



**Panel** 2.3. Protest(ing) Rural Heritages: The Making and Remaking of Heritage. Part I

**Panel organiser:** Griffin, Carl, University of Sussex, UK; Jones, Roy, Curtin University, Australia; Robertson, Iain, University of Gloucestershire, UK

Acts of protest linger long in community memory, the protest invariably a pivotal moment in shifting social relations. Equally, protest can also be conceived of as representing a catastrophic breakdown in social relations, a low point for the community, something therefore to be erased and forgotten. This tension is also experienced in profoundly dialectical ways: rural elites invariably wanting the commemoration of protest past to be suppressed, while protestors often want the act of protest – and the events that led to the protest – to be written in the rural landscape forever. Conversely, attempts to put particular places under the ‘protection’ of heritage organisations and law can also lead to resistance from those members of the community whose lives the inscription will delimit. Drawing on recent attempts to think through the ways in which protest is commemorated ‘from below’ and work in memory studies, this session seeks to examine these complex relationship in a variety of different conceptual, spatial and temporal contexts. Papers explore how past rural protests are used to revivify resistance in the present; the selective memories of communities in commemorating past struggles; or, battles over attempts to celebrate previous protests. In conclusion, the session asks why some rural protests are actively remembered and others not – and why community memories of some protests are actively subjugated – as well as how acts of commemoration and ‘protection’ can in themselves provoke protests in a variety of forms.

**Chair:** Griffin, Carl, University of Sussex, UK

Monday 19.8.2013 // 1400 – 1530 // Session 2 – Room A-122

2.3.1. Invoking Rural Heritage as Protest? The Western Australian „Shack” Settlements of Wedge and Grey

Paper

**Jones, Roy, Curtin University, Australia**  
**Selwood, H. John, University of Winnipeg, Canada**

During the early and mid-twentieth century, many recreational ‘shack’ settlements were established on Crown (public) Land in scenic, waterside locations around Australia. Characteristically, they evolved as farm and city families created structures at sites where they had camped in order to fish, swim and enjoy the environment. Their establishment was by transgression rather than protest, since the ‘shackies’ simply occupied unused land in remote locations. Over time, these settlements developed a distinctive architecture related to their opportunistic use of building materials and ingenious methods of obtaining power and water supplies and strong social bonds between the inhabitants. In recent decades, as more roads were built, and as more waterside land was demanded for development, many of these illegal settlements were removed entirely. Wedge and Grey are the only remaining shack settlements on the 400 kilometre coastal strip extending from state capital Perth to the regional centre of Geraldton. The community associations of both settlements have been resisting government proposals for their demolition for several decades and have recently taken the approach of invoking their heritage value as a justification for their retention. This paper considers a novel form of rural protest, namely the associations’ involvement in the production of a report, lodged in 2012 by the National Trust of Australia with the state Heritage Council, recommending that Wedge and Grey be placed on the Western Australian Heritage Register and that a plan be developed for their conservation.

2.3.2. „Old Events” as a Resource for Action in Times of Political Change: The Example of „Ecovillage Brodowin”

Paper

**Scholze-Irrlitz, Leonore, Institute of European Ethnology, Humboldt-University Berlin, Germany**

This paper focuses on “Ecovillage Brodowin”, 80km from Berlin in East Germany, home since 1991 to one of the largest organic farms in Germany. The issue to be discussed will be: What effect did the experience with protest and the development of action practices against the industrial use of land from the 1960s up to the 1980s have on the economical, social and cultural transformations since 1991? A landscape preservation area was created in Brodowin in the 1960s as the result of protests against new forms of land use – the destruction of the landscape in order to create large coherent tracts of land. A second wave of protests in the 1970s concerned the ecological effects of agricultural fertilizers on lakes and in the ground water, resulting in the creation of a forum on environmental issues. This group kept growing through the years, it organised protests and resistance actions, and since it did not fit into the political order of the GDR, it eventually split the village in supporting and opposing groups. How do the various groups cope after the political turn with the memory of these protests? What was the influence of the decision to transform the former farming cooperative into an organic farm? What are the sequels of these events on the present behaviour, thinking and action patterns of a group of people in village settings? The theoretical starting point will be provided by the ethnological understanding of social conflicts which result from the interaction of history, culture, social organisation and natural environment, as developed in cultural ecology.

2.3.3. Creating Something From Very Little: Manufacturing a Protest Heritage Icon

Paper

**Robertson, Iain, University of Gloucestershire, UK**

This paper takes as its point of departure a series of monuments to acts of social protest on the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. The more significant point of departure, however, is the statement by the driving force behind the project: ‘we realised that we had at least four events that were well worth celebrating so we up and sailed off from there’. The paper asks ‘why those and why not others?’. In particular, it focuses on the Bernera riot of 1874, a celebrated, iconic and even notorious event of the Land Wars. The question I ask is how did this happen? And additionally, how and why do we seek to memorialise protest events when the protestors themselves rarely explicitly cited the memory of protest past as inspiration for present action. The actions of historians and playwrights, were, it is shown, central in stimulating the cultural revival of the Highlands in the 1970s and 1980s and led directly to its commemoration in the mid 1990s. We memorialise to enable remembering when there is a danger of forgetting. But in so doing, we imbue the event with an iconic status far removed from that of the original. This is what has happened to the Bernera riot of 1874. It has moved from being a riot on Lewis to being the Highland riot, a synonym and mnemonic. The creation of a lieu de mémoire for the Land Wars was precisely the intention of the Lewis memorials. But this was rejected by the Bernera historical society who instead built a memorial for and by the local alone. Even at the local level and even when expressed from below heritage is always dissonant.

**Participants**

**Griffin, Carl**  
 Senior Lecturer in Human Geography. Author of *The Rural War: Captain Swing and the Politics of Protest* (Manchester University Press, 2012) and *Protest, Politics and Work in Rural England, 1700-1850* (Palgrave, 2014, forthcoming).

**Jones, Roy**  
 Emeritus Professor of Geography. Author (with Brian Shaw) of *Geographies of Australian Heritages: Loving a Sunburnt Country?* (Ashgate, 2007) and *Contested Urban Heritage: Voices from the Periphery* (Ashgate, 1997).

**Robertson, Iain**  
 Senior Lecturer in History. Author of *Heritage from Below* (Ashgate, 2012) and *The Later Highland Land Wars* (Ashgate, 2013, forthcoming).

**Scholze-Irrlitz, Leonore**  
 Director of the State Office for Berlin-Brandenburg Folklore. Author of (with I. Keller) *Costumes as a Cultural Phenomenon of our Time* (Bautzen, 2009) and (with S. Bauer et al) *Food in Europe: Cultural ‘Residues’ in Food and Body* (Bielefeld, 2010).

**Selwood, H. John**  
 Senior Scholar, Department of Geography.