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From Values to Valuing
An ethnographic approach to get a grip on the implicit disclosure of built heritage

People are confronted with (built) heritage on a daily basis, but not always consciously. Such a finding might be hopeful with regards to a thorough democratisation of heritage practices. After all, present day social sciences methods do promise to be able to recognize even the vaguest building blocks of possible (heritage) practices that, in a next stage, can be sculpted into new orderings, new processes of use, management and so on. However, there are some issues. While investigating the potential of social values, with as open a view as possible, the authors were struck by several things. What stood out were the contrasting visions regarding the future of heritage objects, the sometimes very associative and difficult to grasp ways people tend to look at an environment, and the fact that for example the heritage status of a listed landscape for most passers-by only plays on a very implicit level. None of those findings, of course, is problematical in itself, as the potential for future processes does become almost tangible. However, it is not always clear *how* to get hold of this potential, and how to align sometimes spontaneous or unknowing appreciations of heritage with existing expert assessments.

The cases the authors investigated during a social values study[1] are being revisited here. However, they are now highlighted in another way, which is: the way in which *valuing* takes place, mostly by lay people. Also emphasised will be the connection with public space, present here as the space that interacts with for example a heritage building, the mere 'permeability' of an environment, the accessibility of a landscape or a park, etcetera. The link with public space hints at both the aforementioned democratisation of heritage practices, and also towards a precondition for a more absentminded heritage gaze, which in itself might be full of possibilities. The reason why the cases and their connection to the public domain are being addressed, is to ask the following research questions. What is the potential of valuing, understood here as an addition to the present day discourse of heritage values (or even as not consciously linked to heritage in the traditional sense)? And, if heritage indeed emerges from relations in the present (Harrison 2013), how 'subconscious' can these relations be? Is there such a thing as 'implicit disclosure', which would mean: heritage that is not knowingly seen as heritage but that for lots of people adds to the appreciation of a broader environment, to the atmosphere of an area, or even to a sense of place or belonging, and that might produce relations of care in the present? And finally, how to understand the relationship between valuing, implicit disclosure and contemporary processes of adaptive reuse?

This paper argues that the move to valuing and implicit disclosure is not to be understood as a devaluation of (immovable property) heritage, but, on the contrary, as embracing several aspects of heritage that remain underexposed when only a traditional and/or institutionalised approach is acted upon. Ideas of valuing will be made explicit in this text through an actor-network theory inspired (Latour 2005) take on heritage and values, which means that 'intrinsic values' will be put between brackets, not to disqualify them, but to challenge them in a constructive way. This is in line with recent developments in the heritage discourse (see for example Harrison 2013). Heritage has the potential to resonate broadly in the immediate

[1] It was a commissioned project, for the Flemish immovable property heritage agency.

environment, building from the daily experiences of lay people, and it is especially this resonance that the paper aims to address.

First, actor-network theory (see also Yaneva 2008), however not unproblematic, is being called in as a way to mediate between implicit valuing and more explicit outings. Next, the text will dive into the cases of said social values study to illustrate concrete processes of valuing and their potential. Special attention will be paid to participatory and dialogical methods (Callon et al. 2009; Harrison 2013; 2015) and to the social aspects of heritage, including its links with public space. Conclusions will be drawn from the interaction between the theoretical underpinnings and the findings from the cases.

HOW TO GRASP THE SOCIAL MEANING OF BUILT HERITAGE?

Participatory methodologies and (other) contemporary approaches stemming from social theory — mostly via science and technology studies (Latour 2004; Callon et al. 2009) and the broad field of architecture (for example Hamdi 2010) — might be helpful in making sense of the many links between heritage and the general environment. As methods have agency too, even 'world making' agency (Law & Urry 2011), they might be able to make heritage a truly shared practice and, also, to offer new perspectives related to the future management of heritage. Groups of people already gather around particular assets — gardens, parks, buildings, etcetera — and join forces to manage these assets, while mostly making them accessible to the entire community. The commons (Frank 2015) are an important inspiration for present day ways to deal with built heritage, as they might generate enthusiasm for new forms of (shared) heritage management. Moreover, architects tend to take into account the future management of buildings more than they used to, which makes the built products (whether newly built or as the result of adaptive reuse) less separated from processes of (co-)design, construction and occupation than before (Awan et al. 2011).

However, more 'liberal' and even very personal appreciations of artefacts, buildings and environments are as well able to (eventually) contribute to the future management of heritage buildings. In this text, actor-network theory (ANT) is called in to understand the making of connections between the activities of appreciating and managing, on both the personal and the 'common' level. It is precisely by understanding heritage as a set of practices (conscious or not) and by describing these practices, that categories such as 'individual' and 'collective' become more or less obsolete. Already in the 1970s, and apart from ANT, Henri Lefebvre (1991) wrote that space is a social product, not only 'made' by experts but (re)produced throughout daily life and by attributing cultural meaning to it. Thus, following Lefebvre, space to a great extent is made unknowingly and casually. Heritage as well is not only interlinked with experts and their judgments, but also with the daily life of virtually everyone, as ANT will help to substantiate. A conscious, let alone institutionalised, preoccupation with heritage is in fact optional.

What matters here are the proverbial building blocks of heritage practices, however implicit, and how to recognize and acknowledge them. We want to demonstrate that many of these 'seeds' of heritage practices reside at the level of daily life. Methodologies such as actor-network theory can help to make explicit, even operationalize (Callon et al. 2009; Latour 2004) these seeds or building blocks, as ANT understands every fact, phenomenon, axiom, and also every value, practice and 'order of the world' as the result of underlying networks of

very disparate human and non-human actors ('actants'). For the understanding of heritage practices, of course, an ANT view has important implications, the first being the lack of hierarchy between the human and non-human elements mentioned. Inspired by ANT, Harrison (2013, p. 4) understands heritage as "emerging from relationships between people, objects, places and practices". Distinctions and hierarchies, for example between which elements will be institutionalised and which will not, follow later; they are not the concern of the researcher that is mapping the situation at hand. Second, an ANT inspired ethnographic method, involving not only (natural) facts and clear statements but also (social) values, feelings and all kinds of perceptions and experiences, is located at a cognitive ánd a more expressive level. What is more, because ANT studies networks and interprets everything as the result of networks, there is no difference between processes, products and performances. The way a value is being produced, the value itself and the effects it has on other things are described by means of the same network. This can be compared to what Latour (2005) calls a 'matter of concern', i.e. a thing in which the very production of the thing and what it triggers are incorporated in its description. For heritage practices this would mean, even in careful wording, that the process of valuing and the resulting value(s) are strongly interrelated. ANT thus inspires heritage practices to let go of rigid interpretations of values. More generally, it encourages everyone who is involved with heritage to push forward valuing as a process.

When valuing is a shared enterprise, the step towards a popular support for heritage, or even forms of shared management, becomes feasible or at least thinkable. An ANT-approach does not make an a priori distinction between experts and lay people. And existing values do not necessarily 'disappear'; there might even be no reason for them to disappear. ANT suggests the possibility of a new *organisation* of values, in 'collective worlds' (Callon et al. 2009; Harrison 2013) in which sometimes very different actants and their attributes live together, without institutionalising too quickly.

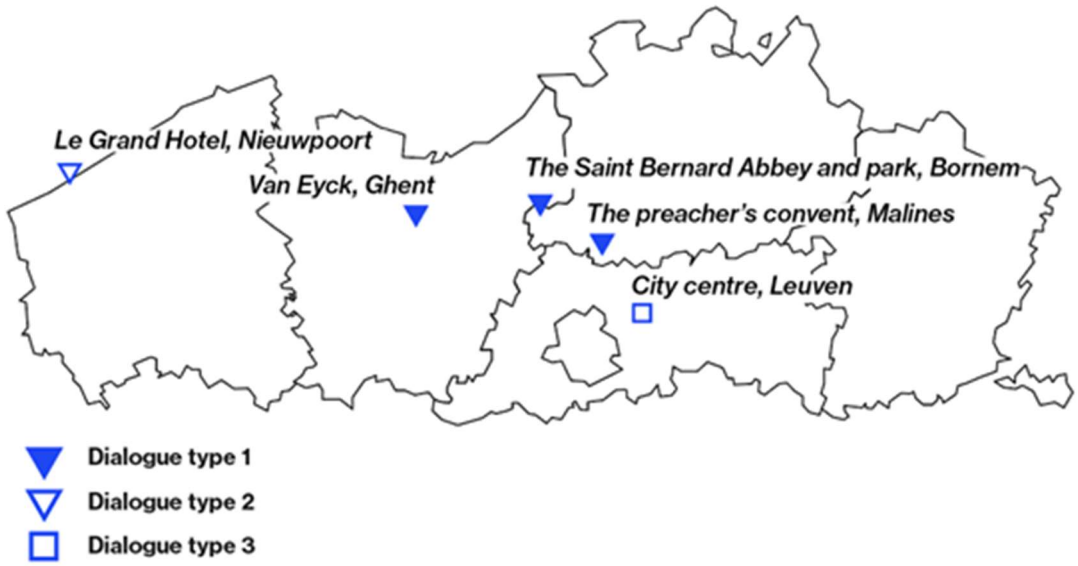
Siân Jones (2017) too emphasises that the act of valuing becomes more important than the values themselves. She goes even further by stating that "there is also the question of whether a value-based model, which inevitably tends to objectify and fix different categories of value, is even appropriate" (Ibid., p.22). The need for a more dynamic mode of valuing appears as a minimum. And Fredheim & Khalaf (2016) state that this emphasis on valuing seems to be not only the result of a broader 'social turn', but also arises from a dealing with values that tends to follow (a closer reading of) reality itself: "The urban environment is continuously changing, both physically and socially; a value typology for urban heritage must reflect and respond to this changing nature" (ibid.). John Law and John Urry (2011) go further by writing that it is reality itself that is a "relational effect". According to them, research methods are performative, "they have effects; they make differences; they enact realities; and they can help to bring into being what they also discover" (ibid.). Law and Urry make a plea for "messy methods", and for methods that take into account the "sensory", the "emotional", and the "kinaesthetic" (aspects of pleasure and pain) (ibid.). Consequently, it would follow that understanding and practising, or realities and methods, go hand in hand. What is more, this takes place in a "way in which most people think about and experience heritage" (Harrison 2013, p. 226). Translated into values, this is far from a traditional approach, while it could go perfectly with the approach advocated by Jones (2017).

Next to roughly external factors — changing paradigms in social studies and humanities, and the changing ways existing environments are generally experienced — another reason to focus on valuing is that what we understand as (social) values is in need of being expanded. The road seems open for a more 'implicit' appreciation of heritage. For example, are 'experiences' part of this? And does it make sense to think of connections between experiences and social values? Do spontaneous reactions to buildings and environments and feelings play a role in present day heritage practices? We suggest that only a dynamic mode of valuing is capable of connecting the building blocks out of which appreciations of heritage consist with (a contemporary interpretation of) heritage values — taken that valuing reforms rather than revolutionises the phenomenon of values (as, in the latter case, values as such would become obsolete). Siân Jones, in her 2017 article on social heritage values, refers directly to ethnography as the obvious method to trace social values. To trace the building blocks we, not being trained in ethnography as such, tried very open and also very simple methods, in which we let local actors (users, passers-by, locals) talk freely, in some cases as freely as possible, in order for the most honest appreciations to emerge — however vague at times. Harrison (2015, p. 38) too, in going beyond the divide between the natural and the cultural in heritage, prefers an approach that is "ethnographic, drawing particularly on material, visual, and sensory ethnographies".

These appreciations, at first, are being understood as 'unfiltered', linked to everyday life, and not necessarily part of heritage discourse (or part of it yet). Every appreciative building block enters the equation symmetrically, which means that for these explorations it does not matter whether it is uttered by experts or lay people. It does not matter at first whether it concerns knowledge, associations, feelings, experiences or a combination of such building blocks (normative, cognitive, associative, experiential, affective or practical modes of valuing), nor what the object of appreciation is (a building, a landscape, an object, an environment). It does not matter either what — if any — the focus of the person uttering it is (spiritual, identity related, binding or bridging, memory related). Unfiltered appreciation is not readily subdivided in concise categories; it is context dependent and comes in hybrid form. Order indeed can follow later.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CASES AND METHODOLOGY

The following cases were selected in the context of an assignment for the Flanders Heritage Agency. Important for the selection (then) was to arrive at a diverse pallet of cases with a good spread in terms of geographical location, type of heritage, existing organisation model, programme and type of activity that takes place.



[Plate 1. This schematic map of Flanders shows the location of the cases. Endeavour]

The cases were part of a commissioned exploratory study into the nature of social values, their link with the bottom-up experience of heritage, and their link with well-being. The aim of the cases was to gain insight into the social values that passers-by and users attribute to heritage sites in their everyday environment, and into *the way* people value these sites — the mode of valuing that is. Because the appreciation of immovable heritage is a subjective matter, the already mentioned qualitative approach was chosen. The investigative actions were divided into three types of 'dialogue moments' in which different cases were present and different methods were put into use each time. This way, it became possible to evaluate which method offers the most potential for identifying social values. We briefly frame the various cases in relation to the methods used for each type of dialogue.

Dialogue type 1:
These were actually short, spontaneous conversations, averaging 15 minutes, on the site, with people who had gone there before and with users. We worked with open questions, with as little guidance as possible, in order for the person being questioned to answer from their own world. A number of key questions were formulated that determined the structure of the conversation.

The preacher's convent, Malines
This former monastery in Malines was given a new purpose as a library. In addition, the building also offers space to the city, as a meeting place for the neighbourhood, and to a restaurant, a coffee bar, a cultural performance space, an exhibition space and a co-working space. Main actors in the reallocation are the city of Malines (owner) and the Flemish government as main financial partners.

[Plate 2. Bibliotheek Predikheren, Malines. Agentschap Onroerend Erfgoed, Kris Vandevorst]

The Saint Bernard Abbey and park, Bornem

The abbey is being redeveloped by the municipality in cooperation with a project developer. It will become a mixed-used project, consisting of a library, housing, tourist functions and a visitor centre. The abbey itself is still in transformation, but the garden and outbuildings are currently being used by recreational users and the youth movement respectively. Because of its location and scale, it is expected to have a great impact on the surrounding village life. The combination of functions makes the case interesting for studying various social values in the same case. This is an example of a private-public partnership.

[Plate 3. The Saint Bernard Abbey and Park, Bornem. Endeavour]

The Van Eyck swimming pool, Ghent

The Van Eyck swimming pool is the oldest pool in Flanders. After renovation, this former swimming pool is again in use as a swimming pool. This is the only case with a fairly heterogeneous programme; people enter the building almost exclusively to swim or bathe. The location at the Portus Ganda with its redesigned public space and diverse target audiences makes this an ideal case for studying the 'uninhibited and dispassionate look' of a diverse group of visitors. The building in publicly owned and managed by the city of Ghent; main financial partners are the Flemish government, the Province of East Flanders and the Mercurius Fund (a Flemish fund for city projects).

[Plate 4. View of the Van Eyck swimming pool, Ghent. Jimi Dalen]

Dialogue type 2:
We used a two-step method for this type of dialogue. We started off with spontaneous interviews on the spot that were processed to distil themes and shared insights. This was followed by one or more (online) group discussions with privileged witnesses. The group discussions were dedicated to making connections between the free appreciations of respondents on the spot and the phenomenon of social heritage values.

Le Grand Hotel Nieuwpoort
This case is mainly about architectural heritage, especially buildings from the twentieth century such as the famous hotel *Le Grand Hôtel*, now called *The Grand*. But in the interviews, other aspects such as tranquillity, 'space and openness' related to the beach, the dike, the harbour channel, etc. were also discussed, as well as art in the open or public space. Because of this, the emphasis soon shifted to the whole urban space of Nieuwpoort-Bad, with the nearby seawall, the harbour channel and even the Simli district, a modernist neighbourhood situated a little deeper inland but still part of Nieuwpoort-Bad. The act of walking became prominent as well in the type 2 dialogue.

[Plate 5. *Le Grand Hôtel*, Nieuwpoort-Bad. Hasselt University]

Dialogue type 3:
We organised a roundtable discussion with citizens who have become experts in a particular topic, from their passion, but who still do this on a voluntary basis. Thus, the opportunity was offered to hear voices that cover both sides of the story: that of the lay people and that of the experts. The aim therefore was to obtain a reflection on citizens' appreciations of immovable heritage, from the perspective of their knowledge, how they 'function', their approach to heritage and their world of experience. For us, this conversation formed the ideal bridge between the insights gained from the short interviews with citizens and the formulation of conclusions and recommendations. The material context for this conversation was the square in front of Leuven's town hall, which is the subject of an open urban design call. There is a participatory process going on at the moment to (re)upgrade the social value of the building from 'town hall' to 'house of the city'. The related participatory process consists of several moments with city services, local organisations and citizens, which made an interesting entry point for the type 3 discussion.

[Plate 6. Town Hall and the square in front of it, Leuven. Anno, Deruyter & Felt]

MAPPING PRACTICES AND PROCESSES OF HERITAGE VALUING

In order to obtain a more nuanced and accurate view of heritage valuing, the processes presented in this paper are conceptualised as amalgams of forces, practices, technologies and expressions, including what may be called dimensions of fluidity, impressions, rhythms or sensations — raw experiences of perception which "pass over and through the body" (Thrift, 2004; Dovey, 2010). In the cases, 'practical' components are being addressed. As valuing built heritage is not a formal, linear cognitive process, the cases were approached in a very free and open way, exactly to let these amalgams of forces flow. This is being explored for example by investigating reused heritage buildings or sites being visited by the public for practical reasons (to go shopping, swimming, to have a drink, to see an exhibition). By implication only, then, the building or site is being appreciated as heritage — sideways that is — but therefore not insincerely (see the cases of dialogue 1, such as Malines, Ghent and Bornem, and also dialogue 2).

If actor-network theory truly is an inspiration, then values, all kinds of local conditions, narratives, filters and the existing heritage regime with its existing values come to the same level. All circumstances and dependencies are part of 'the network of valuing'. Institutionalised values too have their effects on more fleeting bottom-up appreciations. In some cases, a listed heritage — precisely because it is listed — made it possible for a place to evolve in a certain way, in turn evoking certain appreciations, even when it might not always have been clear for passers-by that the heritage was listed in the first place. A heritage landscape for example being there, open to visit (maybe even still there precisely because it was listed), even when in itself not the exact goal of the field trip, elicits relationships with those people present there. It is those interactions that we believe contribute to social valuing a great deal. The approach of attempting to capture very implicit modes of valuing, as in the dialogue 2 case of Nieuwpoort, is directly related to those interactions.

According to Laurajane Smith (2006), heritage (valuing) always encompasses a degree of negotiating. When it comes to the unfiltered, empirical form of appreciation that is being discussed here, this means that there is an extra layer of deliberation, which might be situated between the unfiltered appreciation and a more institutionalised level which includes heritage values. Which appreciations 'grow up' to become institutionalised values? And should that even be the goal? Which aspects and conditions play a role? Which 'new values' are able to coexist with existing values? A deliberation process like this never happens in a vacuum, it is always influenced by theoretical and cultural frameworks, norms (and values), narratives, goals and foci of those involved, policy and so on — as shown by the Bornem-case (see below). The 'after talks' with privileged witnesses of dialogue 2, and — in an even more focused way — the dialogue 3 case of Louvain, explicitly addressed this mode of negotiating.

Bottom-up appreciations also play a central role in symbolically appropriating heritage by a local community. The possibilities of learning and tactical heritage valuing are often missing from accounts of heritage values. The case of Louvain (dialogue 3) additionally stresses how both within 'tactical' (de Certeau 1984) and more formal heritage valuing, local everyday

heritage and living history are crucial. Once more, atmospheres, emotions and experiences obtain a mobilising character, resulting in heritage participation by local residents and even in community building.

WALKING NIEUWPOORT-BAD: A PATHWAY TO IMPLICIT DISCLOSURE

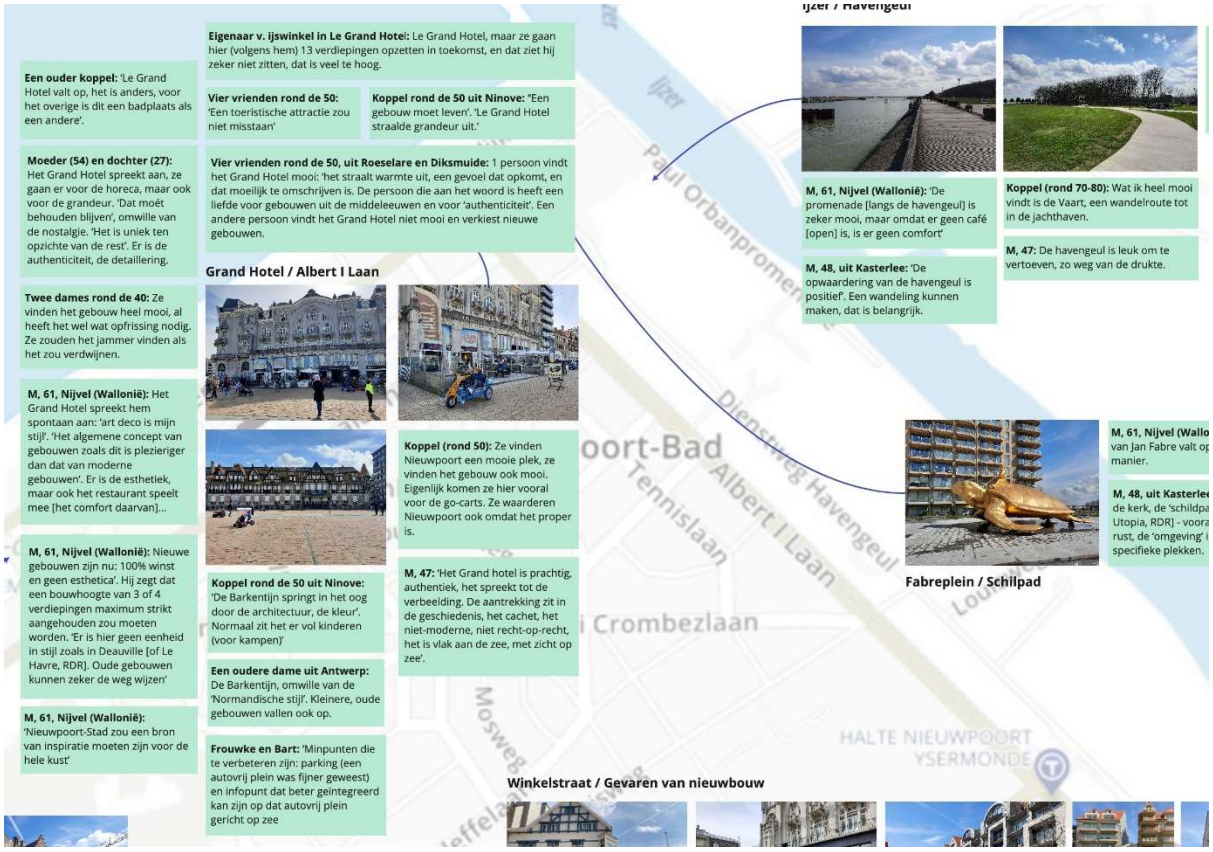
The initial reason why Nieuwpoort-Bad (a seaside town, part of the Flemish city of Nieuwpoort) was part of the research project on social values had to do with the presence of an art deco hotel — nowadays called *The Grand* — that is being transformed into apartments, shops and a restaurant by the renowned British architect David Chipperfield. Adaptive reuse — Chipperfield will not only refurbish *The Grand* but also top the building with a couple of new floors, in a very analogical (de Solà-Morales 1996) style — is at the basis of the choice for Nieuwpoort-Bad. However, it soon turned out that, when asked about their appreciations, passers-by referred not just to buildings and objects, but to more complex and ambiguous spatial situations.

[Plate 7. The typical situation of an older house in between newer apartment buildings, Nieuwpoort-Bad. Hasselt University]

The research team used free-form interviews to track down the most unfiltered and unmediated impressions and qualifications of (elements of) Nieuwpoort-Bad. Very noticeable was the way people, mostly tourists, tended to name more than just one place or object, and on top of that, they made connections between these separate elements. It stood out that they especially valued the slow tempo of the walk to let impressions sink in (which does not necessarily mean that these impressions would hit the cognitive level). Of course, the idea of impressions that have their effect troughout a walk is not new (see Buckhardt 2021; Dobsen 2011; Goldhagen 2017; Lynch 1960; Moles 2008). Lucius Buckhardt, for example, in his

concept of ‘strollology’ stresses the importance of “strings of impressions”, “synthesised in the minds’ eye” (Burckhardt 2021). Walking the surroundings, he adds, provides other perceptions of a particular building than just visiting the building alone, making it a richer experience (ibid.). Important to support the walk (and finally the appreciation of certain elements in the environment) are a level of comfort — cafés, restaurants, shops — and the mere permeability and accessibility of public space, as people in Nieuwpoort mentioned. They like to casually and autonomously explore the town, and when they are hinted towards for example heritage buildings, this will be experienced as an added value. It’s not the reason why they are there in the first place, but most passers-by gratefully let it happen. When searching for the nature of social values, it seemed as if senses of identity, place, belonging etc. were only mentioned when sequences of places and impressions were present. More at the object level, a penchant for things that get lost throughout time was felt, for example considering the scale, the grain and the texture of old buildings. This is probably why Chipperfield’s analogues (de Solà-Morales 1996) approach, which formally, tectonically, materially, and on a narrative level continues the architecture of the past, can count on the general approval of the interviewees. And it is probably why new generic apartment buildings with more floors that the neighbouring structures cannot. There is a demand for a certain branch of ‘authentic experience’, for an accessible and comfortable public space and for an environment where one can learn more, dive deeper into history, when desired. Considered that way, a place is always a step towards ‘more’. That is why casual or implicit disclosure is valuable in itself. In Nieuwpoort-Bad, people seemed to like precisely that, the opportunity to explore, more than heritage objects such as the art deco hotel themselves. Heritage therefore shouldn’t always stand out.

Revisiting the phenomenon of adaptive reuse, the findings of Nieuwpoort-Bad should not pretend to instruct on ‘adaptive reuse’ proper. However, they point out that a building cannot be separated from its environment, as the latter is important as an opportunity — maybe the main reason — to 'discover' the building. Conversely, a building may offer some form of comfort to its surroundings — as a shelter for bad weather, a place to enjoy a drink —, thereby supporting the exploration of the environment. Accessibility of sites and their surroundings is found to be crucial, by many interviewees. Apart from mere comfort, a certain ‘right to the city’ (Harvey 2013) is being experienced. Public space assists the process of valuing. Gross privatisations and other exclusion mechanisms on the other hand disrupt this process, and less support for heritage may be the result.



[Plate 8. A mapping used for a second phase workshop on Nieuwpoort-Bad, arranging what was gathered from the free-form interviews. Hasselt University]

IMPLICIT DISCLOSURE AND HYBRID ASPECTS OF 'VALUING HERITAGE' IN GHENT AND MALINES

In the case of implicit disclosure, the situational framework reinforces a positive appreciation of the immovable heritage. Users and passers-by often experience a certain well-being. In the interviews of dialogue type 1, the interviewees mainly focused on appreciations that were sensory in nature, the "look and feel" as one respondent (EC, 66, M, Destelbergen) called it. In the course of the conversation, appreciations were often connected to personal memories and meanings: 'sentiments' such as nostalgia, 'sense of place' and 'sense of belonging', a notion such as 'historical awareness' or a function or value such as a 'meeting place'. At this point, the conversation often threatened to fall silent. Only after presenting a range of values, institutionalised (social) heritage values were put forward by the interviewees and discussed (or not).

It is of significance that we saw exceptions to this pattern among 'informed lay people', for example architects, historians or people with an architectural or historical interest. In the Predikheren (the former Dominican monastery, now public library in Malines), an architect and a building consultant were interviewed by chance. When asked about their experience, a rather objectified, almost professional appreciation followed. In the city of Ghent, a person interested in history, PM (69, M, Ghent), linked personal biographical elements to the historical significance of the Portus Ganda and buildings in the area (the old harbour). Although the appreciation of the reused heritage was generally more explicit than was the case in Nieuwpoort, the complexity of the valuing of heritage and the entanglement between

the various 'building blocks' was once again apparent. Personal and collective (processes of) meaning-making became inextricably linked and the formation of personal and group identities intertwined.
Moreover, the sensory dimension was also prominent. Several interviewees described as an added value the presence of traces of the various functions of a building over time. This dimension also increased their involvement in the building. After all, expert architectural and spatial interventions can resonate in an effect that strongly colours the experience of the building or place. This is evident from the case of the Portus Ganda in Ghent. The redevelopment of the site highlighted the historic character of the Portus Ganda, as a result of which the place began to connect with other immovable heritage in the area.

THE DOMINICANS CONVENT (HET PREDIKHEREN), MALINES

Many interviewees recognized the positive impact of immovable heritage on the environment and the neighbourhood. Within this, the immovable heritage often forms a landmark or functions as a meeting place. For example, the water feature on the site at the Predikheren in Malines attracts a lot of people from the area and beyond in good weather. According to the respondents, examples of adaptive heritage reuse such as these give the city a more attractive image. It appears to be an asset that several (cultural) activities have found shelter within the complex. In addition to the library, there is a café and restaurant; there is room for workshops and courses, and film screenings and concerts take place, which benefits the public image of the Predikheren. The library at the Predikheren also focuses on community activities, which strengthens the bond between the Malinois and the site.
Valuing of heritage as a practice turned out to be fluid, hybrid and process-based. Valuing of heritage is difficult to lock in tightly defined (heritage) values. What may make more sense in an analysis is thinking in clusters such as historical sensation, 'sense of place', 'sense of belonging' and (intergenerational) connection. This dimension turned out to be important for many interviewees, with the importance seeming to increase as a person gets older. It could be linked to the educational value of immovable heritage, which was cited relatively often by the interviewees. Immovable heritage stimulates curiosity about the stories behind it, as is the case in Nieuwpoort-Bad. Immovable property heritage and the stories associated with it help, for example, to bring children into contact with the past. A heightened sense of history and a sense of belonging can form the basis for a certain sense of pride. In several cases the sense of belonging and the sense of pride seem to go hand in hand with a collective identity. This concerns a set of values (for example diversity, resilience, openness and tolerance) in which one recognizes oneself or with which one associates oneself, understood here as an assemblage that oscillates between movement and fixation, between fragmentation and integration (Mouffe 1996; Hall 1996). A more accurate and complete mapping of the different clusters and their vectors naturally requires a broader research design than was possible for the current study.

TACTICAL HERITAGE VALUING AND THE TENSION BETWEEN GRIDS OF HERITAGE VALUES IN BORNEM

The case of Saint Bernard's Abbey in Bornem (which is being transformed into luxury housing, among other things) makes it clear that the handling of immovable heritage and the lenses through which immovable heritage is being looked at can be very different. For Abbot

L. (82, M, Bornem), the authenticity and identity of the abbey were always based on religion and community life, for him the essences of abbey life. With the disappearance of these two dimensions, which were very important for centuries, a 'living world' ceased to exist. The ingrained daily routines, rhythms and rituals through which the building was experienced and appropriated, disappeared with the fathers: "For me it is no longer an abbey. The building has ceased to be an abbey. There is no more monastic life. For me, the abbey meant religion and community life. It was precisely these aspects that could not be transferred."

[Plate 9. The breviary path at the Saint Bernard Abbey and Park, Bornem. Endeavour]

A 'living world' that has been transferred and, at least for the time being, is being continued, is that of the ‘vegetable growers’. The dialogical process of recognition is an ongoing negotiation of habituating, defining, redefining and reproducing affinities with values, norms and customs (Isin & Wood, 1999). For the last half century, following in the footsteps of the

fathers, they have their vegetable garden within the walls of the domain. "Actually, we are like the fathers, without having to live here". Here, too, stories were made and passed on. Will their 'living' socio-spatial practice be counted among the heritage of tomorrow? For the heritage professional who was dubbed by the vegetable growers the "desk man", that does not seem to be a foregone conclusion. The possibly messy, 'impure', practice of the vegetable growers and the ‘scientifically approved’ botanic garden planned on the domain seem to be on a collision course. In any case, the ‘desk man’ and the ‘vegetable growers’ appear to look at the domain with different eyes. Their means, environment, conventions and orientation differ.

[Plate 10. The vegetable growers at the Saint Bernard Abbey and Park, Bornem. Endeavour]

The process of identifying with a place, people, stories, images and other attributions is closely related to the access one has to certain fields and grids of values (Boltanski & Thévenot, 1991; Savage, Bagnall & Longhurst, 2005). Although they all try to work carefully and respectfully, the various actors involved, for example the municipal or construction

workers, nevertheless seem to value the heritage site somewhat differently. In the case of the property developer, luxury apartments in a historical environment are the intended result. In the case of the local heritage administration, the aim is to give immovable heritage a reuse that serves heritage and historical research and the (village) community. Thus, the process of valuing adaptive heritage reuse is also socially divided: different identifications and different modalities of belonging are possible. Public accessibility is also paramount for the place where people want to pass on stories through the abbey site and its layered history. This should result in an interaction with the neighbourhood and the wider environment.

The value attached to the accessibility of immovable heritage is emphasised by the majority of the interviewees. In the case of the Predikheren (Malines) for example, more than one interviewee was really pleased that it had not become an exclusive affair, not an "expensive real estate project". That the only aspect that turned out to be more difficult in the redevelopment project in Bornem was the private part, is therefore probably no coincidence. Remarkably, most lay people and 'informed lay people' showed a remarkably nuanced view of the management of immovable heritage. Both groups see the importance of retaining the function or of reuse, not only in order to be able to preserve this immovable heritage for future generations, but also because it connects a building or place with the residents in the area. This finding is in line with previous research on stakeholder collaboration that indicated that a vast majority of a local community think that local people should be consulted on matters relating to the development of studied heritage located in their environments, as it directly affects their futures (Aas et al., 2005; Niemczewska 2020). Moreover, equitable access to heritage resources by the local community and visitors is also important with a view to sustainability (Nasser 2003). In any case there is an understanding by lay people, and by some even a demand in that sense, that a pragmatic approach to heritage in which different aspects are balanced against each other, is of great importance.

Contributing to the heritage story, for example by showing friends and acquaintances the neighbourhood or city, gives a feeling of satisfaction and sometimes pride. This kind of involvement was also demonstrated by the more or less general concern about the material condition of immovable heritage. Degradation and negligence are viewed negatively and as a waste of what are ultimately collective resources. However, many 'lay people' continue to identify reused heritage primarily with a number of iconic buildings. Buildings that are threatened with demolition today do not often have this status in the minds of many interviewees, which makes the structures vulnerable.

LOCAL LIVED HERITAGE AND THE EVERYDAY IN LOUVAIN

According to the people the laymen-experts spoke with, the inhabitants of Louvain do not feel involved (any more) in the urban dynamics and the related heritage stories. After all, it is often about the university's past — the catholic university (KU Leuven) being the city's biggest employer and institution proper. This even has an impact on the formation of identity and social cohesion in the long term. The potential importance of proximity is seemingly lost.

The qualification 'proximity' is indeed to be found in the valuing process of adaptive heritage reuse. After all, this allows the perspective of users and interested parties to be taken into account. In this context, concepts such as memory value and narrative capacity will play an important role. In particular, it concerns the ability to make an important development or event from the past imaginable by means of adaptive heritage reuse. The need for a new

knowledge policy was discussed extensively (see also Gielen 2007). It is mainly about the ability to make an important development or event from the past imaginable by means of adaptive heritage reuse. Buildings, sites and landscapes offer an ‘authentic place’ to go and experience the story of the past. However, it should be borne in mind that it is still about a building, site or landscape plus a story. History does not lie in the object, but the object becomes meaningful in a historical story. Adaptive heritage reuse provides depth in time, because it has travelled a historical trajectory or refers to a historical trajectory (Frijhoff 1999).

[Plate 11. The art installation *Velodrome* (2021) by Elke Thuy and Bruno Herzeele, reviving the old Louvain passion for cyclism, Louvain. Eric Danhier]

During the discussion, a central topic was ‘micro histoire’, which refers to the history of everyday life, the history in which people can recognize themselves. The laymen-experts stated that, as they learnt from experience, on average the historical interest of lay people goes back up to 100 years and is usually linked to experiences within one's own living environment. In this, stories of family, acquaintances or impressions from the close environment have a large impact. This was noticed by the laymen-experts of Louvain when they organised an exhibition a few years ago on the impact of WWI on life in general in the then devastated city. Older people in particular were overflowing with stories about their parents or other acquaintances, which aroused many emotions. In this way, various historical layers started to play a role in current identity constructions, both of the city and for themselves.

The interdependence of history and memory has been enhanced by the ‘cultural turn’ in history and the ‘social turn’ in heritage policy (Klein 2000; Misztal 2003). The laymen experts stated that ‘micro histoire’ and familial and generational memories entangled with adaptive

heritage reuse also allow to connect with intangible heritage, customs and traditions from everyday life, which may or may not still be alive today. Recognisability can be nurtured. Though, in many cases, people are no longer aware of the heritage value in their immediate surroundings. So, at the project level, more effort can be put into making connections: between intangible and tangible heritage experiences, between so-called ‘book history’ and ‘living history’, between local communities and between generations. Adaptive heritage reuse acts as a carrier and trigger here. Communities rely on shared stories. Small stories and 'living history' shed a different light on immovable heritage that people use in everyday life or that they often pass by without questioning it. This provides opportunities for casual education. Stories on a ‘human scale’ allow more easily to engage neighbourhood residents, including 'newcomers'. Trajectories such as street histories, subsidised by the local heritage cell, give people an opportunity to discover and acquire knowledge. This is also the case with the Predikheren (Mechelen) and the neighbourhood organisation Macharius-Heirnis in Ghent and it is the aim in Bornem. In this way, associations between knowledge, the environment, stories and heritage are set in motion in a soft way. This in turn leads to greater appreciation. Adaptive heritage reuse thus becomes an active and conscious part of the living environment.

DISCUSSION

An ethnography inspired approach was embarked on to get a grip on the socio-cultural significance of immovable property heritage in Flanders. Several cases, related to immovable property heritage and adaptive reuse, were approached as open as possible. We interviewed people in the street and discussed those findings with laymen-experts. We mapped unfiltered, clustered and sometimes very messy appreciations of buildings and environments. Often, these appreciations are related to aspects of public space. Recognizable and especially quotidian readings of places and environments seem to contribute to the social effects of buildings and places.

Throughout the cases, the research process brought about a number of shifts in the approach to the research problem. First, there was a shift from heritage experts to the (casual) users of heritage, or lay people. In doing so, we focused on the 'implicit disclosure' that allows everyday practices (visiting a library, attending a performance, and so on) to be connected with heritage valuing. Second, there was a shift from a cognitive interpretation by experts to an 'unfiltered experience' by lay users. This unfiltered experience can be understood as a physical sensation, sometimes mixed with other notions (cognitive as well, associative, normative and so on). The performative capacity of the site, the building or the landscape on the user was stressed. This performative dimension, along with the unfiltered experience, lies at the basis of a dynamic process of appreciation, appropriation and possibly meaning-making. It is here that the third shift is situated: the shift from the value grids of the professionals — rather fixed and institutionalised — to a process of valuing that is probing; that has a fluid, hybrid and dynamic character.

Rather vague and complexly clustered appreciations and feelings of place, belonging, and so on, form the basis for further and deeper understandings (see the cases of Nieuwpoort and Malines for example). Making these appreciations explicit comes second, and is optional. Seeing it that way, heritage (management) is about creating opportunities which

help personal appreciations, however vague, to become part of and maybe stay part of the future of a site, a building or an object. Daily practices such as walking and visiting a library thus (co)produce places themselves. As Kate Moles (2008) writes: “Places are not only a medium but also an outcome of action, producing and being produced through human practice”. And likewise, according to Harrison (2013, p. 113), “heritage is caught up in the quotidian bodily practices of dwelling, travelling, working and ‘being’ in the world”. The basic conditions for achieving this are in general very ordinary, as the cases show. It is about the accessibility of a site, the permeability of public spaces, and a minimum of comfort. What also seems to matter is the state of the objects under scrutiny, and thus the very tangible dimension of things. Apart from the somewhat separate but not unimportant characteristic of ‘scale’ (see the case of Nieuwpoort), this concerns the grain and the texture of old buildings, on which appreciations of them appear to become grafted. In summary, a lasting link with everyday life and daily practices turns out to be crucial for (an unfiltered mode of) valuing to happen.

We argue that the findings of this paper point towards a (deeper) relationship between adaptive heritage reuse, valuing as a process and ‘implicit disclosure’. Precisely a more sensitive and at the same time dynamic approach is able to detect in processes of adaptive reuse the implicit qualities and values, while adaptive reuse as such does not always display this sensitivity.

CONCLUSION

Within the discussed research trajectory, we approached built heritage as connected, symmetrical and dialogical (Harrsion 2013; 2015), and with as many stories as there are users. What heritage is and how heritage is dealt with, forms the basis of negotiation and valuation processes (see also Smith 2006). Not only the process of valuing, but in fact also the associated social practices and what can be called 'unfiltered experience', imply an involvement of many lay people in heritage. It is a commitment that can form the germ of a more explicit and formal participation. Processes of adaptive heritage reuse as well, we suggest, might benefit from a more user-oriented approach, or at least from the general recognition of the social aspects of reuse.

It seems that there is great potential in actor-network theory, and maybe even more in the ‘operationalisation’ (see Latour 2004; Callon et al. 2009) of such an understanding, in order to detect seeds of values and subsequently make them part of a ‘politics’ of heritage. That is: valuing understood as a genuine and continuous process of deliberation, institutionalisation and the permanent reconsidering thereof. The limitation, of course, of such an approach is: where does it stop? And how to practically organise it? That is why, earlier, this approach was dubbed a reform rather than a revolution. As a matter of fact, however, the sensitivities touched upon in this text already find their way into practices of heritage, as the discussion in Louvain and the heritage related works cited in this paper prove — heritage is more than the highly institutionalised field that is so visibly present.

More specifically, as the cases indicate, there are clear implications for public space. Soft values such as accessibility, the quality and comfort of public space itself, proximity and a clear connection with everyday life contribute enormously to a broad appreciation of built

heritage. Consequently, a process of adaptive heritage reuse that implies accessibility makes it possible for a large group of people to appreciate the heritage structures involved. The attention thus generated, however implicit, may in turn benefit the heritage. Generally, people do not want new exclusive projects, as the cases show, with *The Grand* in Nieuwpoort-Bad as a particular exception to that rule (because without the Chipperfield project, there would probably have been a standstill, and hence a still derelict building and, as a consequence, a less attractive public space — interviewees sensed that too).

Larger privatisations of heritage buildings, mostly of a bigger scale or situated in a more urban setting than for example the abbey in Bormen, threaten to make the public space and therefore the city itself less 'porous'. And at the same time, 'adaptive heritage reuse' is often being invoked as a kind of lubricant to make large real estate operations happen[2]. Adaptive reuse in itself is more or less value free. It has positive and negative effects on public space. Attention for the level of 'implicit disclosure', however, gives rise to ways of keeping heritage, public space, the city and the appreciations of city dwellers and visitors closely tied together.

Certainly, keeping heritage explicitly public does get attention nowadays, but it could be even more in tune with a broad movement of the right to air, light, the city. It is probably possible to firmly embed something of the bottom-up appreciation of heritage — a certain interpretation of social values — in future policy, preferably in a more dynamic way than we are used to. This could in turn generate wider support for heritage sites and buildings, both in the human sense as in the non-human sense of rhizomatic attachments and connections to sites, objects, stories and regulations. Such a grounding of heritage in broad and symmetrical networks could as well generate an important potential with respect to management. What is more: in itself, heritage is not always able to cope with forces such as the financialisation of real estate. Taking what we call 'unfiltered experience' seriously, might just make heritage more resilient to these forces and may increase the chances of keeping it public or at least experienceable from public space. Because it comes to effects that in fact even include general well-being, it might be worth it to further explore the connections between heritage, its appreciation by the public, its effects, and the related modes of management and policy.

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[2] During the revising of the paper in the summer of 2022, the case of the Botanic Sanctuary, a luxury hotel in Antwerp's city centre, made headlines in the Flemish media. In the 2010s, most of the site of the former Hospital of St. Elisabeth, the oldest hospital in the city, was privatized. An old passage on the site remained publicly accessible. When the Botanic Sanctuary replaced the implicit barriers (mostly mental demarcation lines) that it had placed with explicit architectural props, this provoked strong reactions among a part of the Antwerp population.

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Figures & tables

Plate 1, 3, 9, 10: Endeavour
Plate 2: Onroerend Erfgoed [the Flemish immovable property heritage agency] & Kris Vandervorst
Plate 4: Jimi Dalen
Plate 5, 7, 8: Hasselt University
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