



Measuring the Impact of Changing Modes of Governance on Historic Urban Environments

Chris LANDORF, Architect and Senior Lecturer
The University of Queensland, Australia
c.landorf@uq.edu.au

For nearly twenty years, Government policies aimed at the alleviation of poverty and social exclusion have been moving away from a singular reliance on financial stimulation and market de-regulation. Instead, the theoretical framework that has evolved to underpin current approaches to public policy increasingly relies on targeting community capacity building and cross-sectoral partnerships. While a wide range of approaches have been noted, they can be categorized broadly into two inter-related strategies. The first strategy is focused on strengthening the networks, norms and trust that support coordinated social action, more commonly referred to as social capital. The second strategy is aimed at the promotion of governance as a means to enhancing social capital. This sees the state become a facilitating partner in the promotion of localized collaborative partnerships. Governance also implies community consultation and participation, and the involvement of the voluntary or third sector alongside public and private institutions in the democratic management of local affairs. The problem is that establishing causal links between policy interventions aimed at community capacity building and the resultant social outcomes, is notoriously difficult to measure. However, as collaborative partnerships are increasingly being integrated into urban policy through urban and regional regeneration projects, the policy imperative for finding evidence of such a link is increasing.

Nowhere is the need for accurate social outcome measures more evident than at complex heritage sites such as historic town centers and industrial landscapes. Even given the recent UNESCO affirmation that heritage is an instrument for sustainable development, it is hard to see how such heritage sites can succeed as collaborative partnerships in community capacity building and incubators of urban transformation in areas of physical and social deprivation. As background, the paper examines how the authority of expert heritage knowledge reflexively serves to undermine the possibility of effective community participation at complex heritage sites. With identity established as central to effective social action, the paper also considers how the construct of authenticity, with its focus on a temporally fixed material reality, works against the evolution of positive and contemporary place-based identity. The paper then presents a governance model for complex historic urban sites and an associated matrix for the measurement of outcomes. The model is applied to the historic mining city of Broken Hill, Australia to demonstrate the way in which quality performance measures can be used firstly, assess the impact of changing modes of governance on an historic urban environment, and secondly, to develop appropriate strategies for future urban transformations.

KEY WORDS: Governance, social capital, historic urban environment diagnostic tool.