

***A Companion to Heritage Studies.* William Logan, Máiread Nic Craith, and Ullrich Kockel, eds. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016. 624 pp.\***

Reviewed by C. Kurt Dewhurst

The remarkable emergence of field of heritage studies over the past five decades has had a significant impact on cultural practice and cultural politics. This evolution has fostered a growing body of scholarship that is illuminating the concept of heritage and the critical role it plays in community life around the globe. *A Companion to Heritage Studies* is an impressive volume that includes thirty-seven chapters from forty-four contributors representing truly diverse perspectives on the field of heritage studies.

Organized in three parts—“Expanding Heritage,” “Using and Abusing Heritage,” and “Recasting Heritage”—the editors have assembled a series of essays that capture the often confounding challenges of creating effective cultural heritage policies and the complex impact that these policies have when put into practice. What is most welcome here is the presence of heritage scholars from multiple disciplines (including museum studies) who present case studies in thoughtful and perceptive ways that convey the challenges of implementing contemporary heritage policy and practice.

The editors frame the contributions by placing them in both chronological but also theoretical contexts. They note that, “when ideas of ‘heritage’ were initially formalized, their focus was on monuments and sites... From these beginnings, heritage planners around the world have sought to protect broad areas of historic, aesthetic, architectural, or scientific interest” (2). In the section on Expanding Heritage, the contributors trace the intellectual movement of heritage studies’ focus on conservation areas, vernacular structures, and cultural landscapes. Along with this steady change in trends and scope, the editors and contributors provide a fine summary of the role of the conventions, laws, and institutions that have played such a major role in heritage work in the past decades. The volume assesses the effectiveness of the international role of the World Heritage List as part of UNESCO’s Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and those conventions that followed. The editors call attention to the early role of heritage policy on national and local identity building and the eventual way that heritage policy-makers and practitioners have used heritage as a strategy for addressing societal issues associated with multicultural community life. One of the most valuable series of essays focuses on the explosion of scholarly work and public policy, especially internationally, on intangible cultural heritage. Attention is given to the role of memory as a construct in heritage studies along with the practice of collecting heritage.

The section on “Using and Abusing Heritage” is especially instructive to students, scholars, and cultural administrators. The essays in this section call into question the growing focus in many parts of the world on cultural tourism and the role of who owns heritage in local communities—especially communities that have been layered chronologically by generations due to immigration and resettlement. The attention to the socioeconomic development of place is an essential

---

\* This editorially reviewed contribution was accepted for publication in *Museum Anthropology Review* on February 25, 2016. The work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

element in heritage studies. Museums are acknowledged for their growing importance as sites for digital heritage and their responsibilities to collect and make heritage assets accessible to not only scholars but also to their local communities. It is important to add that attention is also paid in this collection of essays to the impact of war, ethnic conflict, and civil unrest to not only heritage sites but to the people due to displacement, “ethnic cleansing,” and forced removal.

The final section, “Recasting Heritage,” raises perplexing questions about the growing costs of heritage protection and the sustainability of funding the growing demand for heritage stewardship. The editors pose the question of whether it is necessary now to re-think and limit what is considered heritage in the twenty-first century. This provocative section addresses the current focus on the need to develop a more holistic and inclusive idea of heritage and also points out the need for serious consideration of the ethics of heritage policy and practice.

*A Companion to Heritage Studies* is a timely compilation of contributions from both senior scholars and emerging new generation academics and practitioners. While there are some places where there is duplication of chronicling the history of conventions and policies, the volume is a notable contribution to the field of heritage studies and is an excellent anchor work for classes in cultural heritage studies. Museum studies and material culture scholars will find special value in this book as well.

*C. Kurt Dewhurst is the Director of Arts and Culture and a Senior Fellow, University Outreach and Engagement; is Director Emeritus and Curator of Folklife and Cultural Heritage at Michigan State University Museum; and a Professor of English and Museum Studies at Michigan State University.*

<http://dx.doi.org/10.14434/mar.v10i2.21767>