

# **Making Meaning Together:**

**Heritage site management and new approaches to  
meaning-making**

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## **Abstract**

This dissertation looks at how those who manage and interpret heritage sites are incorporating into their practice, new thinking about the way visitors make meaning. Recent research has emphasised visitors' agency, and drawn attention to the cultural and political work of heritage performance. The ways visitors use emotion and imagination has also received greater attention. Rather than heritage value as intrinsic to sites, and best identified by the professional, recent theoretical understandings position visitors as active co-creators of heritage. How these new ideas might be applied in practice, and how organisations could most productively share authority for meaning-making, has not been sufficiently addressed. This research positions itself in that gap, and seeks to contribute to a conversation about how theory translates to practice.

The Department of Conservation (DOC) was selected as an information-rich case study. At the time of research, the Department was in its third and final phase of new policy work that places greater emphasis on working in collaboration with others. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with four DOC staff from across a range of roles. A further three interviews were undertaken with DOC partners and a contractor connected with sites discussed by DOC interviewees.

The findings show that while heritage managers accept that visitors will make a variety of meanings at a site, they do not currently have a robust understanding of the meanings their visitors are making; of what they think and feel, and what a visit to the site really means to them. Only recently has getting this knowledge really appeared a priority, and organisations are still working out how best to collect this data, and how it could then inform their practice. This lack of understanding has inhibited practitioners' ability to respond to visitors, and to recognise the cultural work they do. When it came to partnerships, organisations were more invested in both understanding and responding to the other party. In some cases, they were willing to add to or modify their own ideas about what the value of the heritage was, or what stories it could be used to tell. A flexible and reflexive practice is advocated, in which organisations are clear about their own goals, recognise and engage with the meanings visitors and partners make, and are open to the possibility of being changed themselves in the process.

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# Chapter One: Introduction

## Introduction

Making Meaning Together is a study of the relationship between those who manage heritage sites, and their visitors and partners. It is motivated by my own experience both as a visitor, and as a visitor host at various heritage sites, and from my reading of recent literature on how visitors make meaning. My aim is to interrogate the space between theory and practice, to identify the challenges and to look for ways to approach these.

While living in the UK, I enjoyed visiting heritage sites. There were places I would go just for the atmosphere or how they made me feel. And there were places I was drawn to because of their connection with larger stories – narratives of adventure, romance and mystery. In this way, I visited castles, ancient stone circles, houses of famous people, locations mentioned in novels, and pubs that had been frequented by admired writers. The precise details of the site were never upmost in my mind, rather it was my story and experience of visitation that was important, and it is that which has stuck with me. I have no clear memories of any interpretation, fancy or otherwise. As an outsider, I was aware that I was performing these places slightly differently from others who had a different relationship with the site. This feeling became particularly marked as I travelled on to Asia and to Latin America. I was curious about how others saw a site, and what it meant to them.

Back in New Zealand, and living in Wellington, I took on jobs as a Visitor Host at Old St Paul's and at the National War Memorial. Old St Paul's is “one of the best examples of Gothic Revival architecture in the world.”<sup>1</sup> Built entirely in native timber and first opened in 1866, the church is managed by Heritage New Zealand, and during the summer months is a busy tourist attraction. Visitors were often keen to tell me their stories, and it quickly became clear that this place meant a wide range of things to different people. It triggered memories, and it became part of new ones. And for some it was simply a chance to use the bathroom. Likewise at the War Memorial, I saw people both indifferent and in tears. On one occasion, I found a couple letting their child swim in the pool at the bottom of the fountain. The boy was dressed in his swim shorts and his parents had a towel on hand. This was no spur of the moment frolic, but a thought-out use of this heritage site. This episode

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1 “Old St Paul's,” Heritage New Zealand, accessed February 20, 2017, <http://www.heritage.org.nz/places/places-to-visit/wellington-region/old-st-pauls>

got me thinking more critically about visitor performance, how a place really is what you make it, and what you bring with you. Some performances are more acceptable than others to those who manage such sites, but all do work in creating it and making meaning.

With this in mind, I turned to the literature. I was interested in the personal experience of heritage visitation, and to what extent this was acknowledged by heritage managers. I liked Cornelius Holtorf's emphasis on the metaphorical rather than literal content of heritage. "The stories told through heritage," he says, "are partly about the visitors themselves: their own social milieu and lifestyles, their collective identities, and their preoccupations and dreams about other periods."<sup>2</sup> I was also drawn to Laurajane Smith's conception of heritage as a performance,<sup>3</sup> and her insistence that visitors are as much the makers of heritage as professionals.<sup>4</sup> It is this conception of heritage, as intangible and in performance, that I have drawn on to inform my approach to this dissertation. Smith argues that the performance of heritage does cultural and political work. But, she points out, "the performances that curators and heritage managers engage in are not necessarily the performances with which visitors engage."<sup>5</sup> I was interested in how these competing values were, or could be, negotiated, and what a greater recognition of the meanings visitors and partners make, might mean for heritage practice.

I explore these issues through a case study of the Department of Conservation (DOC) and two of their partners: the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust (OCRT Trust), and the Marsden Cross Trust Board. Partnership implies a joint approach and a sharing of authority and control. How best to share authority for meaning-making with visitors is a theme of the literature, and I was interested to look at partnerships as an extension of the organisation/visitor relationship. Partnerships are also an area DOC have placed increased attention on in their recent policy work. In the remainder of this chapter, I outline the relevant literature and trace the development of ideas about meaning-making. In Chapter Two, I discuss the research design and introduce my interviewees, their organisations and the main sites they discuss. The following three chapters then present the findings of the research, and the conclusion discusses their implications.

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- 2 Cornelius Holtorf, "Heritage Values in Contemporary Popular Culture," in *Heritage Values in Contemporary Society*, ed. George S. Smith, Phyllis Mauch Messenger and Hilary A. Soderland (Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, 2010), 50.
  - 3 Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 66–74.
  - 4 Smith, "The Cultural 'Work' of Tourism," in *The Cultural Moment in Tourism*, ed. Laurajane Smith, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (New York: Routledge, 2012), 214.
  - 5 Laurajane Smith, "Visitor Emotion, Affect and Registers of Engagement at Museums and Heritage Sites." *Conservation Science in Cultural Heritage* 14 (2014):125.

## Literature review

To understand how people make meaning at heritage sites is to understand how the past is used in the present by individuals. Institutions, and those who manage heritage, have long sought to communicate effectively with their visitors, deliver specific messages, and influence the way in which meaning is made. Unpicking the mechanics of meaning-making is an ongoing museological project, and one with profound implications for practice. How are heritage institutions in New Zealand engaging with meaning-making theory? Are they responsive to emerging research, and what would this look like in practice?

The study of meaning-making at heritage sites has been enabled by two important shifts in thinking. The first is that rather than being passive receivers, visitors actively construct meaning. The second is that heritage value is not intrinsic to objects or sites. It does not lie dormant, waiting for the expert to reveal it, but is instead intangible and in performance.<sup>6</sup> I trace this changing conception of visitors and of heritage, and discuss the emergence of meaning-making as a subject of study. I then consider the directions and topics within meaning-making that have drawn the interest of theorists. I finish by asking how institutions are responding to these latest insights.

### *Visitors as active performers of heritage*

Today, we understand visitors to museums and heritage sites as diverse, self-aware and active in their construction of meaning. They draw upon their own backgrounds and experiences to make sense of the heritage encounter. They use heritage in ways that fill their needs, and are quite capable of ignoring or subverting messages that do not answer these needs. But visitors have not always been credited with such powers of agency and autonomy. Previous thinking saw visitors as empty and passive; vessels waiting to be filled with the carefully constructed messages of experts.<sup>7</sup> If the visitor did not receive the message correctly this was due to a certain failing on their part. Experts looked for more effective ways to communicate *to* visitors, rather than seeking to construct meaning *with* them.

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<sup>6</sup> Smith, *Uses of Heritage*; Smith, "The Cultural 'Work' of Tourism," 213.

<sup>7</sup> Rhiannon Mason, "Museums, Galleries and Heritage: Sites of Meaning-Making and Communication," in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Gerard Corsane (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 201.

Alternatives to this thinking were starting to make themselves felt in a range of disciplines, but it was not until the early 1990s that these ideas would fully permeate museum studies.<sup>8</sup> The 'New Museology'<sup>9</sup> was afoot, bringing renewed urgency to questions of identity and mission that had been niggling museums in the two decades prior.<sup>10</sup> Were museums about things, or were they for people?<sup>11</sup> If museums were to strive for more "successful relationships with audiences"<sup>12</sup> a new understanding of these audiences would be required; one that acknowledged their agency. Communicating with audiences became a lot more complicated, and a lot more interesting.

### *Emergence of meaning-making*

Early contributors to meaning-making in museums approached the topic from the perspective of museum education. With education, rather than collections and research, now positioned at the core of the museum's mission, it was this educative goal that a better understanding of meaning-making was employed to achieve.<sup>13</sup> As well as education theory, early contributors were informed by constructivism and hermeneutics, and drew on ideas of the active audience current within media and communications theory, literary theory, and history.

In 1992, John Falk and Lynn Dierking proposed what they called the "Interactive Experience Model",<sup>14</sup> a new understanding of visitors that took into account the physical, social, and personal context of the museum visit. Following up on this work was Eilean Hooper-Greenhill. In her book *The Educational Role of the Museum*, she lays aside the old 'transmission model' of communication and describes a multi-directional process where meaning is negotiated.<sup>15</sup> In describing how visitors make meaning, Hooper-Greenhill draws on Stanley Fish and his work on 'interpretive communities'.<sup>16</sup> As well as drawing on their personal background to make meaning, audiences might also employ a 'reading strategy'. This could be described as a lens through which the content in question is viewed; in essence setting criteria for what to notice and where to find value.

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8 Ibid.

9 For a discussion of 'New Museology' see Deirdre C. Stam, "The Informed Muse: The Implications of the 'New Museology' for Museum Practice," in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Gerard Corsane, 54–70 (London; New York: Routledge, 2005).

10 Julia D. Harrison, "Ideas of Museums in the 1990s," in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Gerard Corsane (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 41.

11 Stephen E. Weil, *Rethinking the Museum and Other Meditations* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1990).

12 Eilean Hooper-Greenhill, *The Educational Role of the Museum*, ed. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), x.

13 John H. Falk and Lynn Dierking, *The Museum Experience* (Washington, DC: Whalesback Books, 1992), xiii.

14 Ibid., 1–7.

15 Hooper-Greenhill, *The Educational Role of the Museum*, 16–17.

16 Ibid., 13–14.



Examples of interpretive communities include groups with specific cultural or academic knowledge. Pierre Bourdieu's concept of 'cultural capital' is also of relevance here. Bourdieu showed that the knowledge, including learnt behaviours and ways of seeing, visitors brought to their experience of art gallery visitation, greatly influenced their ability to decode the artwork in ways deemed by society as appropriate or correct.<sup>17</sup> Institutions must be aware of the prior knowledge they take as given, and also of narratives of value that lend authority to a particular reading as correct. In the transmission model of communication, power relations were overt. In the new multi-directional model, they are obscured. But this does not mean, Hooper-Greenhill warns us, that they are not still in operation. She also points out the power of interpretive communities to constrain or silence, as well as enable meaning.<sup>18</sup> Another early theorist to call for a better understanding of meaning-making in museums was Lois Silverman. Writing in 1993, she looks for “more effective ways to share authority for the making of meaning in museums.”<sup>19</sup> What skills would museum educators need to accomplish this, she asks, and what would this look like in practice.<sup>20</sup> An awareness of power relations, along with this question of sharing authority, and how to do it productively is one I return to later.

### *Heritage and meaning-making*

Heritage too, has undergone a similar shift towards visitors, but perhaps the more fundamental shift has been in the conception of what heritage is, where its value is to be found, and the relationship between the tangible and intangible.

Heritage practitioners had long been giving thought to their audiences and the best ways to communicate with them. Freeman Tilden, widely considered the founding father of heritage interpretation, published his seminal work, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, in 1957. He outlines six principles for effective interpretation.<sup>21</sup> Implicit in these is the idea that the audience would be active in their construction of meaning. Interpretation was to provoke rather than instruct. It would lead the visitor, through their own curiosity and thought process, to understanding. Interpretation was also to be mindful of the background and experience of visitors, and to relate what was being

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17 Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *The Love of Art: European Art Museums and their Public*, trans. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1997).

18 Hooper-Greenhill, *The Educational Role of the Museum*, 14.

19 Lois Silverman, “Making Meaning Together: Lessons from the Field of American History,” *Journal of Museum Education* 18 (1993): 10.

20 Silverman, “Making Meaning Together,” 10.

21 Freeman Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, rev. ed. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1967), 9.

discussed to something within this experience. Interpretation for children should not be a watered down version of what was available for adults, but should take a different approach.

Later commentators, while acknowledging Tilden's contribution, particularly at a time when this conception of visitors was in its infancy, have the following critique to make. David Uzzell questions Tilden's assumption that interpretation done well enough will ultimately have the desired effect. He suggests a much more complex relationship between information, attitude change and behaviour change.<sup>22</sup> He also questions what the end goal of interpretation should be. Writing in 1998, he stated that "Heritage interpretation is stuck in a rut where the *how* has become more important than the *why*"<sup>23</sup> [emphasis in original]. Tilden's *raison d'être* for interpretation was that through understanding its value, visitors would come to appreciate and seek to protect those values.<sup>24</sup> As a conservationist who worked with natural heritage, preservation was for Tilden the obvious and unquestioned end goal.

As well as a focus on the technicalities of interpretation, heritage has also suffered from an overemphasis on its material fabric. This fabric of heritage is where, in a Western discourse, authenticity and heritage value has traditionally been found to reside. This is a concept that has proven hard to shake. Tim Winter comments that while quite disparate meanings and voices are being extracted from heritage sites, there is still the idea that these meanings are there to be extracted by the impartial expert, that stable and intrinsic values exist.<sup>25</sup> This conception of heritage, along with related and equally intractable ideas, make up what Smith refers to as the authorised heritage discourse (AHD). In this discourse heritage value is the preserve of experts; heritage is to be saved unchanged for future generations; and is something only to be engaged with passively.<sup>26</sup> Challenging this conception has led to a reconsideration of what heritage is, and has allowed us to re-imagine the role of the visitor, not as receiver, but as co-creator.

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22 David Uzzell, "Interpreting Our Heritage: A theoretical Interpretation," in *Contemporary Issues in Heritage and Environmental Interpretation*, ed. David Uzzell, and R. Ballantyne (London: The Stationery Office, 1998), 2.

23 Ibid.

24 Tilden adopted the phrase "Through interpretation, understanding; through understanding, appreciation; through appreciation, protection", which he found in a Park Service Administration Manual. Tilden, *Interpreting Our Heritage*, 38.

25 Tim Winter, "Cultures of Interpretation," in *Heritage, Place, Encounter, Engagement*, ed. Russell Staiff (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013), 176.

26 Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 29–32.

Heritage value is not intrinsic to places and objects, but rather, is constructed to answer our need in the present. We need only look at the past, to see the arbitrary and changing nature of our values. Holtorf reminds us of the fluid nature of heritage when he describes how every generation rewrites its history, and with it the significance of objects and sites.<sup>27</sup> Drawing on Raphael Samuel, and work by Tunbridge and Ashworth, Holtorf counters fears that heritage is a non-renewable and finite resource, the fabric of which must be protected by experts for the benefit of future generations. “Ancient sites and objects”, he says, “are not the origin but the product of cultural appreciation of the past.”<sup>28</sup> We create heritage to fill our needs, and are quite capable of creating more as we need it.

### *Directions in meaning-making*

This revised conception of heritage refocuses attention from the material fabric of heritage, to those who manage and use it. Finding out more about how people use heritage, therefore appears an obvious next step of investigation. Meaning-making touches on many aspects of what heritage is, what it does, and what it means to different people. Various commentators have navigated paths that have wound their way around the topic of meaning-making. Some of the directions taken include performance (Urry,<sup>29</sup> Bagnall,<sup>30</sup> Baerenholdt,<sup>31</sup> Crouch<sup>32</sup>); emotion and affect (Soren,<sup>33</sup> Smith,<sup>34</sup> Gregory and Witcomb,<sup>35</sup> Tolia-Kelly, Waterton and Watson<sup>36</sup>); and authenticity (Wang,<sup>37</sup> Timothy

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27 Cornelius J. Holtorf, “Is the Past a Non-renewable Resource?” in *The Heritage Reader*, ed. G.J Fairclough (London: Routledge, 2008), 130.

28 Holtorf, “Is the Past a Non-renewable Resource?” 128.

29 John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990).

30 Gaynor Bagnall, “Performance and Performativity at Heritage Sites,” *Museum and Society* 1 (2003): 87–103.

31 Jørgen Ole Baerenholdt et al., *Performing Tourist Places* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate, 2004).

32 David Crouch, “Meaning, Encounter and Performativity: Threads and Moments of Spacetimes in doing Tourism,” in *The Cultural Moment in Tourism*, ed. Laurajane Smith, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (New York: Routledge, 2012), 19–37.

33 Barbara Soren, “Museum Experiences that Change Visitors,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 24 (2009): 233–251.

34 Smith, “Visitor Emotion”; Laurajane Smith, “Changing Views? Emotional Intelligence, Registers of Engagement and the Museum Visit,” in *Museums as Sites of Historical Consciousness*, ed. Viviane Gosselin and Phaedra Livingstone (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2016), 101–121.

35 Kate Gregory and Andrea Witcomb, “Beyond Nostalgia: The Role of Affect in Generating Historical Understanding at Heritage Sites,” in *Museum Revolutions: How Museums Change and are Changed*, ed. Simon Knell, Suzanne Macleod and Sheila Watson (London: Routledge, 2007), 263–275; Andrea Witcomb, “Understanding the Role of Affect in Producing a Critical Pedagogy for History Museums,” *Museum Management and Curatorship* 28 (2013): 255–271.

36 Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson, *Heritage, Affect and Emotion: Politics, Practices and Infrastructures*, ed. Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2017).

37 Ning Wang, “Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 26 (1999): 349–370.

and Boyd,<sup>38</sup> Wang<sup>39</sup>). Other complementary themes are audiences, leisure, tourism, imagination, memory, and identity. The topic is wide-ranging and slippery, and even with a considerable amount of work done, there are still calls for a better understanding of what heritage does, and how people use it. I cannot review all the paths taken here, so would instead like to focus on how heritage institutions see their relationship with their visitors, and role in directing the ways meaning is made.

### *The work that heritage does*

In asking how people make meaning, we should also be asking 'why'. What is it we seek from heritage? Or as Smith puts it, what is the “cultural, political and social work” that heritage does?<sup>40</sup> Peter Howard reminds us that heritage has often been described as everything that we want to keep. “Volition”, he says, “is critical.”<sup>41</sup> We could think of heritage as desire made flesh. The fabric of heritage gives form to our values, letting us touch them. The material referent anchors our stories, and gives us new ways to share them with others. Heritage takes form when others agree to see the same thing we do.

This 'seeing' is not primarily undertaken with the eyes, but happens in the imaginative space of the mind. We create heritage and shape our physical world to align it with what we might call our 'inscape'.<sup>42</sup> When what we see with our eyes, and what we see with our minds do not align we experience an imaginative displacement. In cases like this, we can adapt our stories or adapt our surrounds, creating heritage to order. Robin Hood is a piece of heritage that has received both treatments. The Robin Hood legend has attracted the interest of more than one scholar in relation to heritage and meaning-making, and particularly as it touches on tourism and marketing. Roy Jones describes how Sherwood Forest is being replanted to make it more closely resemble the wild and expansive forest of our imaginations.<sup>43</sup> The tale is also, he notes, in a process of continuous adaptation to meet the present-day needs of audiences. Most notably the character of Maid Marian has been reinvented to suit our evolving gender politics.<sup>44</sup> This is heritage in performance; it is live

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38 Dallen J. Timothy and Stephen W. Boyd, “The Authenticity Debate,” in *Heritage Tourism* (New York: Pearson Education, 2002), 237–240.

39 Yu Wang, “Customized Authenticity Begins at Home,” *Annals of Tourism Research* 34 (2007): 789–804.

40 Smith, “Visitor Emotion,” 125.

41 Peter Howard, *Heritage: Management, Interpretation, Identity* (London; New York: Continuum, 2003), 6.

42 David Eggleton, “Waitaha – A Canterbury Poem Sequence,” in *Beyond the Scene: Landscape and Identity in Aotearoa New Zealand*, ed. Janet Stephenson, Mick Abbott and Jacinta Ruru (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2010), 57.

43 Roy Jones, “Authenticity, the Media and Heritage Tourism: Robin Hood and Brother Cadfael as Midlands Tourist Magnets,” in *Culture, Heritage and Representation: Perspectives on Visuality and the Past*, ed. Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (Farnham, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2010), 154.

44 *Ibid.*, 150.

and responsive to our needs. Anna Scott sees the interest some scholars take in tracking down the 'facts' of the Robin Hood story as an “inappropriate preoccupation”.<sup>45</sup> The 'truth' of the story is unimportant compared with our desire to retell it. It is the performance of heritage and our authentic use of it in the present that has power. Drawing on Holtorf, Mary-Catherine Garden writes, “Rather than focusing on whether a site is 'real' we are beginning to understand that the 'vividness' of the experience is as important as whether it is 'real'.”<sup>46</sup>

Authenticity is a term that has provoked much debate in the heritage literature. It has gained particular intensity around heritage tourism, where the issue of staged or commodified heritage has been one of interest.<sup>47</sup> Commentators have asked to what extent tourists seek fantasy experiences, and how knowing or otherwise they are about the “simulated nature of tourism”.<sup>48</sup> Writing in 2012, Smith sees that these debates have now achieved a level of agreement about the “subjective nature of authenticity”.<sup>49</sup> Rather than becoming tangled in the intricacies of who is performing for whom and for what purpose, Smith posits that tourists are not mere onlookers of heritage performances, authentic or otherwise, but are themselves performers whose actions do cultural work.<sup>50</sup> Authenticity then, is to be found in the meanings and values that the visitor brings with them to the site, and what their performance of the heritage means to them. Gaynor Bagnall talks of emotional authenticity.<sup>51</sup> She argues that visitors' engagement with the heritage produces an emotional response that is “meaningful and ‘real’.” Visitors' moments of performance, Smith says:

may be shallow, banal and simply focused on entertainment; others may be profound, deep and emotionally resonant, in which something is perhaps 'learned', newly understood or re-worked. However, they will be active and they will be *authentic* – by which I mean they will have real contemporary cultural meaning, of whatever significance, to the performer of that moment.<sup>52</sup>

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45 Anna Scott, “Publics Versus Professionals: Agency and Engagement with 'Robin Hood' and the 'Pilgrim Fathers' in Nottinghamshire,” in *The Cultural Moment in Tourism*, ed. Laurajane Smith, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (New York: Routledge, 2012), 137.

46 Mary-Catherine Garden, “The Heritagescape – Looking at Heritage Sites,” in *Heritage Studies: Methods and Approaches*, ed. Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and John Carman (London; New York: Routledge, 2009), 273.

47 Dallen J. Timothy and Stephen W. Boyd, “The Authenticity Debate,” 239–244.

48 Ibid., 240.

49 Smith, “The Cultural 'Work' of Tourism,” 215.

50 Ibid., 213, 214.

51 Bagnall, “Performance and Performativity at Heritage Sites,” 88.

52 Smith, “The Cultural 'Work' of Tourism,” 215.

Robin Hood is accepted as a myth, but as a construction based on our changing needs and desires all heritage has some degree of myth, and also potentially, as Moana Jackson warns us, of 'mythstake'. Speaking at the 2016 Museums Australasia conference, Jackson reminded his audience that the type of story told is dependent on the teller. "Whoever takes the power to name something, to define it, determines both its meaning and the way it is understood."<sup>53</sup> We must always be aware that truth is not finite but determined by our current view and use of history, and informed by our desire for particular stories.

Equally, if the heritage is not desired, its basis in 'fact' matters little. It is now well established that visitors are quite capable of actively ignoring, or re-purposing curatorial messages they have no interest in, or do not agree with.<sup>54</sup> The quality of the interpretation is but a small factor besides the visitor's desire to engage with the narrative. In her study of meaning-making at English country houses, Smith found that many visitors to Harewood House took little notice of the 1807 bicentenary exhibition that linked the wealth of the house with Britain's involvement in the slave trade. She concluded that this was because it did not fit with visitors' idea of how they wanted to perform the country house. She also notes that the exhibition sat outside of the AHD and its "master narrative about Englishness and the good and the great", which provided a frame for visitors' performances.<sup>55</sup> While received narratives of a place are influential, visitors are also quite capable of ignoring their offers of ready-made meaning. Tim Winter's study of domestic tourists to the World Heritage site of Angkor, Cambodia, reveals a heritage practice that is very much of the present, concerned with recent history, and resilient against the management of the site as ancient material culture.<sup>56</sup> He calls for management practice to be adjusted to recognise the meaning-making undertaken by domestic tourists.

### *Emotion*

Duncan Light describes the experience of heritage visitation as a "complex entanglement of the cognitive and the emotional", and he says, "interpretation often has little to do with it."<sup>57</sup> The part

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53 Moana Jackson, "Monuments, Museums and Memory" (paper presented at the Museums Australasia Conference, Auckland, May 15–19, 2016).

54 Laurajane Smith, "The 'Doing' of Heritage: Heritage as Performance," *Performing Heritage: Research, Practice and Innovation in Museum Theatre and Live Interpretation*, ed. Anthony Jackson and Jenny Kidd (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

55 Smith, "The 'Doing' of Heritage: Heritage as Performance," 73–75; Smith, "Visitor Emotion," 128.

56 Tim Winter, "Landscape, Memory and Heritage: New Year Celebrations at Angkor, Cambodia," *Current Issues in Tourism* 7 (2004).

57 Duncan Light and Steve Watson, "The Castle Imagined," in *Heritage, Affect and Emotion: Politics, Practices and Infrastructures*, ed. Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (Abingdon, Oxon; New York:

that emotion plays in meaning-making has been a popular topic of investigation; the central question being the relationship between emotion and critical reflection. Can experiences that stir our emotions also engage our minds?

Early thinking on this topic was wary, and viewed emotion with suspicion. Robert Hewison described heritage as a nostalgic escape for a Britain in decline, and felt that this kind of sentimentality impeded critical reflection.<sup>58</sup> Recent thinking, however, has been more favourably inclined. Emotion has been acknowledged as an effective way to connect with audiences, especially when the content may be otherwise unfamiliar or centred around a culture that is foreign. But while emotional experiences may be engaging, are they effective in delivering the message the institution wants to convey? Does a strong or deeply emotional experience necessarily make for a more lasting impression? Smith thinks not. Introducing the phrase 'registers of engagement', she describes how even banal or shallow engagement does cultural work. As Michael Billig explains, the banal slips by unquestioned. Its power lies in its ubiquity, and its ability to appear natural, while constantly reinforcing its message.<sup>59</sup> It is also possible for deep or highly emotional engagement to leave little lasting impression on a visitor. Instead, Smith sees a person's ability and willingness to reflect on and process the experience as having a greater impact than emotion alone.<sup>60</sup> In 2009, Barbara Soren published an article on what she terms 'transformative experience'. Institutions, as well as educating their visitors have often sought to offer them moments of transformation. These are moments in which the visitors' view of the world or their feelings about it are altered. Soren identified emotion, the authentic and the unexpected as possible triggers for a transformative experience.<sup>61</sup> Again, the combination of emotion, and the cognitive processing of this emotion emerged as important.

The question remains, however, are some interpretive strategies more effective than others in prompting visitors' critical faculties? One discussion to emerge is that of 'hot' and 'cool' authenticity.<sup>62</sup> Hot authenticity plucks at the emotions, while cool authenticity speaks calmly to the mind. Using his case study of Robin Hood and Sherwood Forest, Jones concludes that a mix of both hot and cool, what he terms 'tepid authenticity', is a particularly appealing combination.<sup>63</sup> He sees

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Routledge, 2012), 155.

58 Robert Lumley, "The Debate on Heritage Reviewed," in *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Gerard Corsane (London; New York: Routledge, 2005), 17.

59 Michael Billig, *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage, 1995).

60 Smith, "Visitor Emotion"; Smith, "Changing Views."

61 Soren, "Museum Experiences that Change Visitors."

62 Tom Selwyn, "Introduction," in *The Tourist Image: Myths and Myth Making in Tourism*, ed. Tom Selwyn (Chichester; New York: John Wiley, 1996), 21–28; Erik Cohen and Scott Cohen, "Authentication: Hot and Cool," *Annals of Tourism Research* 39 (2012).

63 Jones, "Authenticity, the Media and Heritage Tourism," 145–154.

the two existing in a symbiotic relationship, with no conflict in the juxtaposition of real places with fictional stories. Perhaps the two sit more easily than would competing cool authenticities, as we accept one as 'real' and the other as emotionally real,<sup>64</sup> though both do real work. I would like to suggest that our awareness of the constructed nature of hot authenticity could be brought to bear on our idea of the cool as a construction as well. The discussion that has taken place around theatricality is useful here. Whether undertaken by re-enactors or paid performers, theatrical presentation has often been dismissed by critics as amateur and frivolous, and little attention has been paid to the heritage work that it does.<sup>65</sup> This is unfortunate as a consideration of theatre has much to offer. In a longitudinal research project, Anthony Jackson and Jenny Kidd found that theatrical presentation was effective in inviting an emotional response, and also in provoking critical reflection. The overt theatricality of the presentation drew attention to its construction and prompted visitors to reflect on how it had been put together, and on their own responses to it. Kidd also found that visitors were then more inclined to consider the construction of the museum's other, more traditional displays, as well.<sup>66</sup>

Instead of worrying that visitors may get lost in a fairyland of the hyper-real<sup>67</sup> I argue that they use its pleasures quite knowingly. As we have seen earlier, visitors are quite capable of ignoring content they would rather not engage with. Their ability to make conscious use of emotion should also be credited. As Smith says, "heritage sites and museums are places where people go to feel, to be emotional",<sup>68</sup> and they do this with intent. In another strand, a quality described as 'numen' has been examined. The numinous experience is deeply emotional, with a spiritual-like dimension. In their study of visitor motivation, in which they introduce the concept of the numinous heritage experience, Catherine Cameron and John Gatewood found that numen seekers looked to use both their emotion and intellect to 'get a feel for a place'.<sup>69</sup> The feeling of numen was created through visitors' conscious reflection, and creation of personal connection. Visitors were in control of the experience, using both intellect and emotion, and doing so actively and knowingly.

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64 For a discussion of emotional realism, see Bagnall, "Performance and Performativity," 88.

65 Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 34.

66 Anthony Jackson, and Jenny Kidd, "Performance, Learning and Heritage: A Research Project Funded by the Arts & Humanities Research Council July 2005–November 2008," (Centre for Applied Theatre Research, University of Manchester, November 2008), <http://www.plh.manchester.ac.uk>

67 Jones, "Authenticity, the Media and Heritage Tourism," 145.

68 Smith, "Visitor Emotion," 125.

69 Catherine M. Cameron and John B. Gatewood, "The Numen Experience in Heritage Tourism," in *The Cultural Moment in Tourism*, ed. Laurajane Smith, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (New York: Routledge, 2012).



In their quest to find the most effective ways to deliver their goals, be these learning or attitude change, what institutions have often failed to ask is – do people come to the museum or heritage site with the intention to learn or to be 'transformed'? Is this the cultural work they look to the institution to help them perform? In a study of visitors to both heritage sites and museums, Smith found that rather than seeking to learn new things most visitors used the institution to help them reinforce what they already knew, felt and believed.<sup>70</sup> If the question of education was raised “it tended to be in relation to children or groups of people other than that to which the speaker belonged, or as something that they felt they should be doing, even if they acknowledged that actually they were not.”<sup>71</sup> Likewise, Smith found that only 6 percent of visitors reported having had a transformative experience in which their views had been changed.

While the confirmation of values could be considered important work, many cultural institutions look to make a bigger impact than that. They want to transform society for the better. They are aspirational. The idea that cultural institutions should serve a social purpose is not a new one. Museums of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were concerned not only with education, but also with the “moral and cultural regulation of the working classes”.<sup>72</sup> While the concerns of the day have changed, the idea that cultural institutions have a role to play in achieving positive outcomes for society, has not. How can institutions reconcile our new understanding of visitors with their mission to teach and to change them? Should they adjust their mission and goals to more closely align with those of visitors? Could they, as Silverman asked, share authority for meaning-making more effectively? What skills would they need to do this?

John Holden describes institutional value as being “about the way that cultural organisations act.”<sup>73</sup> It is manifest in the trust that the public shows in them; in their values, and in their capacity to show leadership and direction. Institutions have traditionally viewed themselves as impartial, and counted this as a value. Tilden stated that information was not in itself interpretation. But everything the institution does conveys a message. What it chooses to define as heritage is as much a performance as how it chooses to present it. As we reflect on past heritage performances, the choices made are

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70 Smith, “Visitor Emotion,” 127.

71 Ibid.

72 Tony Bennett, *The Birth of the Museum: History, Theory, Politics* (London: Routledge, 1995), 73.

73 John Holden, “How we Value Arts and Culture,” in *Sustaining Cultural Development: Unified Systems and New Governance in Cultural Life*, ed. Biljana Mickov and James Doyle (Farnham, Surrey; Burlington, VT: Gower Publishing, 2013), 26–27.

more visible to us and we are better able to identify the power relations involved. Stories, it has been proved, can be dangerous<sup>74</sup> and impartiality is a naive dream. Robert Janes believes institutions should banish any attempt at neutrality and be upfront about their values and goals. He believes they have a role to play in challenging myths, and in leading positive change. Concerned with climate change, the myth he most urgently wants to challenge is that of relentless economic growth. “What is the purpose of museums?”<sup>75</sup> he asks. What is the value they wish to contribute to their communities, and to the world?<sup>76</sup> Like Uzzell, he sees that focus has rested too heavily on the 'how', rather than the 'why'.<sup>77</sup> Janes believes that museums should “help envision and create this new narrative with their communities using their unique skills and perspectives.”<sup>78</sup> The word I would like to draw attention to here is 'with'. By loudly proclaiming their mission, institutions invite visitors to actively choose to align themselves with them. Institutions can tell visitors why they believe their mission is important, they can show them ways to contribute, but the energy must come from the visitor. The structure institutions can provide is important. As Nina Simon explains in her book *The Participatory Museum*, providing structure produces a more thoughtful and focused result. It attunes participation to the mission of the museum, producing action that is meaningful.<sup>79</sup> While structured, the results should not be predetermined. For an experience to be truly interactive, the unexpected must be possible.<sup>80</sup> And as Soren found, the unexpected can lead to moments of transformation or open up different ways to see the world.<sup>81</sup> Performative actions, Smith says, including symbolic ones, such as performing an apology, or bearing witness, are real actions, and effect change in the real world.<sup>82</sup> Stories have power. Janes and Simon agree, and like Smith, believe that institutions should pay more attention to the performances of visitors and the meanings that they make. Visitors, Simon says, do want to feel that their actions can and do make a difference, and are looking to institutions to help them achieve this.<sup>83</sup>

The sphere where visitor performances and meaning-making have most often been overlooked, Smith says, is tourism. Tourists have been conceptualised as “inauthentic, destructive, and culturally

74 In his paper presented at the Museum Australasia Conference 2016, Moana Jackson quoted Patricia Grace, “Books are Dangerous,” *Proceedings of the Fourth Early Childhood Convention, January 27–30* (1987): 59–63.

75 Robert R. Janes, *Museums without Borders: Selected Writings of Robert R. Janes* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), 258.

76 Robert R. Janes, (video recording presented as part of the session “Provocations” at the Museums Australasia Conference, Auckland, May 15–19, 2016).

77 Janes, *Museums without Borders*, 263.

78 Janes, Museums Australasia presentation.

79 Nina Simon, *The Participatory Museum* (Santa Cruz, California: Museum 2.0, 2010), chapter 1.

80 Barbara Kirishenblatt-Gimblett, “Destination Museum: Heritage, Museums and Tourism,” (keynote address presented at City Gallery, Wellington, August 15, 1994), 46.

81 Soren, “Museum Experiences that Change Visitors,” 248.

82 Smith, “The ‘Doing’ of Heritage: Heritage as Performance,” 78–9.

83 Nina Simon, *The Art of Relevance* (Santa Cruz, California: Museum 2.0, 2016), 151–155.

ignorant”.<sup>84</sup> As a consequence, much of the attention and energy of site managers has been focused on the economic and physical impact of their presence, rather than any critical examination of the cultural 'work' that tourists do.<sup>85</sup> This conception has since been challenged; one notable contribution being Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt et al.'s study of the construction of place through tourist performances. The action of doing tourism, Bærenholdt et al. argue, is not as much about the physical location, as it is about “a way of being in the world, encountering, looking at it and making sense.”<sup>86</sup> And, they remind us, this making sense “also comprises the dreamscapes of anticipation and remembrance”.<sup>87</sup> Tourism is not something that just 'happens' to a place, but is a performance of consequence.<sup>88</sup> Tourists are often described as just “passing through”, with the implication that because they are not in an ongoing relationship with a site, their action there is ephemeral.<sup>89</sup> Gordon Waitt and Ruth Lane challenge this conception by proposing that tourism has an active role to play in shaping understandings of heritage places.<sup>90</sup> The suggestion is that if institutions were to conceive of tourists differently, recognising not just the impact of their wallets, but also the impact of their performances, greater reflection could be brought to what these performances mean, and what other performances might be possible. As Smith comments, “the cultural as well as economic ‘work’ that tourism does is not well understood, but the various ways in which non-expert groups use and engage with heritage is key to understanding why heritage matters.”<sup>91</sup> Neil Silberman too, sees that heritage professionals should pay more attention to the actions and performances of non-expert or community groups. Organisations, he says, should “reinvent the field of public heritage as a revival of peoples' sense of belonging and participation in a living cultural community, not just the preservation or safeguarding of symbolic heritage elements.”<sup>92</sup>

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84 Smith, “The Cultural ‘Work’ of Tourism,” 210.

85 Ibid.

86 Jørgen Ole Bærenholdt et al. *Performing Tourist Places* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT, USA: Ashgate, 2004) 2.

87 Bærenholdt, *Performing Tourist Places*, 9. See also David Crouch, “Meaning, Encounter and Performativity: Threads and Moments of Spacetimes in doing Tourism,” in *The Cultural Moment in Tourism*, ed. Laurajane Smith, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (New York: Routledge, 2012), 20; Garth Lean, “The Lingering Moment,” in *The Cultural Moment in Tourism*, ed. Laurajane Smith, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (New York: Routledge, 2012), 288.

88 Laurajane Smith, “The Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, a Challenge to the Authorised Heritage Discourse?” *2013 IRCI Meeting on ICH – Evaluating the Inscription Criteria for the Two Lists of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention*, ed. Misako Ohnuki (Tokyo: International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI), 2013) 139.

89 Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, 33.

90 Gordon Waitt and Ruth Lane, “Four-wheel Drivescapes: Embodied Understandings of the Kimberley,” *Journal of Rural Studies* 23 (2007).

91 Smith, “Intangible Cultural Heritage,” 139–140.

92 Neil A. Silberman, “Changing Visions of Heritage Value: What Role Should the Experts Play?” *Association francophone pour le savoir (ACFAS)* (2012): 11–12, [http://works.bepress.com/neil\\_silberman/48/](http://works.bepress.com/neil_silberman/48/)

As much as institutions may want to *deliver* new understandings to visitors, they cannot do it *for* them. The phrase 'bringing heritage to life' is often quoted as something heritage institutions are trying to achieve for their visitors. This places the emphasis on the action of the institution. As Alison Hems shrewdly observes, what heritage institutions should instead be focusing on, is providing visitors the space to bring their own life and liveliness to the heritage encounter.<sup>93</sup>

## Summary

The conception of heritage as intangible and in performance; its value not inherent, but continually under construction, has opened up new ways to think about how meaning is made at heritage sites. Visitors too, have undergone a re-evaluation. Instead of being passive receivers of messages, they are now acknowledged as active constructors of meaning. Institutions first became interested in meaning-making as a tool to help them better deliver their educative goals. What has emerged, however, are questions about the institutions' mission and its relationship with its visitors.

Research has focused on the factors that influence the way visitors to heritage sites make meaning. Studies have examined visitors' relationships to a site; narratives built around a site by popular culture or marketing; and visitors' use of memory, imagination and emotion. These are subtle topics, and there is still more work to be done. We may never be able to say that we fully understand everything heritage means to us, and the multitude of ways in which we use it. Regardless of the challenges, new insights have been forthcoming, and include the following: visitors are more active and self-aware in their construction of meaning than they have historically been given credit for; they are very able to ignore messages they see as irrelevant or not part of the meaning they wish to make; generally visitors do not come to museums and heritage sites with the specific intention to learn, they are not looking for experiences that challenge their beliefs, but rather for affirmation; visitors use museums and heritage sites as places to feel, to experience emotion. When combined with self-awareness, emotion can deliver experiences that are both provocative and have authenticity for visitors. Heritage experiences are meaningful when visitors are the ones who are active in 'bringing heritage to life'.

What hasn't been examined is the response of institutions to the findings of meaning-making research. Are institutions rethinking their missions and goals in relation to their visitors? What are

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<sup>93</sup> Alison Hems, "Thinking about Interpretation: Changing Perspectives at English Heritage," in *Heritage Interpretation*, ed. Alison Hems and Marion Blockley (Milton Park, Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 2006), 199.

the challenges of sharing authority for meaning-making? Can institutions better support visitors' heritage performances? Can they say 'yes' to the energy, creativity, personal and potentially irreverent meanings that visitors may make, while maintaining their responsibility to tell the stories that align with their mission? Stories do have power, and the way that heritage is performed matters.



## Chapter Two: Research design

Chapter One introduced the study and relevant literature. This chapter presents the research questions, research design, and methods. It also introduces my participants, their organisations and the main sites they are involved with or refer to. As discussed in the literature review, the focus of much recent research has been to better understand what visitors are making of the heritage experience. Taking this as my starting point, I turn my attention to those managing sites, and examine how heritage organisations are responding to these emergent theories of meaning-making. This study explores how theory translates to practice, and takes as a case study the Department of Conservation, and two of its partners: the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, and the Marsden Cross Trust Board.

### Research design

#### *Research Questions*

My research question was: How are those who manage and interpret heritage sites reflecting in their practice the changes in thinking that have been brought about by recent research into the way visitors make meaning?

I broke this question down into the following sub-questions:

1. Do those who manage and interpret heritage sites see their visitors as active makers of meaning?
2. What do they know about the meanings their visitors are making?
3. What do they understand about how their visitors make meaning?
4. How are organisations applying their understanding of meaning-making to their work with their partners?

Question one seeks to establish to what extent heritage practitioners are engaged, or agree with, recent theory that emphasises the agency of the visitor in the production of meaning. Questions two and three look at what practitioners know about their visitors and the meanings they are making at a site, and what factors they believe influence how they make these meanings. Question four turns its attention to the relationship of heritage organisations with their partners. Partnerships are where an organisation's flexibility and recognition of others' values are tested. Including partners in my

research also allowed me to look at the question of meaning-making from the point of view of those partnered as well as the organisations doing the partnering.

### *Research Design*

To answer these questions, I chose to undertake a case study. Focusing on a single case allowed me to explore my research questions in greater depth than would otherwise have been possible in the time and space allowed. The compromise, however, is breadth. I could have sought to capture a representative sample of heritage managers from across a range of organisations, but I was keen to understand, even if only in a single case, the factors that drove or influenced an organisation's approach to heritage, their visitors and their work with their partners. Case studies are well suited to this contextual understanding; they allow the researcher to explore not only *what*, but also *why*.<sup>94</sup> Case studies are valuable not only for the data they generate, but also for their ability to identify issues or themes that can then be explored further.<sup>95</sup> To select a case, I used purposeful sampling. I wanted a case that would be information-rich,<sup>96</sup> and able to provide an example of an organisation moving from theory, to the development of policy, and through to implementation and practice. I was aware that DOC was undertaking policy work that looked to make conceptual changes to how they think about and manage heritage. Given this, they appeared a good choice for a case study. The Department of Conservation is a large and complex organisation with a mandate that includes natural as well as historic heritage. It is not representative of other heritage organisations in New Zealand. In selecting this case, I was not seeking to generalise, but rather to explore the particular challenges and successes of an organisation working to implement policy changes.

### *Methods*

Because this research is concerned with what people think and understand, I chose to conduct interviews as an effective way of gaining an in-depth understanding of, an albeit, small group of those involved in managing and interpreting heritage sites. Interviews were semi-structured, providing direction for the conversation, but allowing interviewees to speak freely and to discuss the issues and sites they had most experience of. I complemented this with an examination of DOC heritage policy, and management plans for the OCRT Trust. While these documents provided useful background, my focus was on my participants' understanding and implementation of this policy, rather than the policy in and of itself. I also looked at what visitors had written about the sites my

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94 Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide: For Small-Scale Social Research Projects*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Maidenhead, England; New York: Open University Press, 2014), 55.

95 Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, 57.

96 Michael Quinn Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 2002), 45–46.



respondents mentioned. I looked at TripAdvisor comments, articles and guidebooks, seeking out whatever was available. Although limited to those who chose to share their thoughts and feelings of their heritage visit, these accounts provided a context for my respondents' narratives of the site, and also served to identify sources of data about the visitor experience that were freely available – to my respondents, as well as to myself.

Participants were selected from DOC staff based on their role and the perspective they could offer. Because I wanted to investigate both how policy is conceived and implemented, I sought participants from a cross section of roles from policy development through to on-the-ground heritage management. In this way, I identified and approached Heritage Technical Advisors, Paul Mahoney and Oli duBern; Kaihautu, Director Strategic Cultural Leadership, Taute Taiepa; and Senior Ranger, Andrew Blanshard as participants. Taute, Paul and Oli are based at National Office in Wellington. Taute's role involves strategic direction for DOC's work with iwi as their Treaty Partner. This partnership is an important one for DOC, and I was keen to understand DOC's approach to this relationship. Paul and Oli work with heritage policy, advising DOC's regional and district offices on strategy and delivery. Andrew is based in Kerikeri in the Bay of Islands. He is involved in the on-the-ground management of heritage in this area, and also has an overview role for the Northland region. Based on the projects Taute, Paul and Oli, and Andrew spoke about and/or were involved with, I then followed up by seeking interviews with representatives from the Trusts partnered with DOC on these projects – the two main sites under discussion being The Otago Central Rail Trail, and Rangihoua Heritage Park. Both the OCRT Trust and Marsden Cross Trust Board have a number of stakeholders. The specific complexities of each site were outside the scope of my research question, and to keep the research to a manageable size, I chose to interview only the representative of each Trust, and where possible, a contractor involved with interpretation at the site. I spoke with Kate Wilson, Chair of the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust; John King, Chair of the Marsden Cross Trust Board; and Chris Hay, Creative Director of place-based storytelling company Locales, who produced interpretation for the recent development of Rangihoua Heritage Park.

I was keen to talk to Trusts and contractors as well as DOC staff, as they play a significant role in either managing the heritage, and/or shaping the visitor experience. I also felt they may bring different motivations to their practice, and I was interested in what impact this might have on the way they thought about the heritage and about their visitors. In talking to Trusts and contractors, I also wanted to capture the other side of the partnership relationship. Meaning-making theory has implications not only for the way organisations relate to their visitors, but also how they interact with their partners, and I wanted to look at this relationship from both sides.

Rangihoua Heritage Park and the Otago Central Rail Trail are not presented as comparisons, but rather illustrate the diversity of sites and stakeholder relationships my participants were involved in. My decision to interview representatives of these trusts, gives these sites prominence in the study, but they were not the only sites or examples of practice given by my respondents. Examples are used from one or the other or both to best illustrate the point under discussion, rather than to serve as a direct comparison.

### *Data collection*

Interviews were conducted individually, with the exception of Paul and Oli who I interviewed together. Paul and Oli work in similar roles and it was useful to bounce ideas between them. Paul has a long experience with DOC, and Oli, having only been at the Department for a few months, was a new pair of eyes. Interviews were conducted at a place and time convenient for interviewees. I spoke to Paul and Oli in a meeting room at DOC National Office, and to Taute and Chris at local cafés. As they were based in different parts of the country, I spoke to John, Andrew and Kate by phone. An interview schedule was used to guide the conversation and to make sure I had covered certain topics, but was left open enough to allow for free conversation and discussion by interviewees of points they wanted to raise. I divided my interview questions into themes, roughly addressing each of my research questions. I asked interviewees about the mission, vision and values of their organisation, and what value they saw heritage as offering the visitor; I asked what they knew about their visitors and the meanings they made at a site; and about how they approached their relationship with their partners, and what made for a successful partnership. A basic version of the interview schedule can be found in the appendix. Interviews covered slightly different ground for each participant as determined by their background, experience and current role. For those involved with the practical day-to-day management of sites, these issues were at the forefront, while those in office-based roles spoke more to the development of policy. I invited interviewees to speak about sites they had worked on or been involved with and to answer with examples from their experience. Discussion was not limited to particular sites. Interviews were on average just under an hour in length, and were audio recorded. A full transcript was made, and interviewees given the opportunity to review, alter or remove any of their comments.

### *Analysis*

My approach to the analysis of the data was informed by grounded theory.<sup>97</sup> In grounded theory, analysis involves a “gradual process of coding and categorizing”. Key concepts are identified and

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<sup>97</sup> Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, 285–288.

theory built from the data. This method suited the exploratory nature of my research questions, and provided a systematic process by which to develop categories and themes. After transcribing each interview I read through the transcript and highlighted phrases or examples I felt illuminated the research question. I grouped these into themes or topics, and made note of my initial thoughts alongside these. As I completed and transcribed further interviews, I was able to identify recurring themes and to look for differences and similarities.

In qualitative analysis, meaning is constructed from the researcher's reading of the data.<sup>98</sup> While a systematic process of analysis may be used, the researcher is still the “crucial 'measurement device'”.<sup>99</sup> My interpretation of my respondents' answers was informed by my own experience working at heritage sites, and my understanding of the relevant literature. I was conscious of the temptation to use the literature to make a judgement about the perceived right or wrong way for organisations to relate to their visitors, and sought instead to direct my attention to the experience, beliefs and aims of my respondents. I have not been to either of the two main sites discussed in this research – the Otago Central Rail Trail and Rangihoua Heritage Park. My thoughts about these sites are therefore not coloured by my own experience there, but are informed by what I have read and heard about the sites.

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<sup>98</sup> Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide*, 245.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

## Introduction to organisations and sites discussed

### *The Department of Conservation*

As previously mentioned, I selected DOC as a case study based on the new policy work they are undertaking. I would like now to trace the development of this policy, and DOC's approach to working with others.

The Department of Conservation was established by the Conservation Act 1987, and formed from the Lands and Survey Department, New Zealand Forest Service, and Wildlife Service. DOC manages for conservation purposes land and natural and historic resources held under the Act. It is also charged with advocating for and promoting the benefits of natural and historic resources to present and future generations.<sup>100</sup> Managing roughly a third of New Zealand's land area, including some 13,000 historic sites, 650 of which are actively managed and accessible to the public,<sup>101</sup> the Department is the largest manager of cultural heritage in the country.

DOC's most recent policy work and Stretch Goals to the year 2025, focus on working with others. While the emphasis and extent of this work is new, the underlying idea is not without precedent for the Department. Under the Conservation Act, DOC is required to “give effect to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi”.<sup>102</sup> To do this has required the Department to work with iwi. The goal now is to move beyond the obligations of the Act – to work with Māori in the design phase “as opposed to consulting on solutions.”<sup>103</sup>

A move towards more conscious and strategic community partnerships began in 2000/2001 with a funding boost for this work. Hundreds of partnerships were initiated.<sup>104</sup> Following on from this, DOC created a Conservation with Communities Strategy (2003). DOC realised that it could not undertake its conservation mandate alone, and looked to communities to help and to be involved.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Conservation Act 1987, Section 6.

<sup>101</sup> Department of Conservation, “Statement of Intent 2016–2020, Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2016,” (Wellington: Department of Conservation), 14.

<sup>102</sup> Conservation Act 1987, Section 4.

<sup>103</sup> Department of Conservation, “Statement of Intent 2016–2020, Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2016,” 25.

<sup>104</sup> Bernie Napp, “A Short History of DOC: 1987–2007,” Department of Conservation, March 2007, <http://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/our-history/a-short-history-of-doc/>

<sup>105</sup> Department of Conservation, “Statement of Intent 2016–2020, Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2016,” 21.

DOC currently has 887 community partnerships.<sup>106</sup> The majority of these are conservation based. For the past year, only 12% of volunteer hours were spent on historic heritage projects.<sup>107</sup>

At its most basic, the rationale for community partnerships is in recruiting more hands to get projects done. It is also about encouraging people to feel connected to a place, with the idea that this leads to them caring about it and wanting to work for its protection; they are to become advocates for the site, and for the work of the Department.<sup>108</sup> Recent policy still talks about community involvement within this framework, but also speaks of a “paradigm change” in how heritage management is thought about.<sup>109</sup> DOC are now looking for communities to drive storytelling themselves<sup>110</sup> and to be involved in identification of heritage stories that are important to them.<sup>111</sup>

This new model, they have termed a “partnerships driven approach”. It involves moving from “DOC knows best” to “we trust others”, and positions the Department as a facilitator, collaborator and enabler rather than service provider.<sup>112</sup> Heritage management has also undergone a rethink with public engagement now coming before and alongside fabric protection, rather than at some distant point in the future.<sup>113</sup> Recent policy also demonstrates a greater focus on understanding current and potential audiences.<sup>114</sup> DOC are now in the third and final stage of this policy implementation – “embed[ding] the new way of working in our systems, processes and culture.”<sup>115</sup>

### *Otago Central Rail Trail*

The Otago Central Rail Trail is a 152km long cycle trail running between Clyde and Middelmarsh along the route of the old railway line. It was opened in 2000, and has become a popular recreational attraction for the region. Between July 2015 and July 2016, over 15,000 people completed the trail, and tens of thousands more rode or walked sections of it.<sup>116</sup>

No longer economic, the railway was closed in 1990, and the track from Clyde to Middelmarsh removed the following year. The idea of a recreational cycle trail was floated, and in 1993 DOC

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Department of Conservation, “DOC 2025 Stretch Goal Road Map: Stretch Goal 6,” (Wellington: Department of Conservation, 2016), 1.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>112</sup> Department of Conservation, “Statement of Intent 2016–2020, Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2016,” 26.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>114</sup> Department of Conservation, “Stretch Goal 6,” 5.

<sup>115</sup> Department of Conservation, “Statement of Intent 2016–2020, Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2016,” 22.

<sup>116</sup> “About Our Trail. Rail Trail Numbers,” Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, accessed January 16, 2017, <http://www.otagocentrailtrail.co.nz/about-our-trail/>

purchased the rail corridor for this purpose. There was no precedent for such a trail in New Zealand, and no government funding. Many thought it would be a better idea to reintegrate the land into surrounding properties. MP for Otago, Warren Cooper, ridiculed the idea of a trail, and predicted that the land would become a strip of noxious weeds.<sup>117</sup> Many local farmers were also sceptical. But the trail did find supporters. In 1994, the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust formed with input from the Otago Regional Council and DOC. Partnered with DOC, the Trust grew community support, and raised money to help fund the work to build the trail. The railway ballast was replaced with gravel, bridges were re-decked and handrails added.<sup>118</sup> The trail was opened in stages, culminating in the grand opening in 2000.

The Rail Trail Trust is an entirely volunteer run organisation. Consisting of four trustees, the Trust is currently also supported by a facilitator, administrator and patron. As well as working closely with the local community and with DOC, the Trust works alongside the Rail Trail Operators Group, Tourism Central Otago, Tourism Dunedin, Central Otago District Council, Dunedin City Council, and the Otago Chamber of Commerce.<sup>119</sup> Initially focused on raising funds to allow the opening of the trail, the Trust now takes a wider role and is involved with marketing and interpretation.

### *Rangihoua Heritage Park*

Rangihoua Heritage Park is a 46-hectare park 40 minutes drive from Kerikeri in the Bay of Islands. It is the site of the first planned European settlement in New Zealand. An agreement between Ngāpuhi rangatira, Ruatara, and chaplain and Church Missionary Society agent, Samuel Marsden, saw lay missionaries King, Hall and Kendal arrive with their families in 1814 to live under the protection of Rangihoua Pa. A memorial cross, erected in 1907, marks the site of Marsden's Christmas Day sermon – the first Christian church service held in New Zealand.

A desire to mark the bicentenary led to the formation of the Marsden Cross Trust Board. In 2005, the Trust purchased 20 hectares of land adjoining the existing Marsden Cross Historic Reserve. The resulting Rangihoua Heritage Park is a collaboration between the Marsden Cross Trust Board, Ngati Torehina, the Rangihoua Native Reserve Board, and the Department of Conservation.<sup>120</sup> The Park features an interpretive entranceway, Rore Kāhu, designed by Cheshire Architects, and a series of interpretation panels designed and installed by place-based storytelling company Locales. The Park was officially opened by the Governor-General at a ceremony on the 21st of December 2014.

<sup>117</sup> *Hansard Parliamentary Debates*, New Zealand Railways Corporation Restructuring Bill, second reading, August 21, 1990.

<sup>118</sup> “About Our Trail. Rail Trail Trust,” Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, accessed January 16, 2017.

<sup>119</sup> “About Our Trail. Rail Trail Partners,” Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, accessed January 16, 2017.

<sup>120</sup> “Marsden Cross Trust Board Partners,” Rangihoua Heritage Park, accessed February 24, 2017, <http://www.rangihouaheritage.co.nz/about>

Rangihoua Heritage Park is a DOC Icon Site, and is also one of nine sites chosen for the Landmarks project pilot running in Northland.<sup>121</sup> Icon Sites are places of national significance, and DOC's key sites for cultural tourism. The Landmarks project is a joint initiative between DOC, the Ministry for Culture and Heritage and Heritage New Zealand. It aims to “showcase New Zealand’s historically and culturally important places”, raising their profile and encouraging national and international tourism.<sup>122</sup>

### *Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga*

Along with Rangihoua Heritage Park and the Otago Central Rail Trail, Te Rerenga Wairua was a site mentioned with some frequency by my interviewees. I did not speak to any other parties in connection with the site, but include a short description here to provide context for my interviewees' discussion of it.

The northern-most point of New Zealand, Te Rerenga Wairua has become an increasingly popular tourist destination. The site receives around 150,000 visitors a year,<sup>123</sup> many of these international, arriving as part of a coach tour. Several companies offer day tours of the cape, which include a drive along Ninety Mile beach, sandboarding and other stops of interest. Great views are to be had of the Three Kings Islands and Cape Maria Van Diemen. As well as the scenery, many visitors also comment on the “spectacular”<sup>124</sup> sight of the meeting of the Tasman Sea and Pacific Ocean.

Working with the local community, DOC completed a visitor facilities upgrade in 2009.<sup>125</sup> As part of this work, new interpretation was installed along the path that leads down to the lighthouse. The interpretation covers a wide range of themes, and some of my respondents expressed the concern that the important spiritual story of the site was getting lost and going unrecognised by visitors. In Māori spiritual belief Te Rerenga Wairua is the site from which spirits depart New Zealand on their journey back to their ancestral homeland, Hawaiiki-A-Nui.

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121 “Landmarks Whenua Tohunga,” Northland New Zealand, accessed January 16, 2017, <http://www.landmarks.nz/>

122 “Landmarks Whenua Tohunga,” Ministry for Culture and Heritage, accessed January 16, 2017, <http://www.mch.govt.nz/landmarks>

123 “Cape Reinga/Te Rerenga Wairua Heritage,” Department of Conservation, accessed January 5, 2017, <http://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/northland/places/te-paki-recreation-reserve/cape-reinga-te-rerenga-wairua/heritage/>

124 “Tourist Hot Spot,” review by 'DP2610', TripAdvisor, December 27, 2016, accessed January 5, 2017, [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g255105-d301479-r446803769-Cape\\_Reinga-North\\_Island.html#REVIEWS](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g255105-d301479-r446803769-Cape_Reinga-North_Island.html#REVIEWS)

125 “SH1 Cape Reinga,” NZ Transport Agency Newsletter, July 5, 2009; “Healing Te Rerenga Wairua: Finding a Balance between Engineering, Environmental and Cultural Concerns,” *New Zealand Local Government*, December, 2009, 7–9.

## **Introduction to interviewees**

### **Paul Mahoney**

Heritage Technical Advisor, DOC

Paul started his career as a civil engineer, and as he put it, got into heritage that way – through the engineering side. He has now worked in heritage for DOC for thirty years. Over that time, he has been involved in the physical restoration of heritage, heritage management, theory and interpretation.

### **Oli duBern**

Heritage Technical Advisor, DOC

Oli started at Wellington Zoo as a Guide Ranger, then for eight years held the position of Visitor Experience Manager. “My roles”, he said, “have always been as a visitor champion.” When I spoke with Oli he had been with DOC for three months. As a newcomer to the organisation, Oli offered a fresh pair of eyes.

### **Taute Taiepa**

Kaihautu, Te Kotahitanga, Director Strategic Cultural Leadership, DOC

Taute started his career with the New Zealand Forest Service in 1979, cutting tracks and building huts and bridges in the backcountry. For more than a decade now, he has been working in an office environment, first in community relations, and as an Area Manager, and then as a Kaupapa Atawhai Manager – an iwi liaison role that provides cultural support and guidance. Taute's current role is as a Kaihautu, or Director for the Kahui Kaupapa Atawhai unit which deals with Māori issues on a national scale. Taute's range of experience means he has a thorough understanding of both the operational, policy and community relations aspects of DOC's work.

### **Andrew Blanshard**

Senior Ranger Historic, DOC

Andrew is an archaeologist by training. He started work with DOC in 2006, and has been based in Kerikeri ever since. He has not changed roles during that time, but the role has changed and grown with him. Andrew's role is to monitor key heritage sites, up-skill and train staff, and to be a liaison between DOC and tangata whenua. Because of the length of his experience in the Bay of Islands,



Andrew has recently taken on more of an overview role for the whole of Tai Tokerau, Northland. Comparing the current focus of his role to what it was ten years ago, he saw that there was now more emphasis on “promoting our heritage sites as visitor locations, as opposed to just preserving”.

### **John King**

Chair, Marsden Cross Trust Board

John was approached to be part of the Marsden Cross Trust because of his family links. He is the great-great-grandson of John King, ropemaker and missionary, who arrived with his family to settle at Hohi in 1814. John's enthusiasm for the development of Rangihoua Heritage Park lies in the story it tells of the agreement between Ruatara and Marsden – the warmth of that relationship, and Rangihoua as a “place of accord”. A retired lawyer based in Auckland, John had energy and expertise to bring to the project.

### **Kate Wilson**

Chair, Otago Central Rail Trail Trust

Kate became a Rail Trail Trustee in 2006, and took on the role of Chairperson in 2012.

Kate is a lawyer, Dunedin City Councillor, and very active member of her local community. Originally from Dunedin, she has lived in Middelmarsh since 1992, when she married, and moved to her husband's farm. Some of the projects and events Kate has been involved with include the Middelmarsh Singles Dance, and restoration of the Middelmarsh Station precinct.

For thirteen years, she ran the Kissing Gate Café, and took the opportunity to talk with visitors, gathering anecdotal feedback from them about their experiences on the Trail. Before becoming a Trustee, Kate was involved with the Rail Trail Trust as a community contact person. She was involved with the Rural Women as they lobbied to get toilets along the trail; took part in the partial openings of the trail; and organised local schools to be part of a relay for the grand opening in 2000. She was also a Trustee for the Taieri Gorge Railway, and worked closely with the Trust in this capacity. Kate also has a family connection, with a great-grandfather who was an engineer on the line.

## **Chris Hay**

Creative Director, Locales

Chris' background is in digital tourism. He has worked on websites for both Tourism New Zealand and Tourism Australia, and for the past fifteen years has been running his own design and interpretation companies. Locales, which Chris founded nine years ago, specialises in place-based storytelling using a range of media.

Along with the interpretation at Rangihoua Heritage Park, examples of Locales' work include the Waikato War Experience – a driving tour and audio guide of major Waikato War sites; the Ngā Tapuwae Gallipoli and Western Front mobile apps; and visitor centre and exhibition projects such as the Kerikeri Mission Station and Waihi Gold Discovery Centre.

## **Summary**

This chapter discussed how the research questions for this study emerged from an interest in the translation of theory to practice, and a desire to understand how those who manage and interpret heritage sites are responding to recent insights into the ways visitors make meaning. This study employs a purposeful sampling method, selecting an information-rich case. As an organisation that is undergoing a process of policy change in the way they think about both heritage and visitors, the Department of Conservation was chosen to provide insight into the successes and challenges of engaging with this new theory. The main component of this research is semi-structured interviews with individuals from DOC; from two of its partners – the Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, and the Marsden Cross Trust Board; and from independent heritage contractor, Locales. Policy documents and visitors' accounts of sites mentioned are used as supporting evidence. This chapter also introduced my participants and their organisations. In doing this I looked to 'set the scene', and to provide the reader the opportunity to 'meet' my participants before I discuss their views in the following chapters. This approach is consistent with the idea that individuals' backgrounds, experience, their own and their organisation's goals will play a part in how they interpret situations, and ultimately influence the way they think about visitor meaning-making.

## Chapter Three: Approaches to heritage and meaning-making

In order to begin to answer how those involved in managing and interpreting heritage are responding to and applying recent theory about meaning-making to their practice, it was first necessary to consider how they conceptualised heritage and heritage value. This was identified in the literature as key to informing an institution's approach to thinking about, or indeed, even recognising, visitor meaning-making.<sup>126</sup> Recent theory argues that heritage value is not intrinsic to sites and waiting for the professional to extract or uncover it, but is to be found in the ways the site is performed not only by professionals but by visitors and communities.<sup>127</sup> In recognising this, practitioners acknowledge the role of visitors in creating heritage through their performance.

As discussed earlier, DOC's recent policy describes their new approach to heritage. There is a focus on understanding and working more closely with others, and on public engagement. Heritage meaning and relevance is to be developed *with* people, rather than being undertaken solely by the professional.<sup>128</sup> What I wanted to know, however, was what this looked like in practice.

In this chapter, I address the first two of my four sub-questions:

- do organisations recognise visitors as active makers of meaning?
- what do they know about the meanings their visitors are making?

### *The value of heritage for my respondents*

For many of my respondents, the principle value of heritage sites lay in the stories they could tell and the role of these stories in helping visitors, and in particular New Zealanders, better understand New Zealand's history. As Andrew put it, “we can learn a lot about history, and a lot about where we have come from if we value these sites and tell their stories better.” Respondents also emphasised the role of history and heritage in informing our attitudes, beliefs and behaviours in the present. This view was most strongly expressed in connection to race relations. For Andrew, the most important heritage stories to tell are the ones “that give us clues how better to live in a multicultural environment.” These stories can “speak very strongly to some of the issues we are having now.” Chris also emphasised how an understanding of the past directly impacts the present. Discussing his work on the Waikato War driving tour app he recalls the alarming level of misunderstanding he came across when talking to people about the project:

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<sup>126</sup> Smith, *Uses of Heritage*.

<sup>127</sup> Smith, “The Cultural 'Work' of Tourism,” 214.

<sup>128</sup> Department of Conservation, “Stretch Goal 6,” 4.

[People would say] straight back to my face – 'there was no war, what war, they gave the land away, they were stupid'...the level of misunderstanding, that directly impacts today, is based on a misunderstanding of the past.

Of a project he is currently working on in Australia – “an indigenous overlay of the history of colonisation”, he said, “they are trying to change the cultural fabric of Australia by telling that story differently. And so again, it's not just telling it, it's how you tell it, and retell it, and retell it.” Oli too, agrees that there are “fundamental stories, like Waitangi Treaty Grounds” that New Zealanders should know about. “People should be connected to that because it does enrich your life; it helps you make sense of the world that you live in.” He also notes that “empathy and respect...come from understanding those kind of stories.” This was a theme for both Andrew and John who felt that stories showing the strengths of early Māori leaders could, as John put it, “assist people in their views these days of the Māori people.”

Taute and Kate spoke of both a more personal and a more community-focused value of heritage as reflected by their roles and the projects they have seen and been involved in. Kate, reflecting on the Rail Trail, spoke of the benefits it has brought to the region – not just financially, but in the way it has changed perceptions of the area. Visitors undertaking the trail perform their appreciation and enjoyment of the scenery and stories of the area. And this performance has rubbed off on locals as well. Kate talked of the “sense of pride that [the trail] has brought.” “It's been fantastic to make people realise how lucky they are to live here.”

Taute also identified economic benefits through tourism, and like Kate, he emphasised the meaning-making component of this interaction. Care for the heritage asset, its integrity and its meanings, was paramount. The value heritage had to offer both locals and tourists was in its ability to promote a feeling of personal connection with the landscape and the stories of that landscape, in whichever way was personally meaningful to you. Value was to be found in the practice of heritage, because through practice you feel connected, “you feel the history.”

### *Visitors as active makers of meaning*

From the above it seems clear that some of my respondents did have, if not specific stories, at least certain values that they wanted to impart to their visitors. They were all very aware, however, that visitors would pick what was meaningful to them and were quite able to ignore the rest. Rather than seeking to convey any particular narrative or message, Chris aimed to get people interested and to show them a variety of perspectives:

Messages change over time, and it's nuanced about how people interpret – and people may take amazing things out of the show that you never intended...you're not really there to...deliver 'a message', you are there to engage them and they'll make their own meaning, they'll take their own thing out of it.

For Taute, the idea that heritage is expressed and practised differently by different people is a given. And, like Chris, he saw this as contingent on time. Communities and society are constantly changing, and the way heritage is practised needs to change with them. To do this he saw that management practice should be flexible and inclusive.

My respondents also showed an awareness of the other aspects that go into making up the heritage experience. As Andrew said of visitors to Northland, “They're not just looking for a heritage experience.” Heritage is part of the mix, but they might also want to picnic or swim. Chris too stressed the recreational aspect, “you are doing things for people *on holiday*.”

An awareness that visitors make their own meanings, and may be at a site for reasons not primarily concerned with the heritage, while accepted by my respondents, also presented a dilemma. They did want to communicate something to them, to open up new ways for visitors to think about sites; they did want to challenge their values and opinions. Te Rerenga Wairua/Cape Reinga was mentioned by both Andrew and Oli as a site they felt the vast majority of visitors were probably not taking away from their visit what DOC considers the key heritage value. Of Te Rerenga Wairua Andrew said, “They [visitors] take lots of photos, they recommend it to their friends, but they walk away without any knowledge of that cultural lens. Personally, I don't think that's good enough.” Oli too felt that the site offers:

an opportunity to enrich people's lives there that we just don't know if people are picking up on or taking away. Anecdotally, we'd probably say that they are not taking away the key value of that place, currently. But we just don't know, because we haven't asked.

Considering to what extent it mattered how visitors were using a site and what meanings they made there, Paul reflected on his own experience of visiting Sydney Central Post Office. The post office is a heritage building that is now experiencing a second life as home to cafés and shops. Thinking of why people visit a place, Paul said, “I'm just wondering if it really matters, so long as heritage is part of the brand.” After some reflection, he concluded:

I don't think it matters whether you are there to café or shop, most people aren't going there for post office heritage, but heritage is definitely a part of the brand isn't it? So we've actually enabled the heritage to be a core element, and I think that's all that we're looking for.

Oli spoke of aiming to “mesh the two [institution's and visitor's] motivations together.” Giving the example of Wellington Zoo, he described how a visitor may be there for a fun day out with their three-year-old, and the zoo is there with a message about conservation and animal welfare. Interpretation, he said, and “the experience you provide bridges that gap between what we're trying to achieve and what are the motivations [of the visitor].”

The Rail Trail Trust did not have particular narratives they were keen to communicate in quite the same way as those involved with Rangihoua or other sites of early Māori/European engagement. While the history and stories of the railway itself are something the Trust would like to share with visitors, and while communities along the trail have stories that are important to them that they would like to tell, there was no one message or changed opinion that visitors were to go away with. Kate was upfront about this and unperturbed by the idea that, as she said, “We're not going to hit everything.” She explained – the Trail attracts a diverse range of people and “not everyone is interested in every aspect.” As long as visitors find stories that “add to the experience and not take away from what they are doing” then that is considered a success. Rather than placing all their attention on how to better communicate their own messages, the Trust is keen to understand more about what is important to visitors, and to protect these aspects.

Rather than heritage fabric for its own sake, all of my respondents emphasised the social value they saw as emerging from interaction with heritage sites. It also seemed clear that for some there were particular stories they would like their visitors to engage with. They wanted to reach people who perhaps don't currently have a good understanding of these stories, and to challenge or change their attitudes and behaviours. It seems only logical then to ask what my respondents knew about their visitors – who they are and what they are taking away from their heritage site visit.

#### *What respondents knew about their visitors*

On the whole, my respondents had quite good quantitative data about their visitors. They had an idea of how many people were visiting the site, and often had access, either through their own surveying or through collaboration with regional tourism authorities, to data about where their visitors were from, and how long they stayed in the area. The Rail Trail Trust have run user surveys

in 2008, 2011, and 2014/15 and have gathered data about economic impact and visitor satisfaction along with demographic data.

Qualitative data about visitors, however, was minimal and mostly anecdotal. This was in part due to the time and resources involved in undertaking the kind of data collection that would be necessary. All of my respondents expressed an interest in understanding more about their visitors but were restricted in what they were able to do, or unsure of how to best gather this information. As Andrew explained:

We really struggle to actually get the feedback...we rely a lot on 'oh we were there, we asked someone and they said this'. So it's very, very subjective. It's not statistically usable. I think that's just starting to change as we realise that we could use things like TripAdvisor, and other things to try and encourage feedback, but it's really quite hard, so we don't actually have a good idea about whether or not people are enjoying our sites.

Only recently has gathering qualitative visitor data become a priority for DOC, a move prompted by their new policy work. An organisation's desire to understand their audiences was determined by the extent to which they saw visitors as active meaning-makers whose performances produced heritage value and meaning. While sometimes it did seem to my respondents that as long as the interpretation was good enough, visitors could not fail to take something at least in the realm of what was intended away, it was also suspected that in many cases they were not. International visitors and bus group tours were seen as most troubling in this regard. These are groups who were seen as having limited background information or experience of the site and who had not necessarily made an active choice to visit but found themselves delivered to the site as part of a set itinerary. Andrew described how international visitors were often reluctant to move away from the bus or boat that had brought them, and that instead of exploring Urupukapuka Island and its stories, the majority are content to sit by the wharf and paddle their feet in the water. It was in these cases especially, where qualitative visitor research was seen as necessary and lacking. For Andrew this gap in understanding felt most pronounced in relation to international visitors from Asia and the Indian subcontinent. Of these groups, he said, "I'm not sure what sort of messages they're getting, and whether we are doing a good job for them." "I have no idea if we are getting our messages through to them."

Kate too, identified international visitors as a group the Trust would like to gain a better understanding of. She reflected, "Sometimes it is really hard to consider the contrast to other

places”; the things that will appear strange, in need of explanation, or of interest to people from a different cultural background.

For Chris as well, what people were making of the finished product was largely anecdotal. Effort had, however, gone into pretesting ideas in the development stage. Discussing Locales' work for the Gallipoli and Western Front mobile apps Chris described the development research undertaken:

[I] recorded a few things and went over and tested it with people on the ground. I gave them an i-pad and said 'what do you think about this? Would you be interested in this? What kind of stories would you be interested in?...So we tailored the end product to that research.

Kate too, discussed the value of pretesting ideas, in the Trust's case, through social media such as Facebook. The Trust is also very active on TripAdvisor, and actively seeks feedback and anecdotal insights gained from all members of the community. As Kate put it, it's like having lots of “ears listening to what people want.”

Of my respondents, the Rail Trail Trust knew the most about their visitors. This was largely compiled through surveys, and feedback from local residents and business owners. Perhaps because of the commercial aspect of the Trail, the Trust and business owners and operators have a very sincere interest not only in telling the heritage stories they feel are important, but in supporting and protecting what is of interest to, and valued by trail users, on whose custom they rely. The Otago Central Rail Trail Plan for the Future 2012–2022<sup>129</sup> identifies and discusses ways to care for not only the overt heritage aspects such as the Taieri Gorge Railway<sup>130</sup> and goldmining towns, which have been identified as important visitor attractions,<sup>131</sup> but other aspects of the experience as well. Other aspects of the trail identified as important to visitors include the natural setting – the “big skies, majestic mountain views”, the “wide open spaces and clustered communities”;<sup>132</sup> food and drink; facilities such as toilets, water, signage, and the quality of the trail surface; pre-visit information to aid planning; and not least the “feel good aspects – enjoying genuine, friendly, New Zealand country hospitality, family time and health benefits.”<sup>133</sup>

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129 Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, “Otago Central Rail Trail Plan for the Future 2012–2022,” (Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, 2012), <http://www.otagocentralrailtrail.co.nz/more-info/>

130 The Taieri Gorge Railway is the only section of the Otago Central Railway that remains as an operating rail line. Run as a tourist venture, it connects Middlemarch and Dunedin, and is a popular means of transport for riders on their way to or from the OCRT. <http://www.otagocentralrailtrail.co.nz/transport/#train>; <http://www.dunedinrailways.co.nz/>

131 Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, “Otago Central Rail Trail Plan for the Future,” 14.

132 Ibid., 13.

133 Ibid., 15.



## Summary

This chapter has explored how my respondents think about heritage value, and about their visitors. Respondents identified a mix of what Holden terms intrinsic and instrumental values.<sup>134</sup> The term 'intrinsic value' refers to the personal and subjective value we place on our interaction with the heritage; the way it makes us feel. Heritage sites offered visitors a feeling of personal connection to a place or story, and provided social and recreational experiences. 'Instrumental value' describes the use of heritage to achieve some other aim. Here my respondents identified economic benefits from tourism, and the social cohesion produced from a shared understanding of history. Respondents were open to the idea that visitors would make a diverse range of meanings at a site, while at the same time they often did have key values they wanted the visitor to take away. Understanding of visitors' experience, however, was limited. Often respondents did not know what meaning was being made by visitors at a site so they could neither judge the success of their own aims, or use this understanding to support the visitors own meanings and uses of the site.

The next chapter discusses my respondents' understanding of the factors they felt influenced how visitors made meaning.

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<sup>134</sup> John Holden, "How We Value Arts and Culture," 17–28.



## Chapter Four: Influences on meaning-making

As discussed in the previous chapter, my respondents did see their visitors as active makers of meaning. They were aware of the different layers, from the recreational to the social, that make up the heritage experience. They also saw that visitors' backgrounds greatly influenced how they would behave, how the space made them feel, and ultimately what meanings they would make. But on the whole, they did not have enough information to really understand what was going on for visitors.

Despite this lack of qualitative data, they did have some ideas about *how* their visitors made meaning. This chapter discusses the factors respondents saw as influencing visitor meaning-making, and how they expected their visitors to behave at and engage with a site. Imagination and emotion were identified as important. I did not raise the topic, but emotion and imagination were mentioned, in some capacity, by all my respondents. It was interesting to note that respondents were thinking about this personal experience of visitation, as emotion and affect are identified in the literature as a long overlooked part of the visitor experience.<sup>135</sup> As well as imagination and emotion, respondents also identified wider social narratives as playing a part in how visitors make meaning. In identifying factors they saw as influencing meaning-making, respondents were also identifying the factors they looked to control or modify to direct the response of their visitors.

Before I begin to examine my respondents' thoughts, I'd like to give some background on the sites they discuss by way of a brief examination of what has been written about these sites by visitors.

### *The Rail Trail*

Central Otago features strongly in the public imagination. Of all the heritage sites that DOC manages, the Otago Central Rail Trail is the site New Zealanders “most aspire to visit.”<sup>136</sup> Dreams of the trail are evident in guidebooks, and articles in which the author narrates their experience. In these accounts, it is not railway heritage, or sheep farming or gold-mining that the author most wants to touch, but a kind of dream, slightly different for each writer, of the rural idyll – of a remote and wild landscape, and of a way of life. It is not the specific heritage stories, but the feelings they evoke that these writers draw upon. In the introduction to his book *Trail*, which he describes as a celebration of the trail rather than a guidebook, Paul Sorrel describes the area's history of

<sup>135</sup> Smith, “The Cultural 'Work' of Tourism,” 210; Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson, “Introduction: Heritage, Affect and Emotion,” in *Heritage, Affect and Emotion: Politics, Practices and Infrastructures*, ed. Divya P. Tolia-Kelly, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2017), 1.

<sup>136</sup> Paul Mahoney, “Otago Central Rail Trail, 1893. Heritage Assessment,” (Wellington: Department of Conservation, 2015), 31.

pastoralists and gold-miners as smacking of both “privation and romance.”<sup>137</sup> As for the landscape, the hills are “sleeping giants”, and even the dust from a passing vehicle becomes a “fiery mist” when illuminated by the evening sun.<sup>138</sup>

For Graeme Lay, “this is Sydney-Marshall-Turner-Frame country, and it's great to be immersed in it.”<sup>139</sup> The experience for Lay is mediated through the vision of these painters and writers and what Lay knows and imagines. Part of the experience is what he has brought with him. Imaginings are also used to personal effect, to add excitement and to narrate the story of the journey. Roger Hall makes an adventure from bad weather in describing his party's flight before a coming storm: “We pedalled madly like charters from *Twister*.”<sup>140</sup>

The rail trail is undoubtedly a physical experience. As Graeme Lay writes, “My bum is very sore.”<sup>141</sup> It is also a personal achievement. One reviewer on TripAdvisor describes her delight at reaching the highest point and unwrapping her celebratory slice of lemon cake purchased at the café at Hayes Engineering Works to find a little note from the proprietor saying “Well done!”<sup>142</sup> Food and drink are an important part of the experience, a point reflected in the fact that almost every person reviewing Hayes Engineering Works on TripAdvisor mentions the café.<sup>143</sup>

The trail is also a social experience. It is both the people you travel with, and the people you meet, tourists and locals alike. As Kate said, visitors on the trail “love talking to people about farming, and going to the pub and talking to farmers or seeing them on the side of the road, you know the trail, and talking to them.”

### *Rangihoua and Te Rerenga/Cape Reinga*

For Rangihoua and Te Rerenga Wairua, there was much less material to draw upon, but it was still clear that these sites were experienced by visitors on a physical, emotional and imaginative level. At Rangihoua, views and recreation were important, but reviewers on TripAdvisor, all of whom identified as New Zealanders, also spoke of the importance of the site. Exactly why the site was

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137 Paul Sorrel and Graham Warman, *Trail: Riding the Otago Central Rail Trail* (Auckland: Penguin, 2011) 7.

138 Ibid., 129, 125.

139 Graeme Lay, “Riding in the Maniototo,” *North and South: New Zealand's Lifestyle Magazine*, January, 2011, 121.

140 Roger Hall, “Mind the Bumps,” *New Zealand Listener*, December 21, 2002, 47.

141 Lay, “Riding in the Maniototo,” 121.

142 “I Can Only Comment on the Cafe,” review by 'Franziska S', April 24, 2016, TripAdvisor, accessed September 20, 2016, [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g3136888-d3825696-r366633602-Hayes\\_Engineering\\_Works-Oturehua\\_Central\\_Otago\\_Otago\\_Region\\_South\\_Island.html#REVIEWS](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g3136888-d3825696-r366633602-Hayes_Engineering_Works-Oturehua_Central_Otago_Otago_Region_South_Island.html#REVIEWS)

143 Seven out of eight of the most recent TripAdvisor reviews for Hayes Engineering Works, at time of access on September 20, 2016, mentioned the café. These reviews were dated between April 23, 2016 – September 13, 2016.

important was not articulated, but reviewers clearly felt that in visiting they were performing something worthwhile and personally meaningful, and they encouraged others to visit also.

For the mostly international visitors at Te Rerenga Wairua the experience was a combination of what they had heard about the site, what they imagined and felt, and not least, the bus trip and the weather. Reviewers commented on the presence and behaviour of other tourists, which in some cases dampened the experience for them.<sup>144</sup> And for at least one reviewer, the sealed road, large carpark and paved walk to the lighthouse was at odds with the remote, poetic location he had imagined.<sup>145</sup>

### *Emotion and imagination*

Talking to my respondents about sites they had involvement with, it quickly became clear that emotion and imagination were integral to the way they related to the site, and a part of how they expected and intended their visitors to relate to it too. They spoke with a depth of feeling that demonstrated their enthusiasm for the stories of the site, and ultimately described how the places and stories made them feel and why they felt the site was important. John told me of Bay of Islands chief, Te Pahi,<sup>146</sup> “a wonderful individual with a broad mind and a broad vision”, while Andrew recounted the story of Jane, a young Māori woman and wife of English merchant and first American consul, James Reddy Clendon.<sup>147</sup> In telling me these stories, both Andrew and John invited me to relate on a personal level, and to imagine, both what it would have been like, and what I might have felt in the same situation. To prompt and enable their visitors to imagine was an important part of what my respondents sought to achieve in their interpretive work at the site. Giving their visitors clues as to what the site might have looked like sparked visitors imaginations and 'brought the site to life'.

Some of my respondents also mentioned feeling, or the idea that the experience of just being at the site held an emotive power or resonance. John described being at Rangihoua and looking out over the bay, “You are in the land where it all happened and you can absorb the atmosphere.” Feeling was also important for Taute. Even for international visitors with no prior connection to a site, interaction with a natural environment that was still intact could generate a special feeling:

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144 “More Than Just the Most Northern Point of NZ,” review by 'TravelTrooperX2', TripAdvisor, December 7, 2016, accessed January 10, 2017, [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g255105-d301479-r442481399-Cape\\_Reinga-North\\_Island.html#REVIEWS](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g255105-d301479-r442481399-Cape_Reinga-North_Island.html#REVIEWS)

145 “Had-to-be-there Place,” review by 'AH KUAN S', August 12, 2016, TripAdvisor, accessed January 10, 2017, [https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g255105-d301479-r404449103-Cape\\_Reinga-North\\_Island.html#REVIEWS](https://www.tripadvisor.co.nz/ShowUserReviews-g255105-d301479-r404449103-Cape_Reinga-North_Island.html#REVIEWS)

146 For a biography of Te Pahi see <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1t53/te-pahi>

147 For a biography of Clendon see <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1c19/clendon-james-reddy>

When they [tourists] come here and they go to the South Island, or they go to the far north, it still holds its spirituality, it still holds its physicalness, and the environment still speaks...when you go there, there is a sense of feeling.

While on one level my respondents talked of emotion as something a site automatically conveyed to the visitor, they also recognised the influence of a visitor's background. Thinking of the coach tour visitors from Asia who seemed reluctant to move out of sight of the bus that had brought them, Andrew concluded that what they are used to, and how wide and largely unmodified green spaces make them feel, is very different from what is felt by European or American visitors. In order to feel the significance of Rangihoua the way John does you have to know about the history, and have internalised this as important or significant.

Taute spoke of how interpersonal interpretation could be used to convey the feeling of the site to visitors who did not already share that connection. Hearing the stories of a site from someone connected with that place would provide a sense of emotional authenticity for the listener. As he explained, when you have somebody of that place telling you that story you will feel their words are connected to that place and you will “feel the realness.” When the story is told by those who are not connected to the place “there will be no sense of reality, no sense of connectedness, it will have no spiritualness about it...as my colleague would say, everyone is a unique storyteller.” This kind of emotional authenticity was also present on the rail trail. As mentioned earlier, Kate explained how visitors love talking to farmers. This authentic encounter with a local, and the hearing of their stories from their own lips, is a highly valued part of the experience for many rail trail visitors.

### *Prior imaginings*

As well as the use of imagination at a site, some of my respondents also identified what was imagined by the visitor prior to their arrival as having a significant impact on the meanings they made once they did get there. As mentioned earlier, visitors perform Central Otago as a place of remote and wild beauty. Describing his experience on the rail trail, Graeme Lay mentioned the artists and writers who have helped to shape Central Otago in his imagination. It is no accident that one of the early buildings to be restored was the Wedderburn railway goods shed. Architecturally and historically, it is no more significant than any of the other goods sheds, but it is well known to many as the shed in Graeme Sydney's 1975 painting 'July on the Maniototo'. Recognising the iconic nature of the building, the shed was bought by the Wedderburn community, relocated back to very near its original site, and restored to match its image in the Sydney painting.<sup>148</sup> For visitors on the trail who are familiar with the painting, seeing the shed 'in the flesh', and being “immersed”, as Lay

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<sup>148</sup> Sandra Taylor, “Life Imitates Art in the Maniototo,” *New Zealand Geographic*, November/December, 2002, 20–21.

put it, in the landscape of that painting (even if not in a snowy July) connects the visitor with the landscape of the imagination and the feeling the image evokes.

The power of a site's profile in the public imagination is well known to Chris. Discussing Ngā Tapuwāe, the World War I trails project undertaken by Locales, Chris compared the number of downloads of the Gallipoli and Western Front interpretive resources. There's no reason, he reflected, why the Western Front should not receive the the same interest as Gallipoli, "it's massively more significant than Gallipoli in many ways", but "the Western Front is an unknown, and the uptake on that has been minimal." The story of Gallipoli on the other hand is ingrained in the public consciousness.

Chris saw that part of the issue is down to the way we think about marketing. In his experience, marketing has often been considered separately from interpretation, when in reality they are closely related and should be considered together. What we bring with us to the site and what we imagine before we even get there is often a vital part of how we experience and make sense of a site. Research commissioned by DOC, asked participants about their awareness of and interest in various DOC managed sites. Participants were quite clear that they wanted to know what they could expect prior to arrival. As one participant put it, "Would I just be looking at a big field?"<sup>149</sup> Chris is very aware of this challenge, as projects he has worked on – the Waikato War driving tour app for instance – have involved interpreting archaeological sites that have little more to show than grassy earthworks. In relation to these types of sites, he said:

You've kind of got to sell the idea of even going there, and you have to, so when you go there, you go 'oh, there's that rock', and it's ok just to see that rock.

Retaining control of the marketing, and incorporating this aspect from the outset of a project rather than as an afterthought, is an approach Chris is keen to develop for future projects.

John too, is aware of the power of the well known national narrative, and discussed the challenge of fund-raising for a site and a story that many people have little knowledge or awareness of. You could say Rangihoua just did not exist in the public imagination; therefore, it did not exist. Plans to expand the website content aim to give the site a higher profile and help potential visitors to plan their trip.

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149 Mobius Research and Strategy Ltd., "Department of Conservation Social Values of Heritage Research Report, August 2015," 14.

Wider social narratives and values were also seen by my respondents to influence how visitors understood and interpreted a site. Both more subtle and more pervasive than specific stories or messages conveyed through marketing, these narratives informed the type of stories felt to be important or worth telling. It was narratives operating on this level that my respondents were thinking of when they spoke about the value of heritage to change cultural fabric, and inform visitor attitudes and behaviours; it was these narratives they sought to modify or reconstruct.

As discussed in the previous chapter, respondents were conscious of this cultural and social work of heritage, particularly where it touched on race relations. Many of the sites spoken about by my respondents, including Rangihoua Heritage Park, Otago Central Rail Trail and Te Rerenga Wairua, are also DOC Icon Sites. Through its Icon Sites DOC aims to tell “a range of great stories about kiwi identity.”<sup>150</sup> It looks to use its Icon Sites to create national narratives and do identity work. Rather than one grand piece of work, Andrew spoke of this as an iterative process. By telling stories well at an increasing number of sites, you are, he said, “going to almost by stealth start to create a national identity.” DOC’s Icon Sites are also envisioned as tourist sites. As Paul explained, “We are trying to grow heritage appreciation by developing cultural tourism.” Recruiting tourism to the cause of heritage and national identity recognises the power of affirmation that results from having others perform, through their visitation, the importance of selected places;<sup>151</sup> all stories need an audience. Andrew and John talked of the potential for sites such as Rangihoua to feature in the school curriculum, where they would both reflect and reinforce the stories and values society believes important. John felt that Rangihoua would one day “become part of what you need to see.” The act of visitation was seen as important, people’s presence at the site and performance there working to validate its significance. The cultural impact of visitor performances was most clearly recognised by my respondents with reference to the rail trail, where visitor performances have transformed local perception of Central Otago from a “barren land with no history”<sup>152</sup> to an area of scenic beauty and an idyllic slice of rural life both past and present.

On the rail trail, the cultural work of visitor performances is recognised and celebrated, but in cases where meanings made fall outside of those acceptable to heritage managers and the local community, the issue becomes a thorny one as although unsanctioned, these performances still do

150 “Icon Heritage Sites,” Department of Conservation, accessed January 15, 2017, <http://www.doc.govt.nz/our-work/heritage/icon-heritage-sites/>; see also Department of Conservation, “Statement of Intent 2016–2020, Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2016,” 60.

151 Desmond Wee, “Touring Heritage, Performing Home,” in *The Cultural Moment in Tourism*, ed. Laurajane Smith, Emma Waterton and Steve Watson (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2012), 81.

152 Owen Graham, *Otago Central Rail Trail: From Steam Trains to Pedal Power: The Story of the Otago Central Rail Trail* (Dunedin: Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, 2004), 12.



cultural work. As discussed in Chapter Three, more than one of my respondents mentioned Te Rerenga Wairua as a site they felt was not being performed as they would like. What visitor performances did amount to, however, was not discussed, partly due to the fact that respondents did not have a robust understanding of what meanings their visitor were making. For at least one visitor to Te Rerenga Wairua commenting on TripAdvisor, the performance of other tourists, who they saw eating and drinking at the site, was of consequence.<sup>153</sup> It did matter to them that the spiritual story and corresponding request to refrain from eating and drinking at the site was respected. I asked Taute, in thinking about a site like Te Rerenga Wairua, how important it was to him that visitors took away what was intended about the site. He replied, “I think it's very important, but more important than that is who tells that story.” Whom heritage organisations look to tell stories with, and how they work with others to define the stories and the values of a heritage site is the subject of the next chapter.

## Summary

Addressing my third sub-question, this chapter reviewed my respondents' ideas about how visitors make meaning, and the factors they saw as influencing this process. It also gives an account of the main sites my respondents discussed as seen through the eyes of visitors to those sites. This revealed an experience of visitation that is physical, social and emotional and draws on what the visitor knows and imagines. Emotion and imagination were identified by my respondents as an important part of how they expected their visitors to interact with a site. Visitors were to use their imagination to picture what the site would have been like, and to bring it to life. It was also expected that visitors would relate on an emotional level to the stories of the site, and would almost automatically be able to feel the significance of the site and its history. At the same time, respondents recognised that visitors' backgrounds and what they knew and imagined about the site prior to their visit played a role in the meanings they made once there. Chris suggested that greater use of and control over marketing could help to prepare people for the visit, let them know what to expect, and build anticipation around the stories the heritage manager looked to convey through the site. Taute discussed the power of interpersonal interpretation to address this same issue of visitors' varying backgrounds, and to create an emotional connection through hearing the stories of that place told by someone who is connected to it. My respondents also discussed how national narratives impacted visitor meaning-making. This was of particular interest in relation to DOC's Icon Sites, at which respondents looked to tourism and visitor performance to do cultural work and reinforce the established significance of these sites.

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<sup>153</sup> “More Than Just the Most Northern Point of NZ,” TripAdvisor.



## Chapter Five: Partnerships

In the previous two chapters, I looked at how my respondents conceived of both heritage, and their visitors, and what role they saw for themselves and their organisation in defining and communicating heritage value. I established that, while my respondents did acknowledge visitors as active and capable meaning-makers, their understanding of the meanings visitors made at a site was often limited, or restricted to a focus on how they could best communicate the values of the site to different types of visitors. My respondents were aware of the power of visitor performances to do cultural work, and looked to use tourism to raise the profile of a site and its associated stories. They were also aware of the impact of deviant performances, and identified the issue of whose story, and what control over the telling should be retained. In this chapter, I take up the theme of who is doing the telling and look at this in more detail in relation to organisations' relationship with their partners. I discuss the motivation behind partnerships, and the willingness of both sides to share authority for meaning-making.

### *Ways partners can contribute*

DOC's early partnership work was conservation based. Motivation for establishing partnerships was primarily about getting more hands to do conservation work. It is still the case that more volunteer hours are spent tree planting than any other activity,<sup>154</sup> but my interviewees responses demonstrated that thinking about partnerships is now more nuanced. There are other ways of contributing apart from direct physical restoration work. The meanings visitors and partners make, and their performance of sites, also do *cultural* work.

Paul found himself rethinking what he was saying about the possible ways communities could contribute:

It might be quite limited in a lot of our sites, what the community can actually do actively to contribute to their conservation. I'm just thinking if something like Ruapekapeka Pa, and the idea of the community having working bees or taking on projects – not all that much of that might happen...

He then discussed the idea of storytelling at the site as work the community could undertake:

No, I guess I've got a mental block here because telling the story is part of the heritage.

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<sup>154</sup> Department of Conservation, "Statement of Intent 2016–2020, Annual Report for the Year Ended 30 June 2016," 70.

The idea that partners can help with storytelling is important and recognises partners' agency and the meanings they make as valid.

### *Understanding the other party*

Entering into early partnerships, DOC found that some of its potential partners had goals that didn't always align with DOC's priorities.<sup>155</sup> Research published by DOC in 2005, just a couple years after the introduction of their Conservation with Communities Strategy, discusses this issue. It raises the question of “whether DOC should alter its priorities in order to accommodate a community initiative or, instead, support projects that fit within DOC’s own priorities.”<sup>156</sup> This is similar to the challenge my respondents faced in wanting to communicate to their visitors what they felt was most important about a site, while remaining open to the other meanings that visitors might make there. DOC aims to encourage more diverse groups to visit its heritage sites.<sup>157</sup> It does not want only those who already share DOC's vision and values to come, but to reach new audiences as well. Only partnering with those who are already 'converts' would not achieve this. DOC's experience with partnerships, and the changing conception of visitors that a greater awareness of meaning-making has prompted, has led to increased validity being placed on the views of others. Acknowledging the other party in this way suggests they have something of value to add beyond extra hands to do the job that you have already defined the parameters of.

Accommodating and negotiating the different opinions of their partners was not always easy for my respondents, but this challenging dynamic was also something they identified as part of the value and strength of partnerships. As Kate said, “everything is always an opportunity if you turn it round and think who you've got to work with that can assist people.” Partnerships were important to my respondents because not only did they bring more people on board, but these people had perspectives, ideas and skills that added value to the project. Kate was quick to emphasise the skills that others could contribute. More people involved meant a greater range of skills and ideas to draw on. It was a positive thing she said, to be exposed to a range of perspectives. It was also good to have partners that “challenge your ideas”, and come up with things you never would have thought of. Chris too, while he certainly agreed about the challenge of complex stakeholder relationships, saw that this diversity resulted in interpretation that was rich and offered a range of perspectives to the visitor.

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155 Carla Wilson, “Developing Effective Partnerships between the Department of Conservation and Community Groups,” (Wellington: Department of Conservation, 2005), 41.

156 Ibid.

157 Department of Conservation, “Stretch Goal 6,” 2.

Significantly, my participants also recognised that they were not the sole owners of any story, or the stories of any place; they needed the voices of others. Andrew cited the “strong cultural overlays” in Northland and the many different iwi groups. It was important, he said, to talk to the 'neighbours'. John too, was clear that Rangihoua held significance for different groups – Māori, Pākehā, church groups – and that all should be involved. Of the importance of the Trust's partnership with local iwi Ngāti Torehina he said, “with a project like this, which is really a Māori and Pākehā project, you can't hope to succeed without the full support of Māori people.”

As well as valuing what their partners had to bring to the relationship, my respondents showed that they were open to thinking about the value of heritage for their partners, and in some cases taking these values on board as part of their own goals for what the heritage could achieve. The social value that eventuated from the rail trail was not something that DOC originally had in mind, but is now a value that they recognise and look for in future projects. Paul spoke of the benefit studies the OCRT Trust undertook with Otago University:

You've got the economic benefit, but they have reported on two other benefits that I think are really quite relevant – so the students picked up on this. Firstly they picked up that it had social benefits, because it's created, for example 68 bed and breakfast businesses, so that has helped to make farms more viable, so its kept the population up because farms haven't had to amalgamate. And it's also meant that their children can come home in the holidays and get work, and that sort of thing. And they've got children more interested in taking over the farm, so their whole community, the decline in numbers has been reversed because it's created job opportunities, so they feel as though their social cohesion has been restored. And then the other one is their sense of self-esteem. Because sixteen-thousand people a year want to come and see where they live, and enjoy their scenery and enjoy their lifestyle and enjoy their towns.

These social values that emerged were, Paul said:

probably no-brainers, thinking, reflecting on it, but yeah, they weren't part of the original plan. The plan was to provide cyclists with an experience.

Taute too recognised the social values that could result from communities being involved in doing heritage. But more than just getting extra hands, or even political support for DOC's work, Taute saw the feeling of connection that communities can develop with sites as something of real value for those involved:

I think that's the uniqueness of what the Department is doing in trying to include others into this conservation space. And so that it's not only my work colleagues that touch, feel and experience it, but everybody else.

But finding a way to define, and to measure these community values within a framework not designed for them was an ongoing challenge. Paul said that while DOC now do tell “that story about the local identity and social cohesion” created by the rail trail, it is not something they have measured. If heritage is conceived primarily as fabric, it is easy to measure success by number of sites restored. But a new understanding of heritage and of visitors requires a new framework within which to report value. Visitor numbers alone do not capture the meanings made at sites. The Stretch Goal for heritage recognises this challenge, and indicates that there is more work to be done:

Measurements are likely to include trends in popularity and visitor numbers. However, the level of engagement required, and the potential to provide a meaningful and memorable visitor experience needs to be clarified before success can be meaningfully measured.<sup>158</sup>

More work is also needed, Paul felt, to design a process to formally include a community in identifying heritage sites and values. Discussing the work to identify new Icon Sites, and to include both the Treaty Partner and other stakeholders in that process Paul said:

Gosh, it is new territory, and I think, almost in a global context it's new territory. I recently presented at the heritage planners forum...I said, 'who's done a project like this?', and no one put their hand up.

The challenge, he said:

is to maintain your integrity of the heritage process, while enabling a free discussion. And one of the challenges has been even understanding what our heritage process [to identify value] is.

### *Mutual benefit*

Understanding the benefits of the heritage for their partners was crucial for my respondents, as they saw that a shared vision of value lay at the heart of productive partnership. As Taute explained, there must be mutual benefit and a shared vision:

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<sup>158</sup> Department of Conservation, “Stretch Goal 6,” 7.

I guess the challenges with any organisation or group be they Māori or otherwise, is trying to find that common space, that common understanding that there's a benefit.

To find and define this mutual benefit, organisations needed to understand each other well. They also needed clarity around their own goals. To do this, my respondents said, required good communication, the ability to listen, and to be open and flexible.

While agreements between organisations happened at a formal level, in the experience of my respondents, the communication and trust required often began on a personal level. John stressed the importance of warm personal relationships. He described all those the Marsden Cross Trust worked with, from DOC to contractors, as making up a network of support and advice. As John said, “you get so much more from people if they enjoy the involvement, if they like dealing with you.” He described his relationship with Ngāti Torehina kaumātua Hugh Rihari, as that of personal friendship. This was critical he said, and “based on that trust we worked together to develop what we wanted to do there” [at Rangihoua].

Andrew stressed the importance of understanding what was happening on the ground and that decisions shouldn't just be made at head office based on what had worked in other places. Personalisation was important. Andrew discussed his experience of DOC/community partnerships and explained that the projects and sites that run smoothly are the ones where he has a long history of personal engagement; where people know him and he is trusted. In this environment communication is relaxed and as easy as a phone call and a chat. He emphasised the challenge of attempting to initiate a project where no prior relationship with the community exists:

One of the biggest pitfalls that DOC and other government agencies seem to be falling into at the moment is where they've got one good example of something working, and they go 'ooh, that must be how it goes everywhere', and they try and just pick it up and cookie cutter it across the country and they don't realise that actually the reason why that site worked is because of however many years of interaction and engagement.

### *Organisational capability*

Trust and communication within organisations was important too. Taute discussed the work DOC is doing to build its cultural awareness and capability as an organisation. This encompasses both organisation structure and policy as well as the awareness and understanding of staff at every level. Taute saw connectivity between national and regional operations as vital. He described DOC's

network of Pou Kura Taiao – Indigenous Conservation Ethics Managers or Cultural Advisors who are based around the country. The staff in these roles understand their region and have strong connections within it, many with their iwi. Through these people, an understanding of regional operations is channelled back to National Office. As Taute explained, agreements between DOC and iwi happen at a national level, but the implementation of those agreements happen at a regional level, and what this looks like will be a little different in every case. This diversity and complexity requires flexibility and facilitation on the part of the Department; facilitation that is made possible through communication that is as strong within the organisation as it is outside it. Taute explained the importance of an organisation having the ability to 'hear' the groups they are working with:

I think that's what I love about my job – when I do get in front of iwi and DOC staff, because my ears are Māori ears, and although iwi will be speaking English, our staff will still never hear what I can hear.

Having people within an organisation who can 'translate' is vital. The ability of each party to understand one another, and the potential for miscommunication appear most pronounced between cultures, but it was a challenge my respondents saw as applying to any relationship. Central Otago farmers were a 'cultural community' that the OCRT Trust sought to communicate the value of the trail to. In this case, it was perhaps farmers' wives who acted as the 'translators'; who identified benefits for them and their families and as Kate said, “were really constructive about it.”

Chris too, talked of listening skills. For him, being aware of your view as *a* view and being able to listen in a way that was open, was really important. Reflecting on the nine years he has headed Locales, Chris said:

What I possibly have learnt the most is to shut up and listen...the more time I can buy at the beginning of a project just to listen...the value of that is exponential in terms of what you deliver because you just see things...and you pick up the things that if you are too, I guess inexperienced, naive and arrogant you just bring all your own stuff to a project and you don't realise how much stuff you bring...acknowledging your bias is pretty hard to do.

Strong relationships based on good communication and trust may seem very obvious components of successful heritage partnership, but this does not mean that they are easy to do, nor are they something that DOC has always excelled at. Thinking back to the initiation of the rail trail project, Kate recalled the reticence by members of the community about working with DOC. “They were



worried about partnering with DOC because DOC weren't seen necessarily as being positive to work with." Management of the trail was split between the Dunedin and Alexandra DOC offices. Inconsistent messages were common and communication difficult and frustrating. As Kate described, it "was a really torturous time." There was a lot of uncertainty, and loss of community control was feared. Kate recalled, "there were some farmers who were absolutely against it because they presumed they [DOC] were just going to take over the land." Those opposed could not see a shared benefit, and only an organisation who they did not believe had any skill at sharing authority.

Andrew too, spoke of projects where he has faced community resistance or disinterest; projects he has wanted to do, but that it hasn't been the right time for. For him, deciding what to do when is often prompted by the community, with some projects waiting on the "backburner" for years before coming to fruition when the interest of the community and perhaps personalities involved, and available money align. Kate described how the work of the Rail Trail Trust is also driven by opportunity. People have come forward with ideas, station buildings have come up for sale and been purchased, work has been done corresponding to the interest to do it. A large part of the success of the Rail Trail is undoubtedly the buy-in from locals. But as discussed earlier, community support had to be built.

While finding the 'right time' for the community was important, for my respondents, it was not simply a matter of waiting, but of creating the right time; building relationships and demonstrating the value. As Andrew explained earlier, it was the relationships and trust he had built over many years that eventually led to the initiation of projects. There is an important lesson too, in recognising what is of value to the community. As the example of the Rail Trail demonstrates, it was not the heritage fabric – the tunnels and bridges, however impressive the engineering, that drove people's enthusiasm but rather the social aspects, the *doing* of heritage as a community. As Kate described:

Every small station that they opened they had a community activity, they had a welcome, they had afternoon teas, they got people in there walking and doing it, celebrating it and celebrating it being part of the community, and celebrating bringing something back into that district.

Taute offered another suggestion for gaining community involvement: "Go via the children. They're the best advertising and promotion you can ever get...because they will not stop talking about it." This too is a community-focused approach. As well as offering children the opportunity to be leaders and to have their voices heard, it positions heritage as something families can do as a way of spending quality time together. Thinking what value they could add through their management of a heritage site was an important question for my respondents. They wanted to enable communities to

find what was of benefit to them. In contrast to the situation where they might be struggling to gain community engagement and support for a project, Taute saw that being able to demonstrate the capability to engage will see potential partners come to them. It is a point Andrew also emphasised, “it’s happening more and more. They’ve got a site that they’re passionate about, they come to us.”

### *Flexibility*

Being flexible, my respondents found, encouraged a greater level of engagement. Rather than being a compromise, this flexibility served to advance their work. The skill was, as discussed earlier, in finding the mutual benefit.

Andrew discussed DOC's flexibility and how he has seen this change during his time with the Department:

DOC generally is reasonably open. We don't have a problem these days – it's a big change, and it's changed since I've been here, we don't have to have the green and yellow sign if people don't want it, we don't have to have the first message if people don't want it. We're getting better, we're obviously still bounded by legislation and funding, but actually most other things we're reasonably open to.

Being a bit relaxed and letting communities drive things and do them their way was an approach all my respondents saw merit in. There was nothing to be gained, Paul explained, from being rigid:

So, if you've got a bit that's incorrect here, I mean, you've got to get real you know, the overall equation is massive gain. It's people who see heritage just as fabric, and then they say 'oh well, nothing was happening, but now you're doing it, and you're doing it wrong' [all laugh]. No, you get it all the time. And I'm involved with community heritage groups, and you just have to put up with getting stuff wrong, you know, and get over it. Because you'll alienate – your members will bugger off.

Kate found energy was highest for ideas that were wholly community generated. Working with DOC to develop some new interpretation along the Trail, the Trust held a number of community meetings to discuss ideas. These produced a “limited response”, and Kate suggested this might in some part be due to a kind of consultation fatigue. She saw that when it came to interpretation “people often react by criticising rather than participating.” There had, however, been “huge

numbers” turning out to discuss the stars and interplanetary cycleway project. This project was first mooted by local retired farmer and keen amateur astronomer Ian Begg, and has since gained wide community interest and support. It promotes the move to make the Alexandra district a dark-sky reserve<sup>159</sup> and will feature a model of the solar system at a scale of 1:100 million, with planets spaced along the trail accordingly, some up to 70km apart.<sup>160</sup> Otago Museum have given their support, and the project has also received funding from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment’s Unlocking Curious Minds fund.<sup>161</sup> This project is aspirational; it describes something of what the community would like to be known for in the future – a place of science, innovation and astronomy as well as history. The story of a place is never finished, but stretches into the future. The stories of the era of rail and gold will continue to be important, but the present and the future hold important stories too.

For Taute, value is in the doing of heritage, and everybody should be invited to contribute to this. Using this model, the best way to communicate stories is for people to be a part of that story, contributing their own skills in an ever-evolving narrative. Taute is very clear about the fact that society is continually undergoing change and that we need to continue to include new skills and voices in the conservation conversation and practice:

It's a bi-cultural, multi-cultural environment that is coming up...so how long is it going to take before we see a community conservation project environment start to evolve out of that SuperCity [Auckland]. So the Asians could be thinking about how they do conservation back home. So it may be seeing an Asian influence on conservation starting to evolve out of Auckland.

### *Communities in control*

For the community to retain control of their heritage, how they represent it and themselves, and the actions they invited outsiders/visitors to perform was highly valued by my respondents on both sides of the organisation/community divide.

Giving the example of the rail trail, Oli said:

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<sup>159</sup> Pam Jones, “Astro Tourism Potential in Central,” *The News Lakes District & Central Otago*, December 30, 2016, <http://www.thenews.co.nz/news/astro-tourism-potential-in-central/>

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

<sup>161</sup> Kate Wilson, “Plan to Turn Rail Trail into Star Performer,” *The News Lakes District & Central Otago*, August 4, 2016, <http://www.thenews.co.nz/community/plan-to-turn-rail-trail-into-star-performer/>

I think that really hits the mark of where DOC wants to go in terms of providing the strategic advice, but empowering the communities...we can provide them with that support, but it's really important that they are the ones doing it.

The 'doing' of both storytelling and planning was important to Kate. The community should be involved, and the stories told of relevance to them. “Every railway can tell a whole lot of stories” she said, “but it has to be a story that's personal to that community.” In planning for the future, it was important to articulate what was valued and to use this to guide and actively manage the trail's development. For the OCRT Trust, doing this requires a “whole-of-community approach.”<sup>162</sup> The Otago Central Rail Trail Plan for the Future outlines what is valued by both the community and visitors. The trail is to be kept free of commercial material, no hotel chains are allowed and no strip development along the trail, preserving the feeling of wilderness space broken only by compact little towns. Kate said, “I love the fact that we set the policy very early on that there are to be no signage for businesses on the trail.” Visitors are there, she said, for the stunning views and it is this value that should dictate what people see on the trail, not commercialism.

Taute too, discussed the importance of engaging with communities and inviting them to tell their stories:

If we look around the country, there's history there and heritage that's connected with it. And it can come in the form of mining, logging, and a lot of the engineers before the time of the computer were outstanding, there were some amazing engineers there in the 1900s, so there's heritage there. At the same time there were Māori communities living around – and that heritage, that history is there as well to be told. So it's how do you capture that – how as the Department, how do they capture those two components of the heritage and tell the story in unison with each other. And so that there's – but the bigger challenge is being able to tell the right story, and the true story, and that means engagement.

## Summary

This chapter has discussed the relationship between organisations and their partners. This is of necessity a much closer relationship than that of organisations and visitors, and places increased and focused attention on the role of others in defining and performing heritage values. My respondents had clearly given much thought to the partnership relationship, both

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<sup>162</sup> Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, “Otago Central Rail Trail Plan for the Future,” 7.

in terms of what they felt was currently working well, and what they wanted to do in future. For DOC, partnerships were a way of getting more people on board, but significantly, they were also a way for others to take a hand in storytelling. As well as undertaking physical care of the heritage, partners could contribute meaning. For both DOC and the Trusts they work with, being able to communicate successfully and find mutual benefit was essential. Often communication and trust began at a personal level. Expanding this to the organisational level was sometimes harder, and respondents from DOC identified that ongoing work needed to be done to grow cultural capability throughout the organisation. Designing a process and framework within which to work with partners to identify and measure heritage value was another challenge. Trusts too, found including and negotiating the values of their multiple stakeholders a challenge. But they valued these relationships for the different skills and perspectives each party could bring. My respondents also spoke of flexibility. Being flexible recognised and included what communities and partners could contribute, and described a practice that had the ability to change and grow with communities, and ultimately remain relevant into the future.



## Conclusion

This research has explored the question of how those who manage and interpret heritage sites are reflecting in their practice changing conceptions of what heritage is and how visitors construct and make sense of it. This has been examined from the point of view of both a national heritage organisation the Department of Conservation, and two small heritage trusts that work in partnership with the Department. Results of the research show that while heritage managers are embracing new ideas about visitor meaning-making, there remains a tension between the desire to inform and influence visitors, and to remain open to meanings they may wish to make.

Chapter One introduced the study, and established that while there has been increasing scholarly interest in visitor meaning-making, less attention has been given to how the insights of this new research might be applied in practice. This study seeks to address this gap. It asked what heritage managers understand about how their visitors make meaning at a site, and to what extent they are incorporating new thinking into their practice. Chapter Two discussed the research questions in more detail, and outlined the research design, methods and process of analysis. Chapters Three, Four and Five presented the findings of the research.

Respondents recognised that visitors would make a variety of meanings at a site, but their understanding of these meanings was limited and mostly anecdotal. Respondents saw that the recreational and social were an important part of many visitors' heritage experience, as were emotion and imagination. That visitors would use emotion and imagination to help them interpret their experience was seen as a given and an important part of the personal experience of a site. What was imagined about a site prior to a visit was also identified as influential, as were the wider social and cultural narratives in play. Respondents discussed the value of heritage to promote a better understanding of the past and to inform beliefs and behaviours in the present. They hoped that through the practice of heritage particular social and cultural narratives could be promoted, and others destabilised, making for a more tolerant and empathetic society. To achieve this, visitors would have to be open to these narratives and perhaps be willing to question what they currently believed. The literature suggests that visitors look for heritage sites to provide affirmation, rather than to challenge their values or to teach them new things. This was not directly addressed by respondents, and there was often an unspoken tension between the goal of challenging visitors' beliefs, and the competing desire to be open to the meanings visitors may choose to make. In some cases, respondents felt visitors were not taking away the intended message of the site. This was seen as a lost opportunity to both enrich visitors' lives, and advance the institution's mission. What visitors were taking away from their visit, and what the heritage meant to them was an unknown.

Only recently, prompted by their new policy work, has gaining a fuller understanding of visitors become a priority for DOC. Working out how best to gather qualitative visitor data was identified as a challenge, although respondents indicated a growing recognition that even a little could go a long way here.

A limited understanding of their visitors inhibited organisations' ability to think critically about and to measure their own success, and to further support or engage with visitors around what the site meant to them. Their relationship with their partners, however, was necessarily much closer and respondents had several ideas of how best to work with others in this context, and how to include and incorporate what was of value to the other party. Perhaps unsurprisingly, but no less significantly for that, the first thing my respondents emphasised was the need to have a good understanding of their partners. To be able to articulate the benefit for both sides was seen as vital. Understanding what their partners valued, what they needed, but also what they had to contribute formed the basis of these relationships. There still existed the same challenge or tension that respondents had faced in relation to their visitors – the idea that they were open to the meanings visitors wished to make, yet often had particular values they did want their audience to go away with – but it was tempered by greater understanding and a certain level of flexibility.

This research is limited in scope, focusing as it does on one heritage organisation and a small number of individuals. The Department of Conservation is a large organisation with a great diversity of individuals, projects and partnerships. Sites discussed are perhaps more the exception than the rule, and cannot be used to generalise about the work of the Department, or of heritage organisations in New Zealand. There is scope for further studies to look both at different cases, and also to take a different approach and to gain an overview of current heritage practice in New Zealand across different organisations. Meaning-making theory does not adequately address the tension respondents faced in negotiating their own goals and those of their visitors. Likewise, literature discussing interpretation best practice, while acknowledging visitors make their own meanings, does not address how heritage managers and interpreters might engage with these meanings and the cultural and political work that visitors do. This question is one that could receive further attention, as could consideration of effective ways and means for heritage organisations to undertake and apply visitor research.

By exploring how theory translates to practice and seeking the thoughts and experience of heritage managers, this dissertation contributes an important perspective. New ideas about visitor meaning-making have significant implications for practice, and understanding how these are being received and applied by heritage managers and interpreters is critical. Theory should not be divorced from



practice, but in conversation with it. Without this communication the impact of theory is limited, nor can theory be refined if it does not turn its attention to the challenges, both technical and conceptual, encountered in practice. This research advocates for a reflexive practice that not only recognises visitors as active meaning makers, but understands and engages with the meanings they make, and acknowledges the cultural and political work that they do. Where heritage professionals were able to think reflexively about their own values, they opened themselves to new possibilities and ways of thinking about the heritage, that visitors and partners were able to bring. More than consumers of heritage experiences, visitors and partners actively produce heritage. More work is needed to reconfigure organisational frameworks and processes to better include and be able to report on, plan for and protect, values identified and produced by visitors and partners. As well as producers and directors of heritage stories, managers and interpreters should also be listeners. In a true partnership neither side should emerge unaltered. For my respondents, partnerships meant ceding some control, but in doing so, opening up to new possibilities. Sharing authority for meaning-making meant operating in a place of risk, excitement and opportunity, where results are not predetermined and the unexpected is possible.



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## **Appendix A: Simplified interview schedule**

### **Their background**

Can you tell me about your background, what fields you trained in and your path towards the work you do now?

What does your current role involve?

What are you working on at the moment?

### **Vision and mission**

Can you tell me about the vision and mission of your organisation?

DOC has a goal that “history is brought to life and protected.” Thinking about a site you have been involved with, and your philosophy at [organisation] in general, can you describe for me what, in your opinion, 'brought to life and protected' means to you?

DOC also has a goal that visitors will “engage with heritage and value the benefits of interacting with it.” What in your opinion are the benefits that can be derived from interaction with heritage places?

What does success look like?

How do you measure that?

### **Visitors**

Thinking of a site you have been involved with, what do you know about your visitors and the meanings they make at the site?

Are there other things you would like to know about your visitors, and if so, how would that information inform your practice?

### **Working with others**

What do you see as the opportunities or advantages of working closely with others?

And what about the challenges?

With reference to a project you have been involved with, what does sharing authority look like to you?

What skills are needed?