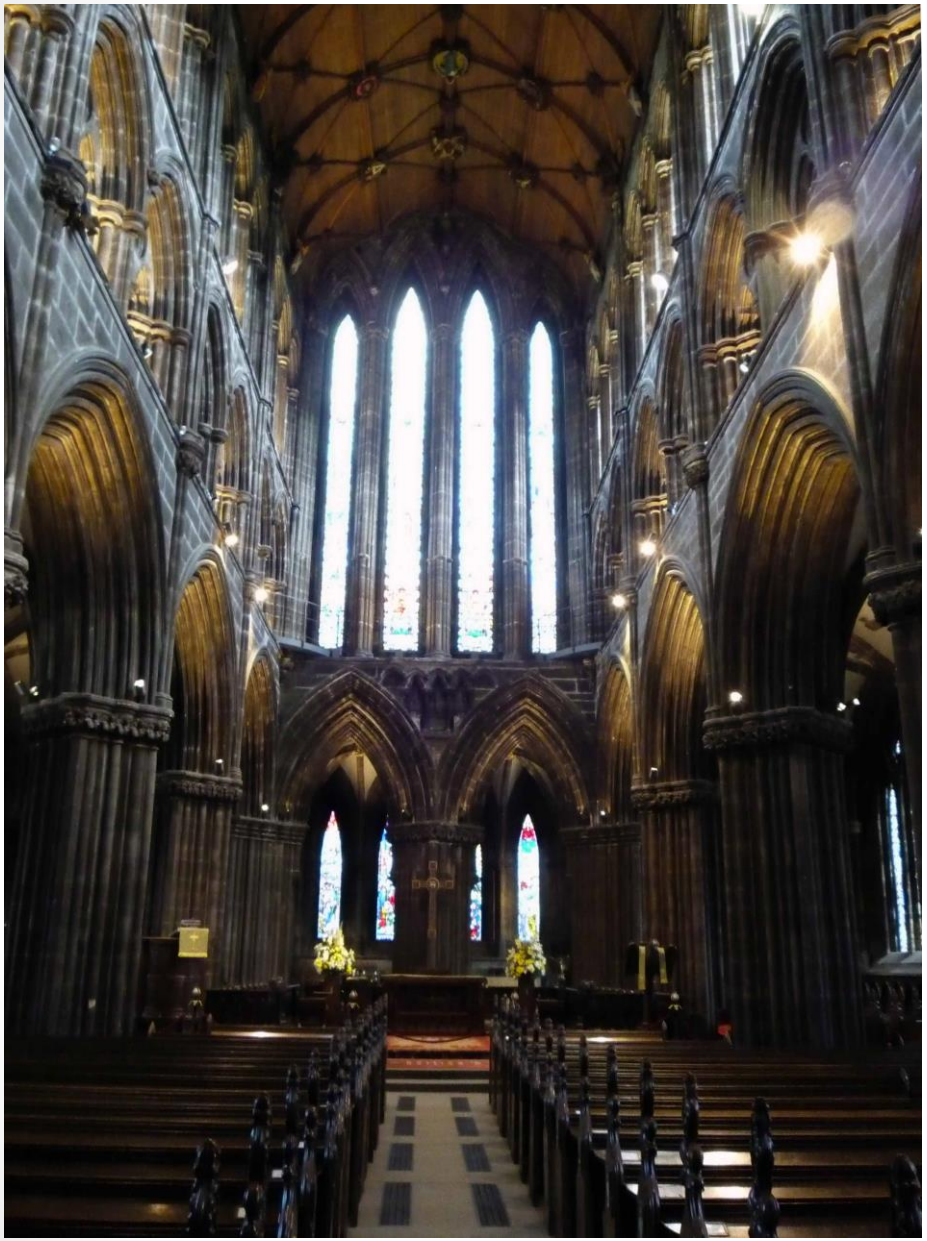
UNIVERSITY of STIRLING

Valuing the Social (and the material)

ScRAP Workshop, 23rd November 2019

Siân Jones, Professor of Environmental History and Heritage, University of Stirling

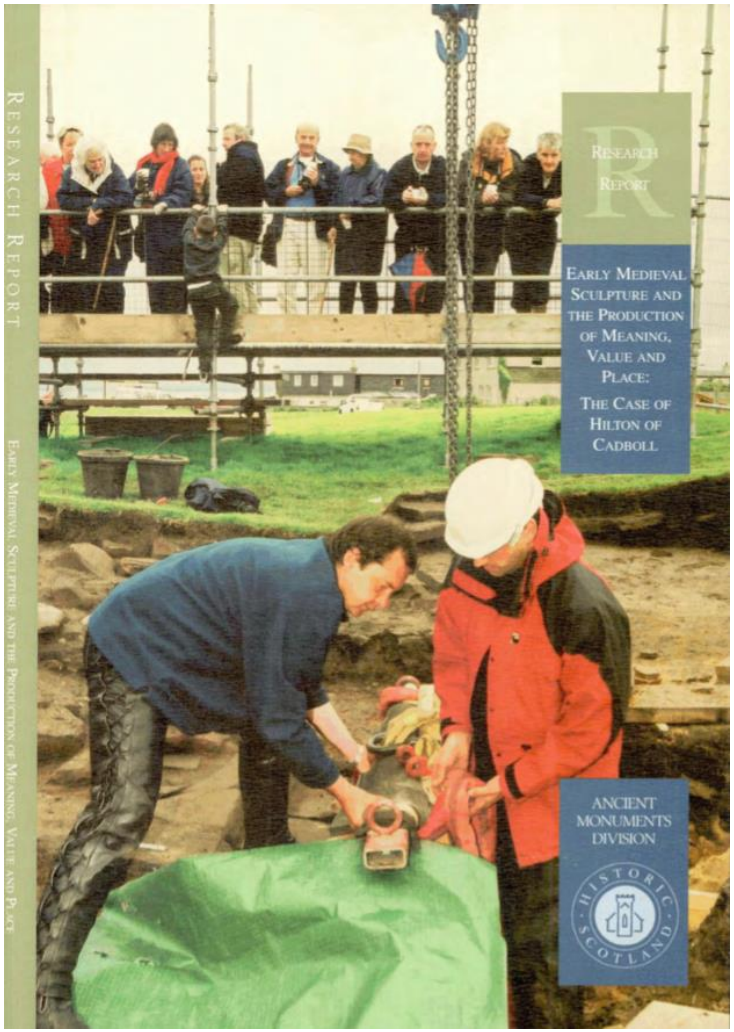


"I know it's just stone [a little embarrassed], but I think it absorbs things, it's like its alive […] It's absorbed the presence of the people who've been here in the past […] Just remember, stone speaks."

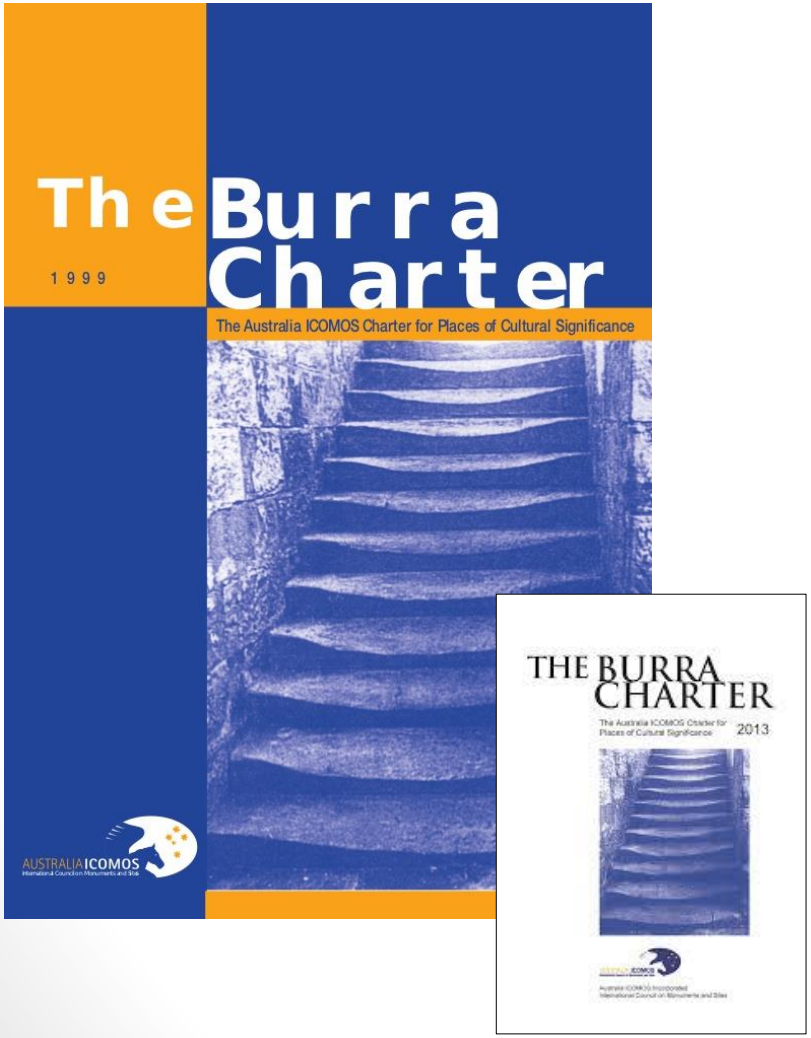
(Interview with Margaret, 2011)

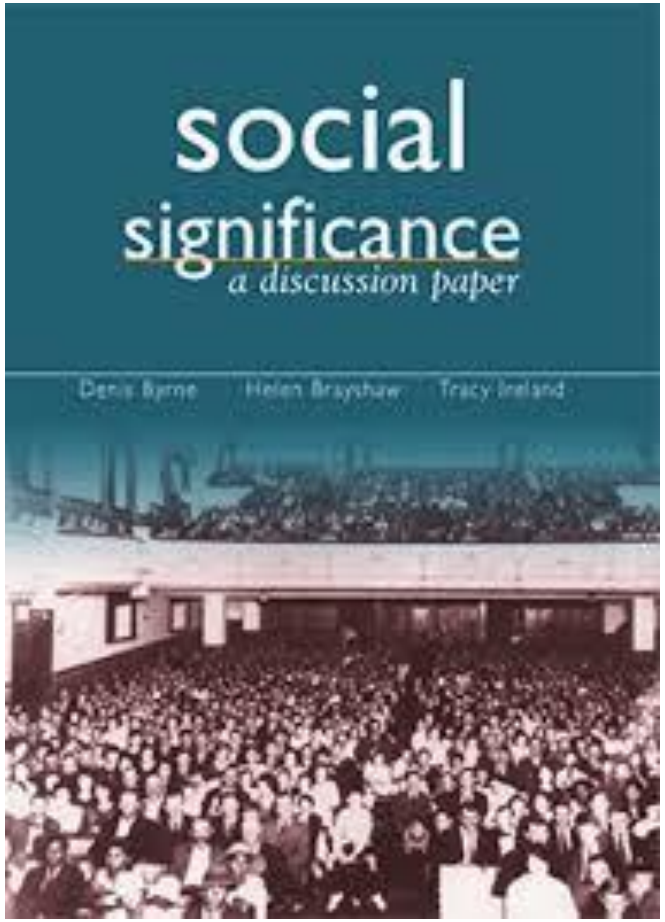
Glasgow Cathedral Choir. Photo: S. Jones

The place of the 'social' in heritage discourses

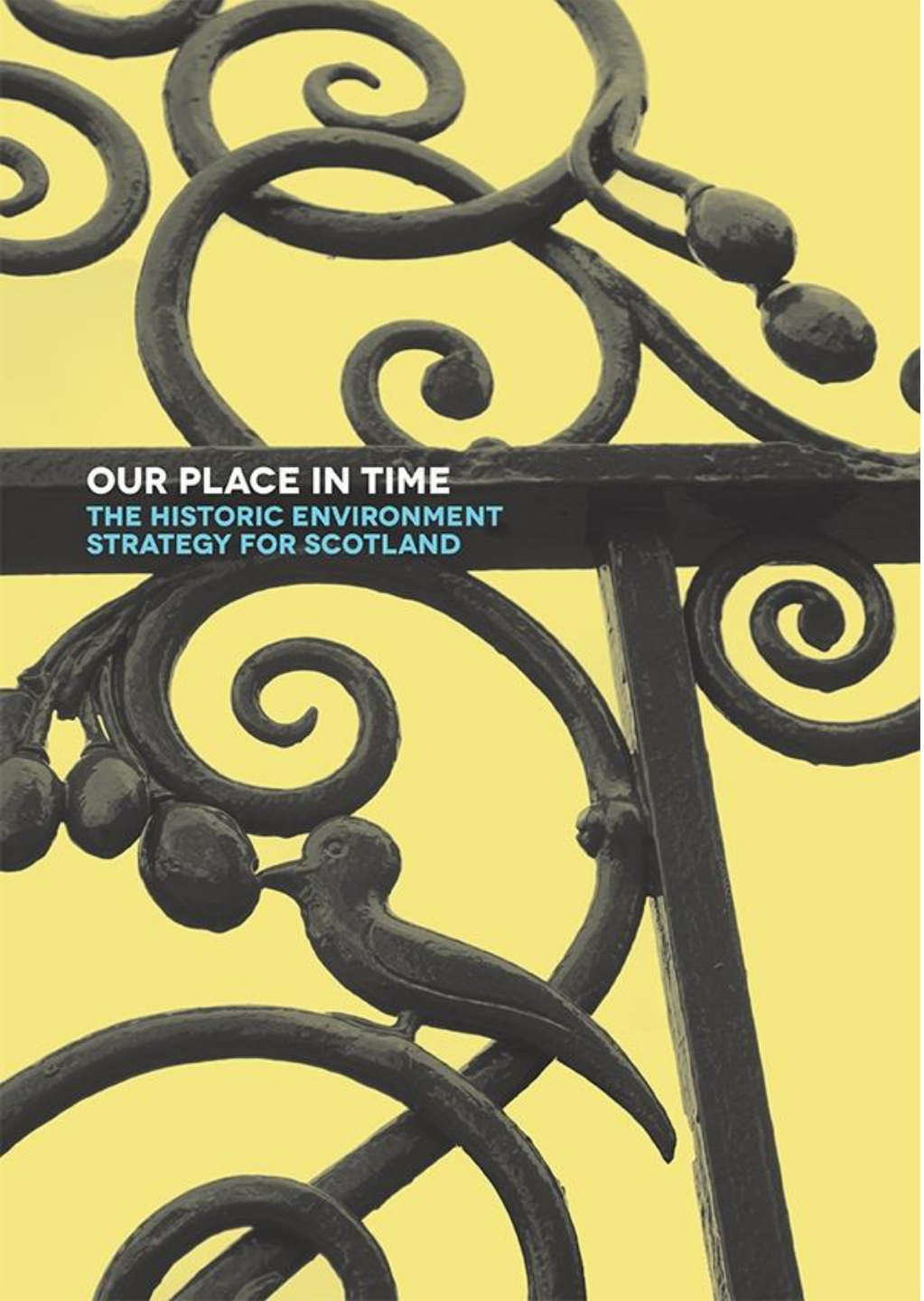


Antipodean influences





A ‘social’ revolution?



"The historic environment could be said to be 'the cultural heritage of places', and is a combination of physical things (tangible) *and those aspects we cannot see - histories, traditions and concepts* (intangible)."

"[I]t helps to create a sense of place, identity and physical and social wellbeing, and benefits the economy, civic participation, tourism and lifelong learning"

THE VISION

Scotland's historic environment is understood and valued, cared for and protected, enjoyed and enhanced. It is at the heart of a flourishing and sustainable Scotland and will be passed on with pride to benefit future generations.

This vision is underpinned by a series of high level aims, together with the rationale for their importance and an outline for delivery.

AIMS

We will realise this shared vision by:

- **Understanding – By investigating and recording** our historic environment to continually develop our knowledge, understanding and interpretation of our past and how best to conserve, sustain and present it.
- **Protecting – By caring for and protecting** the historic environment, ensuring that we can both enjoy and benefit from it and conserve and enhance it for the enjoyment and benefit of future generations.
- **Valuing – By sharing and celebrating** the richness and significance of our historic environment, enabling us to enjoy the fascinating and inspirational diversity of our heritage.

WHY?

We will do this because it will help ensure that the cultural, social, environmental and economic value of our heritage continues to make a major contribution to the nation's wellbeing.

HOW?

Delivering this vision will require the range of bodies, groups and individuals with an interest in, or responsibility for, aspects of the historic environment to work together towards a common purpose. Effective use must be made of the skills, experience and resources of all parties, to realise the values and benefits of our historic environment.

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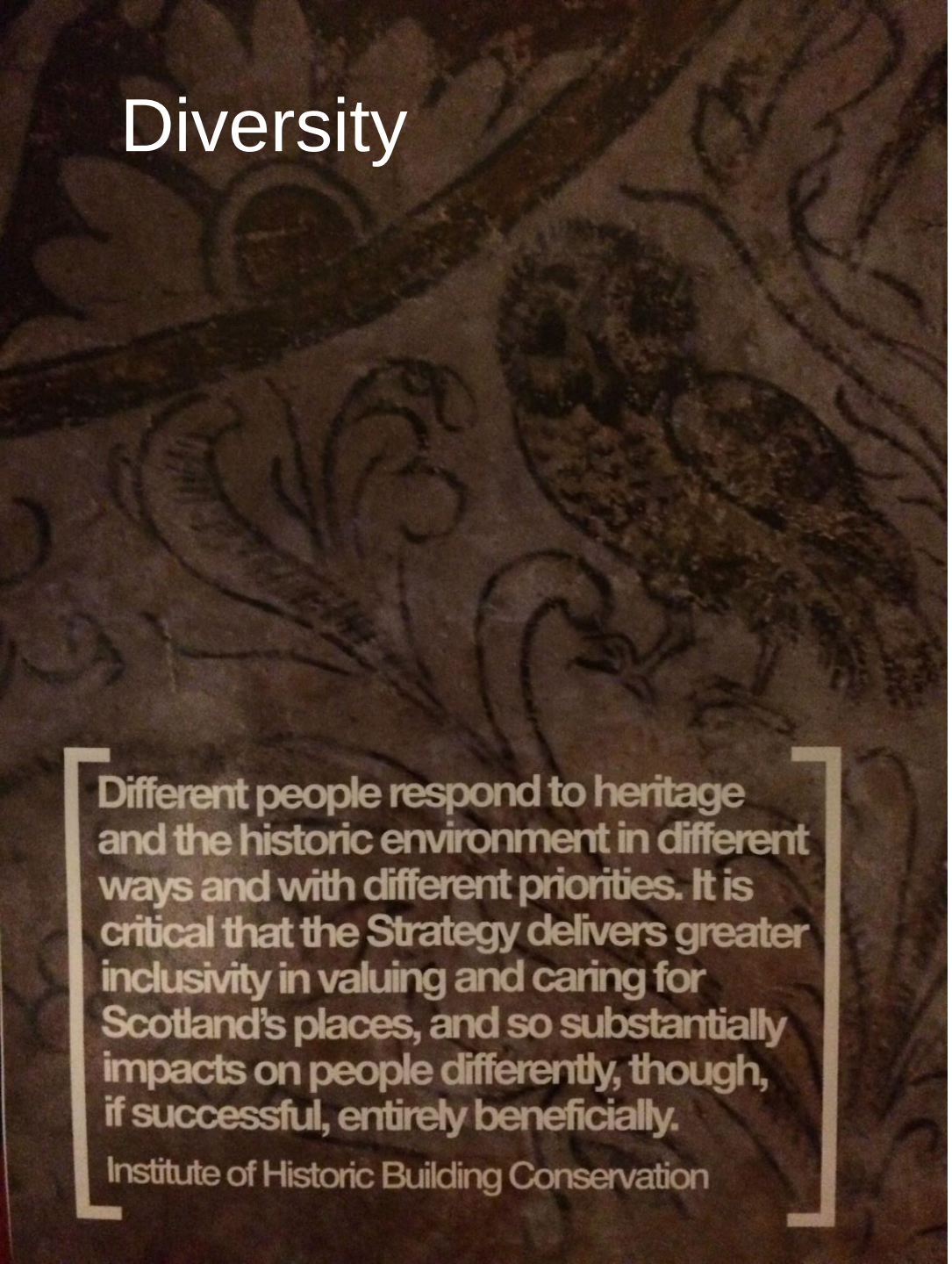
Achnabreck cup and ring marks, Kilmartin Glen, Argyll and Bute
Photograph: © Crown Copyright reproduced courtesy of Historic Scotland

Diversity



But in the final analysis:

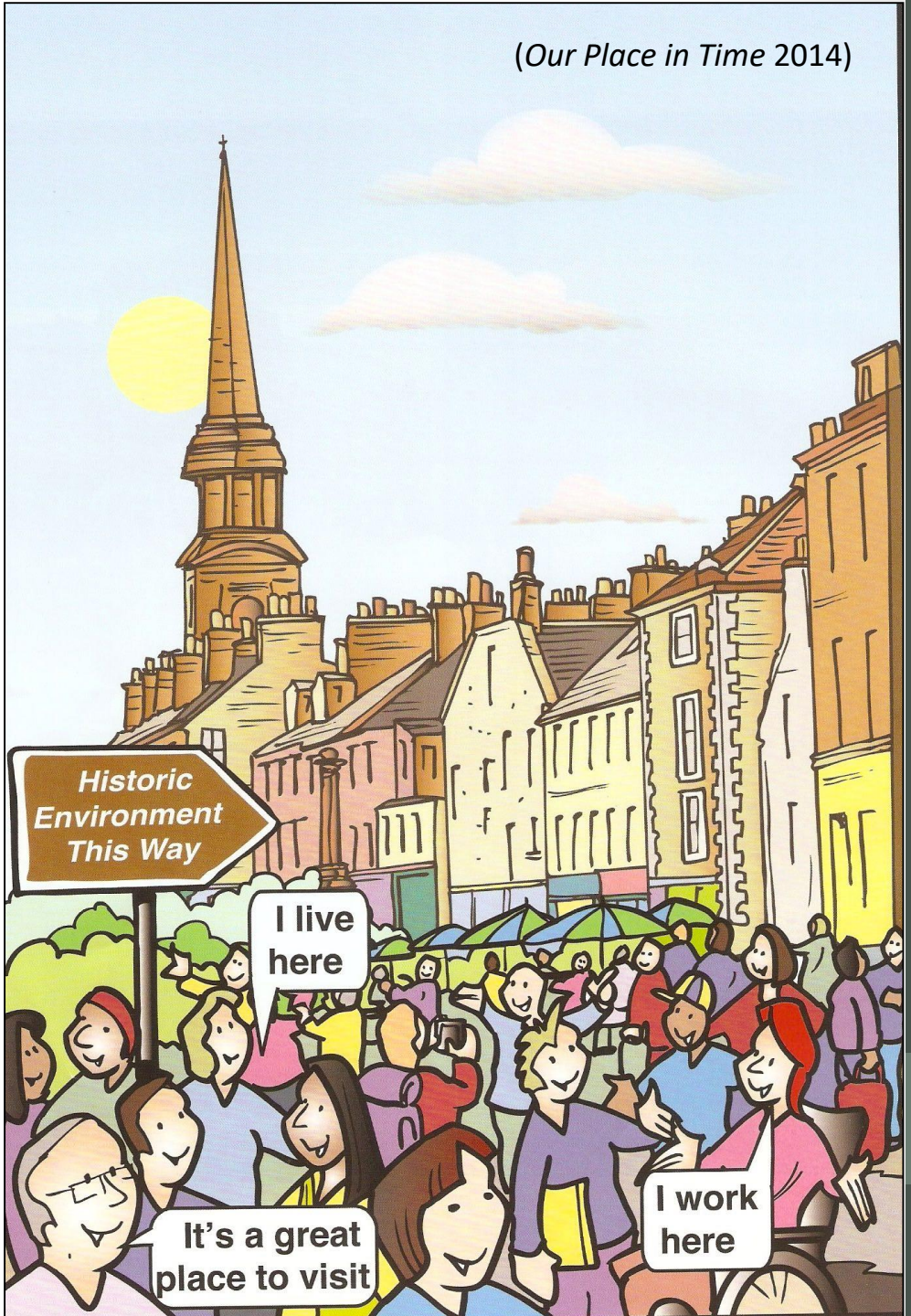
"Scotlands historic environment is intrinsic to ***our*** sense of place and ***strong*** cultural identity. It is diverse, but ***collectively*** it tells the story of ***our shared past***." (emphasis added)

(*Our Place in Time* 2014)

Instrumental benefits

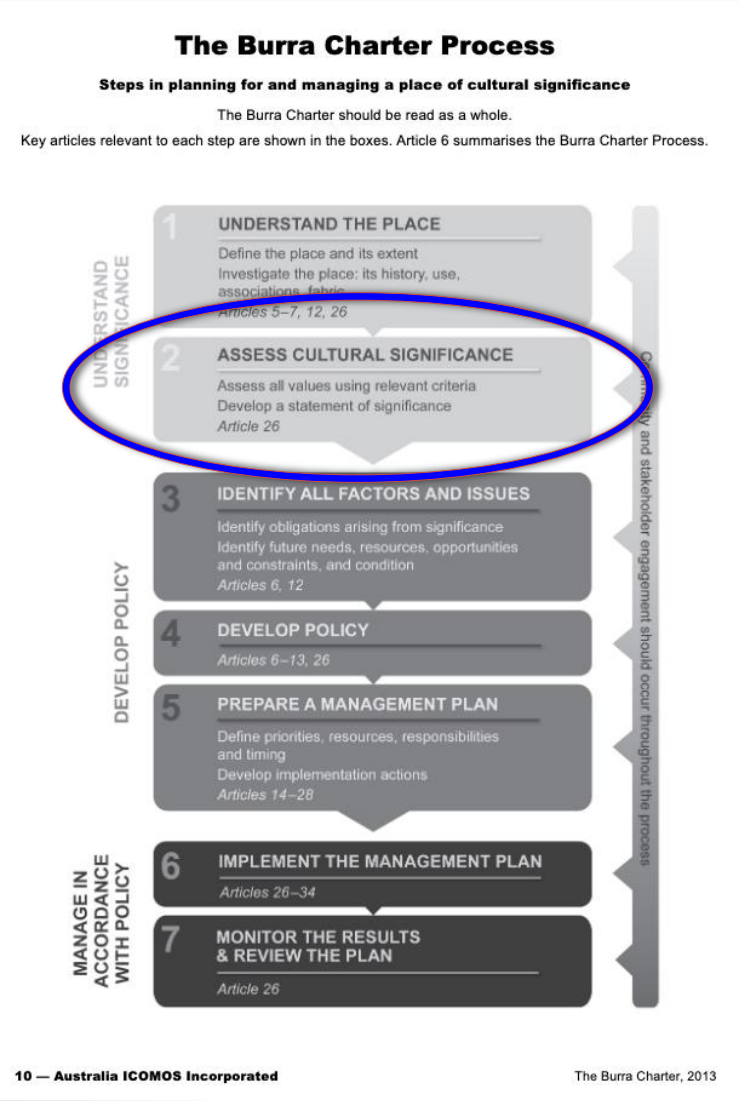
"At HES we want to use the past to make a better future"

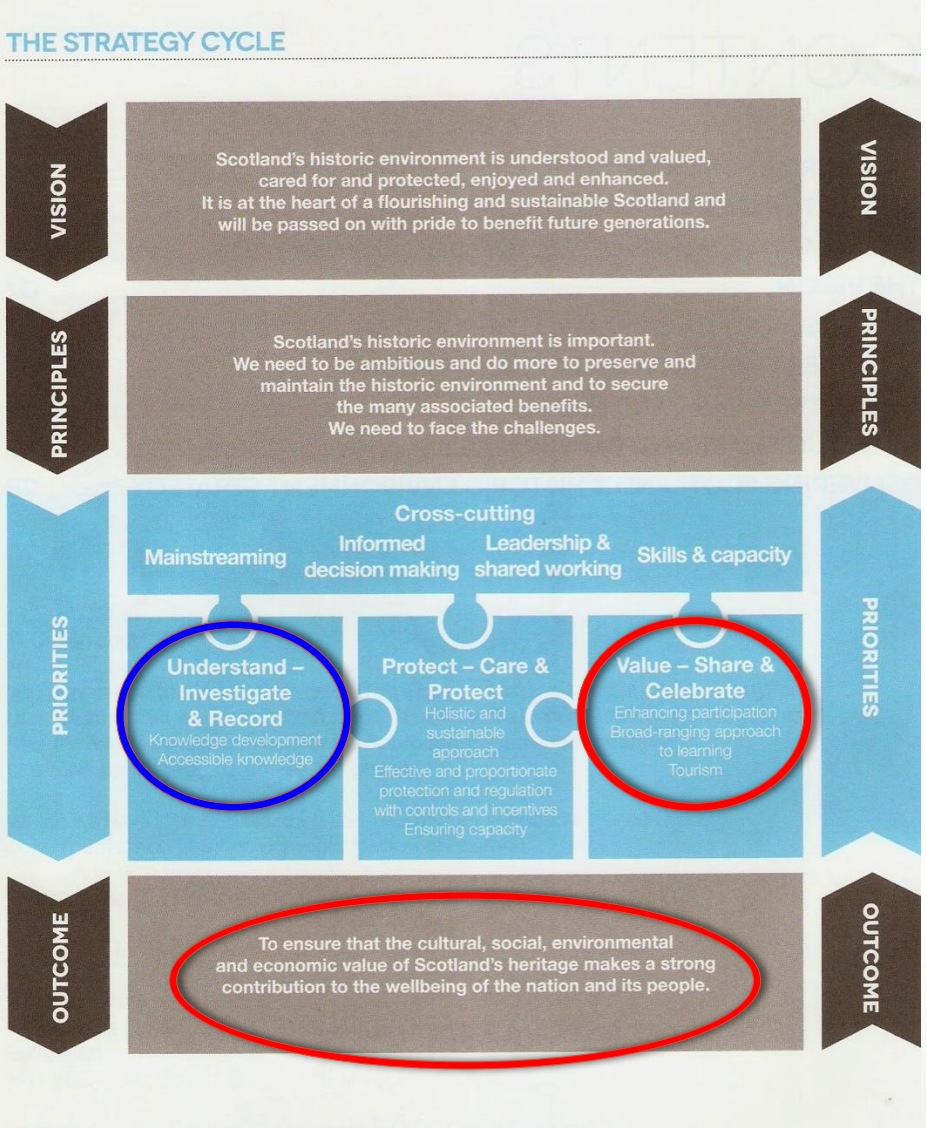
"We want the historic environment to make a real difference to people's lives: to our health, to our economy, to our culture, to our environment. We want heritage to involve everyone so that we all benefit." (*Heritage for All*, HES Corporate Plan 2019 onwards)



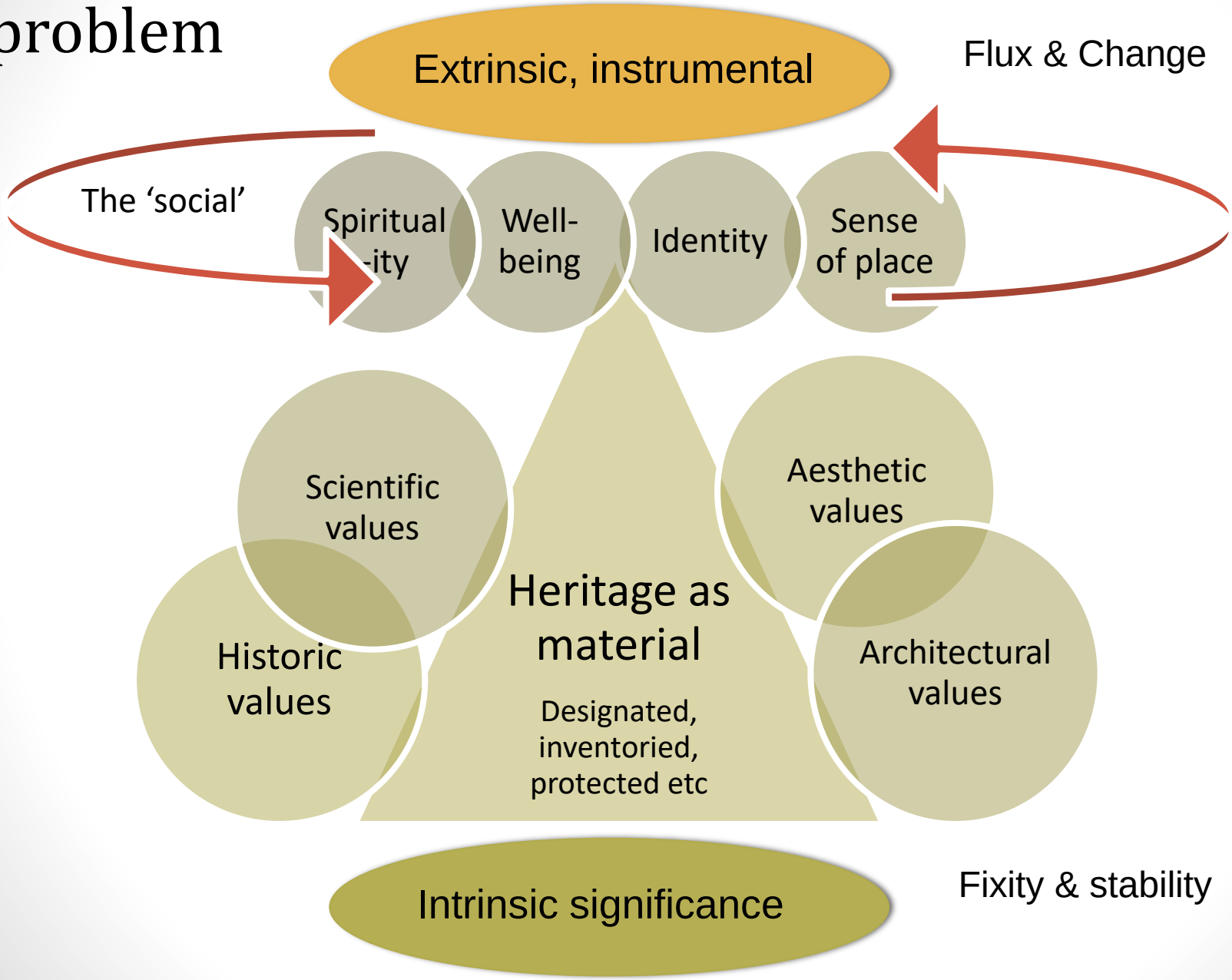
(*Our Place in Time* 2014)

Heritage practice: where does the 'social' sit?



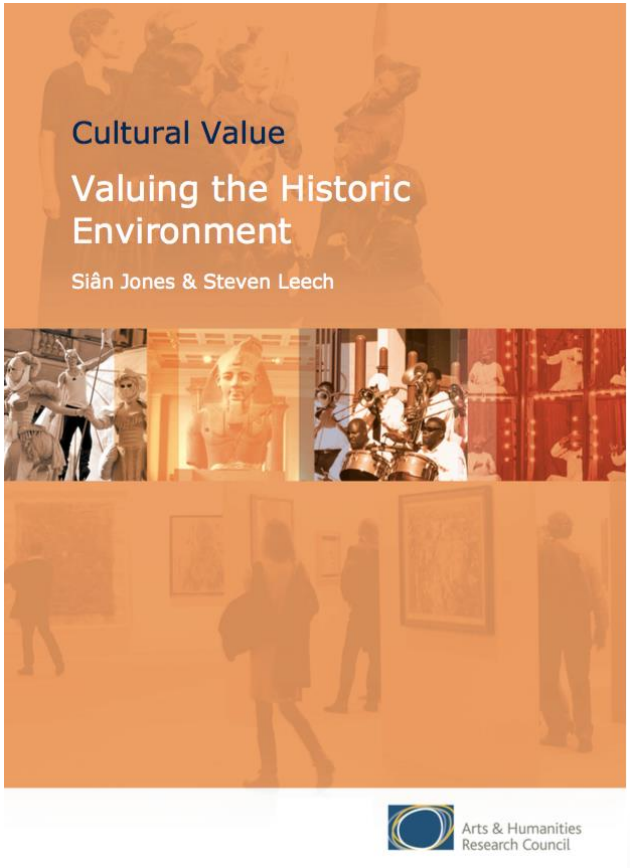


The fundamental problem



A Critical Review of Approaches to Social Value

- University of Manchester, PI: Sian Jones, RA: Steve Leech
- Part of the AHRC Cultural Value Project, 4 month project
- Aimed to advance understanding of how experience of the historic environment creates forms of social value



http://dspace.stir.ac.uk/handle/1893/23881#.WI9qChCgWV4

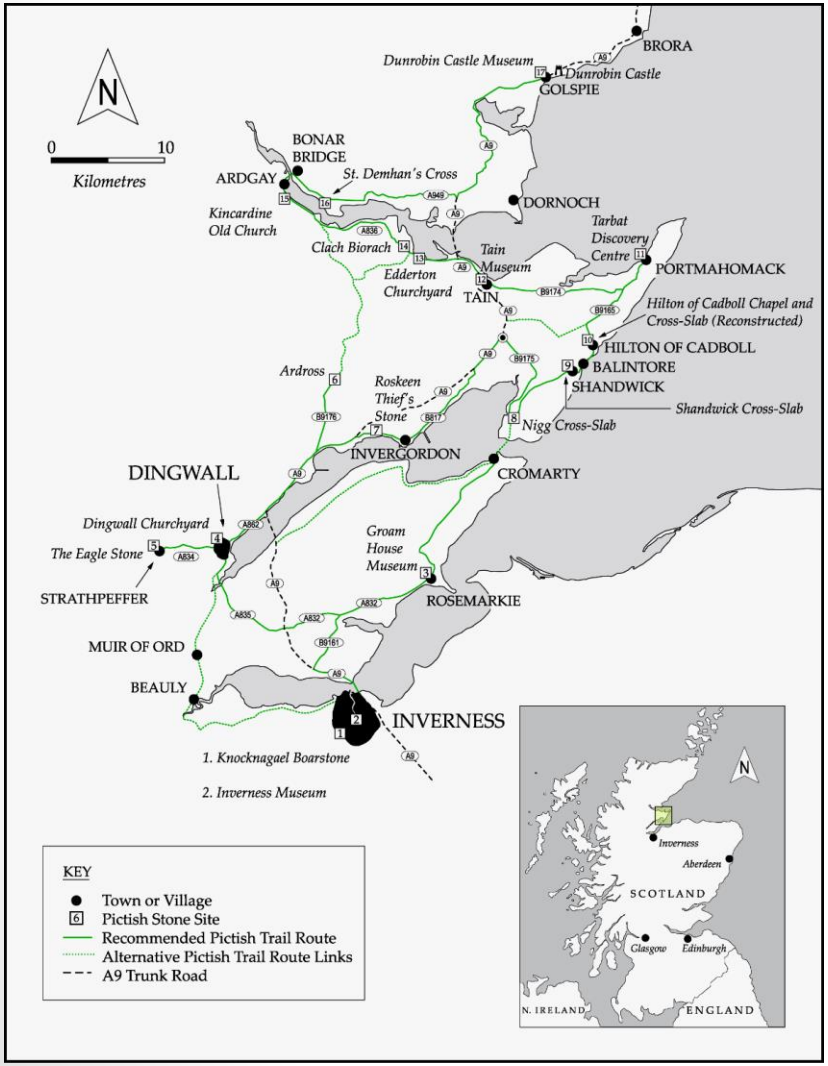
What is 'social value'?

- 'Social value' is defined in various ways (e.g. Burra Charter, English Heritage, Historic Scotland)
- It refers to a collective attachment to place that embodies meanings and values that are important to a community or communities (Johnston 1994: 10).
- It encompasses the ways in which the historic environment provides a basis for identity, distinctiveness, belonging, and social interaction.
- It also accommodates forms of memory, oral history, symbolism, spiritual association and cultural practice associated with the historic environment

Key points from the report

- Multiple contemporary meanings and identities and sense of place
- Produced, reproduced and transformed through performance and practice
- Attachment and belonging – often with competing claims
- ‘Unofficial heritage’ and ‘counter memories’
- The complex relationship between the intangible and tangible
- Social value often diverges from other kinds of value
- It may not be consciously articulated or easy to access
- It may not be evident – or even related – to the physical fabric of a heritage place
- Dynamic, iterative, contested nature of social values – process of ongoing creation of value
- NB This **also** applies to other ‘values’

Hilton of Cadboll and the production of social value



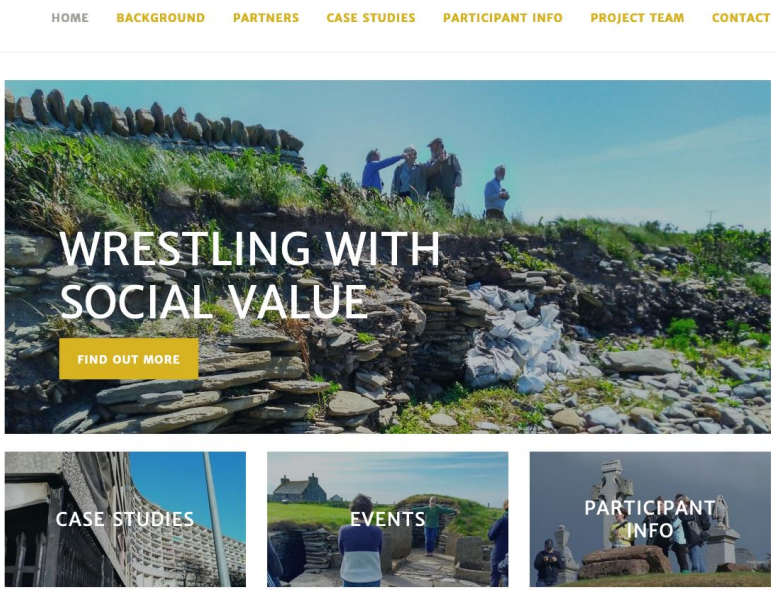
HC 1078

THE
EMIGRANTS

Expertise, agency and social action

Understanding the 'social' – the need for qualitative and participatory methods

- 'Focused ethnography'
- Participant observation
- Semi-structured interviews
- Focused group interviews
- Transect / walking interviews
- Activity mapping / 'tracking'
- Collaborative site visits and mapping (with community representatives)



Liz Robson, Collaborative Doctoral Studentship with UoS/HES, focusing on methodologies for assessing social value

https://wrestlingsocialvalue.org/

The ACCORD project: participatory practices

ACCORD methods

Focused group interview

Leading into co-design

Leading into co-production

Focused group interview

Participation + observation

Making resilient heritage futures through participatory practices

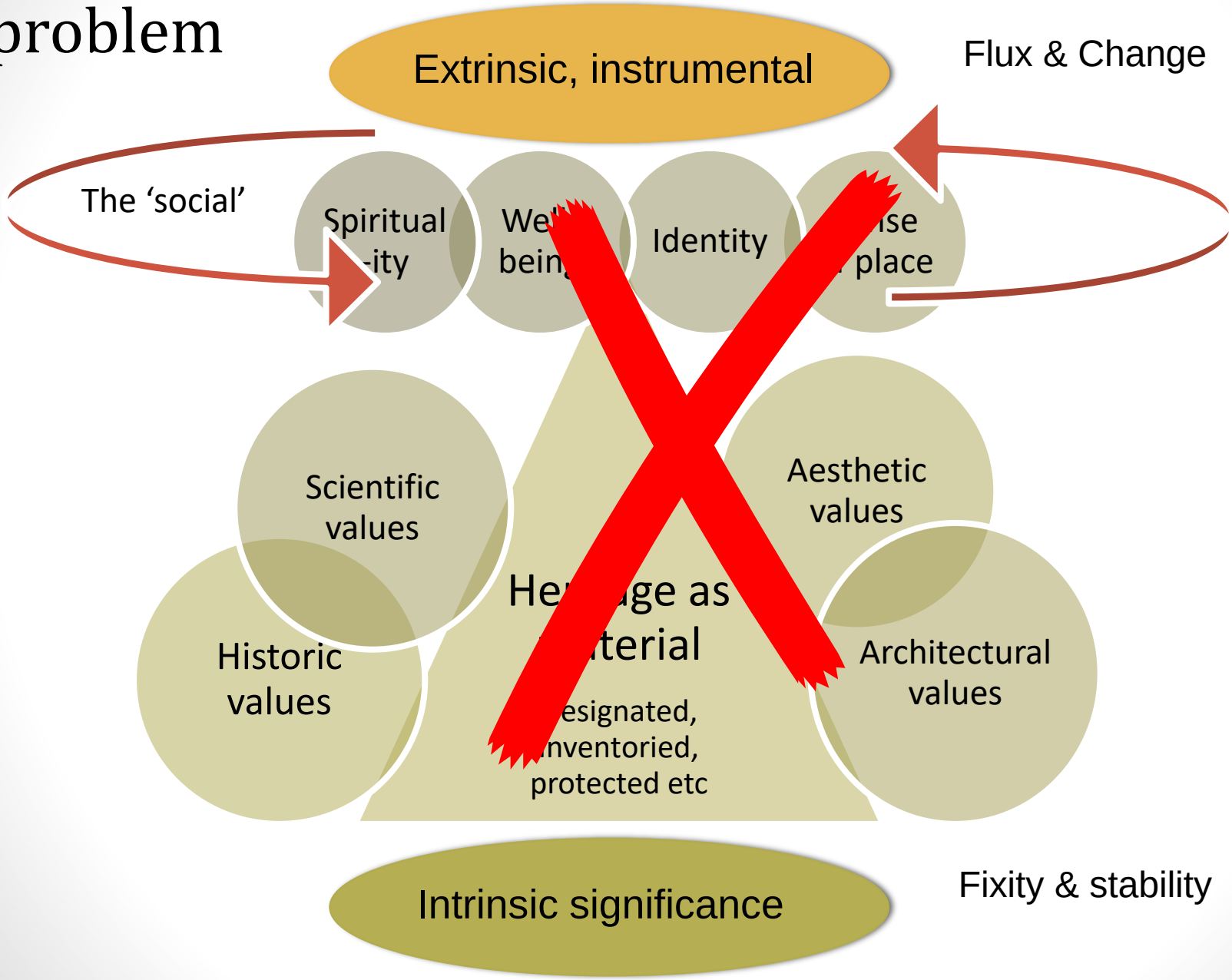
Castlemilk 'How Old Are Yew' community history group

Creating resilient futures by engaging with heritages of destruction and displacement

Working simultaneously with physical places and objects as well as intangible memories and values

Focused ethnographic methods played a key role in understanding these processes

Conclusions: valuing the social and material

- Within the current frameworks there is a need for much more work on social value and the methods and practices required to 'capture them'
- 'Social values' are dynamic, iterative, contested – process of ongoing creation of value – but this applies to all the value typologies
- A more fundamental reconceptualization of the relationship between the social and the material is also in order
- Ultimately that the material and social lives of heritage places are bound up with one another
- Valuing the social and the material would mean following the networks of relations they sustain with people (and other places and objects)
- Conservation as a participatory process of social action (after Denis Byrne 2008) mediating change in the social and the material involving a wide range of social actors

The fundamental problem