

**SHARED HERITAGE:  
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL THEORY AND METHODOLOGY FOR  
ASSESSING, ENHANCING, AND COMMUNICATING A FUTURE-  
ORIENTED SOCIAL ETHIC OF HERITAGE PROTECTION**

A Dissertation Presented

by

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Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

February 2013

Anthropology



## CHAPTER 3

### PICTURING SHARED HERITAGE

Heritage commemoration and preservation are often treated as desirable ends in themselves by professionals, stakeholders, government officials, and advocates. However, these often strictly circumscribed activities, fueled by modernist anxieties, can actually contribute to further alienation of heritage assets and practices from memory communities and stakeholders if they are not seen in a wider social context of evolving collective memory and consciousness. I argue that orienting interventions toward the process of engaging shared heritage ethics (rather than particular heritage properties) creates a “political imaginary” (Gibson-Graham 2006) in which participants engage with heritage as a creative cultural strategy to deliberately and deliberately address the very alienating forces or effects that make nostalgic approaches to the past so seductive (Boym 2007). In this chapter I continue my discussion of the Hadley case study and present my participatory approach for enacting Gibson-Graham’s (2006) three-part methodology of ontological reframing, rereading, and creativity. My approach seeks to redefine the ends of heritage, not as momentary commemoration or decay-halting preservation, but as the continuation of a vital and transformative social process.

#### **Hadley at 350: A Timeless Anniversary**

The year 2009 was both a milestone and an amped up microcosm of normative heritage commemoration practices in the town of Hadley. Throughout the course of the year, Hadley residents and boosters celebrated the 350th anniversary of the town’s establishment by Anglo settlers (Miller 2009). The anniversary was marked by a series of 70 events (not counting repeat performances) that included concerts, dances, and parties;

original dramatic performances; parades; tractor shows; fairs and exhibits; farm, garden, and studio tours; hikes; a golf tournament, 5K road race, and decorating contest; lectures; feasts; and fireworks (Thayer and Miller 2009). A range of documents, artifacts, souvenirs, and monuments were produced to materially memorialize the anniversary, the town's heritage, and the commemorative events themselves. Perhaps no artifact epitomizes the self-referential qualities of heritage commemoration better than the hard cover, full color, *Town of Hadley 350th Anniversary Commemorative Book* (Thayer and Miller 2009), whose 125+ pages and 240+ images chronicle the year's activities; list numerous volunteers, individual donors, and business sponsors; and advertise presumed commercial underwriters.

In addition to memorializing the civic dedication of its authors and supporters, the *Commemorative Book* documents the range of heritage assets and social values that are recognized by contemporary Hadley residents and boosters as the official components of the town's historical agricultural identity. Furthermore, it embodies the un-ironic memorialization of the commemorative process itself through which the townspeople of Hadley proudly celebrated their community, their place, and their continuity. Although not as elaborately linear, nor as progressively-minded as the early twentieth century civic pageants that Glassberg (1990) has documented, the *Commemorative Book* records a year-long pageant of "small town" pride in the face of the continuing drama of urban encroachment and cultural change. Each event, actor, and heritage asset is connected through a single narrative that distinguishes Hadley and its residents as proud rural celebrants and successful preservationists.

Entering the community in the wake of the celebration, I found citizens who were primed to discuss heritage and its protection, and I certainly benefited from the momentum of the 350th anniversary. Considering the vast ground that the festivities covered, my challenge was to document and engage with the community's social ethic in a way that wouldn't simply parrot the values of the anniversary celebrations, but would produce new data about Hadley's heritage practices and understandings. Rural identity and farmland preservation were recurring themes throughout the 350th events; for example, the float that Hadley contributed (to represent itself) to the 250th anniversary parade in the neighboring town of Amherst (celebrated in the same year) was decorated with hay bales, farm produce, a tobacco barn, and "Preserved Farmland" road signs (which mark parcels of land under agricultural preservation easements in both towns, see Figure 3). (Photograph by author)). Throughout the *Commemorative Book*, numerous photographs captured images that conveyed an image of a vibrant farming community living in historic colonial homes on rich meadows nestled between the winding river and tree-covered hills.

Although the anniversary marked the passage of time, the images evoked in the commemorative events suggested that the town's environment and identity were timeless. The *Commemorative Book's* contents were organized by the seasons, implying a cyclical, rather than linear, temporal passage of community life. Narratives and presentations focused on continuity rather than change, and when artifacts of yesteryear were produced (e.g. antiques, carriages, old fire pumps, re-enactors' costumes) they served to enhance the appeal of the rural scenes rather than seeming to be temporally incongruous. Yet

throughout the speeches, scripts, slogans, and letters documented in the book, people were implored to remember: to reflect on the past, to make it an unforgettable year, and even to project these memories into the future. As Casey (2011:186–187) explains, “Commemoration not only looks forward in looking back, thereby transmitting deferred effects of the past, it affirms the past’s selfsameness in the present by means of a consolidated re-enactment, thus assuring a continuation of remembering in the future.” This dissonance between the timeless narrative of heritage identity and the contemporary concern with the passage of time is a product of the paradoxical nature of heritage as both symptom and coping strategy of the alienating forces of modernity: “It is as if the ritual of commemoration could help to patch up the irreversibility of time” (Boym 2007:13).

Official commemorations—like that of Hadley’s 350th anniversary—emphasize essentialized and timeless identities; they tend to mask the local variation in people and places as well as the dynamics of historical and cultural change. Furthermore, if commemoration serves to maintain a sense of temporal continuity, is the fervor of the commemoration proportional to the underlying anxieties felt when a community is confronted with the passage of time and the modernist effects of temporal discontinuity? And could this be observed in Hadley? According to Nora (1989), the objectification of heritage marks the loss of a living heritage ecosystem (i.e. *milieux de mémoire*) (see also Boym 2007; Connerton 2009; Lowenthal 1985; Ricoeur 2006; Williams 1973). The resulting “sites of memory” (i.e. *lieux de memoire* [Nora 1989]) and their attendant process of preservation compress time and space while simultaneously distancing us [of the present] from them [of the past] (Harvey 1989; Lowenthal 1985). Born from anxiety over forgetting, memorials help us remember certain things while permitting us to forget

others; they “conceal the past as much as they cause us to remember it” (Connerton 2009:29). These preservation practices often “preclude other uses” of heritage resources (Lowenthal 1985:xxiv), further alienating us from a living heritage ecosystem. In these ways, commemoration and preservation often mark an end point: not only of a typical heritage project, but of the un-objectified integration of the heritage asset in the fabric of ongoing social, material, and ethical life.

### **Photovoice: Beyond Commemoration and Inventories**

How then to move my ethnographic inquiries beyond the context of the 350th commemoration in Hadley while engaging with the same narrative themes of rural heritage and its protection? In *Sense of History*, Glassberg (2001) addresses a similar problem while studying New England town character: how to document distinctiveness of place and the creative process of place making in the face of clichéd, timeless, and essentialized views of New England people, landscapes, and identity. He cites the effectiveness of photography to elicit a broader range of memories and values that comprise residents’ sense of place and suggests that community photography projects paired with public meetings may expand the survey of relevant assets and sites and, when paired with historic photographs, could elicit more discussion around cultural change (Glassberg 2001:159–161).

Glassberg’s suggestion for public history research is consistent with the usage of photographs and visual media as part of qualitative research in anthropology, sociology, and psychology (Harper 2002). His emphasis upon public (group) meetings is similar to the participatory action research method, Photovoice, recently developed by Wang and Burris (1997; Wang 1999) to collaboratively document cultural attitudes and lived

experiences within the field of public health in order to craft more effective healthcare policies. Photovoice has also been employed in anthropology to document environmental values and issues among marginalized populations and to communicate these issues with policymakers (Harper 2009).

According to Wang (1999:185):

Photovoice has three main goals: to enable people (1) to record and reflect their personal and community strengths and concerns, (2) to promote critical dialogue and knowledge about personal and community issues through group discussions of photographs, and (3) to reach policymakers.

Photovoice further democratizes documentary photography by empowering everyday folk to frame their own images in reference to a given issue, and in doing so define what is of significance and should be included in public discourse. Furthermore, because the documentary photographs become prompts in facilitated focus groups, they potentially become objects of critical reflection rather than an archive of routine commemoration. In the three-step process of photography, ethnography, and public interpretation (typically in the form of an exhibit) I found an integrated method for moving beyond the baseline heritage resource inventory toward creating a deliberative space for shared heritage ethics.

Photovoice's three step process also corresponds with the three part ethical methodology (ontological reframing, rereading, and creativity) outlined by Gibson-Graham (2006) in their participatory action research project of enabling a "politics of possibility" for economic development. Their ethical project seeks to counter hegemonic perspectives and relationships across two domains. First, as action researchers, they are primarily concerned with performatively contesting the hegemony of global capitalism, which obscures the existing and potential variation in economic relationships that can



survive (and even thrive) within capitalism. Second, their treatise contains a meta-critique of academic theory and method; that is, in order to achieve the first project, academics must counter their own disciplinary reliance upon “strong theory” and deconstruction (i.e. techniques that replicate or reify the closed epistemology of hegemony) in order to effectively identify alternative economic frameworks (Gibson-Graham 2006). In both domains, the point isn’t to comprehensively explain or “domesticate” phenomena, but to expand the field of potential so that informed, creative action can be taken (Gibson-Graham 2006:37). When applied to the realm of heritage, creating a heritage “imaginary” means reframing the ontology of heritage to allow us to think and act untethered by an “authorized heritage discourse” (Smith 2006). It encourages rereading heritage narratives and symbols to uncover hidden or obscured values, meanings, or memory communities and to de-essentialize existing ones. It creates contexts for thinking and enabling alternative heritage ethics while remaining critically cognizant of the hegemonic discourse.

In Hadley, I designed the Photovoice project with these principles in mind. During the photography component, I engaged local expertise to collaboratively reframe the ontology of heritage in Hadley in three ways: (1) by combining individuals who have different levels of involvement and affiliation with the town’s official heritage structures; (2) in utilizing a visual medium to directly engage dimensions of perspective, scale, and composition, which aren’t normally self-identified in casual speech; and (3) by assigning particular photography prompts to expand preconceptions about heritage (i.e. what is considered heritage) and to challenge participants to imagine others’ perspectives or document that which is not physically manifest today (i.e. photographing the future). This

reframing step deliberately shifted power away from my academic expertise. However, I wouldn't classify my role as simply a facilitator (a role that professionals tend to turn toward in community-engaged projects). Rather, the step was collaborative: iteratively engaging participants' local knowledge with my academic perspective to widen the semantic (and symbolic) frame of reference for both domains. The process of interpretation and rereading was done at three main points throughout the project: (1) at each of the five photography group meetings, we would discuss the most recent selection of photographs; (2) at the three focus group meetings, participants spoke to and about the selected photographs in relation to specific ethnographic questions I posed; and (3) in my own analysis of the photographs and ethnographic data I collected. Finally, I sought to imbue the project with creativity throughout by linking tools and minds in new combinations to imagine possible outcomes and strategies for addressing threats to Hadley's heritage and the attendant ethical issues that were identified during the project.

That this project is about creating an "imaginary" and enabling an ethics that reframes heritage as a means to deliberately address alienating social forces, my implementation of Photovoice is but one component of an ongoing political process. My project isn't the last step in creating shared heritage, nor is it the first. For as problematic as heritage commemoration and preservation can be to the vitality of a living heritage ecosystem, they are the efforts of an active group of people who are (for the most part, at least in Hadley) well intentioned in their interest in their community, their landscape, and their cultural traditions. Their values and the responsibilities they shoulder (often voluntarily) are the foundations for building shared heritage, since the project of shared heritage is place-based and context-specific. In Hadley, the 350th was an important event

for many participants, and the project of creating a heritage imaginary is not to tear down the work that has gone on before, but to work together transforming existing knowledge and value systems to enhance the vitality of the heritage ecosystem. This work need not be trenchant or serious—while the public exhibit of Photovoice material provides points of access to disseminate ideas to others in the community, it was also an enjoyable community event that celebrated people’s work and input. My experience in Hadley suggested that such activities play important roles in building ethical communities.

### **Rereading Rural Heritage in Hadley**

In this section I present my analysis of the photographs and ethnographic data I collected during the Photovoice component of my research. As explained in Chapter 1, I recruited a team of seven photographers who lived, worked, or attended school in Hadley. Although I initially preferred that only residents participate, I expanded my definition of “community member” to incorporate people who may be identified as “outsiders” by those living in the community, namely four teenagers who attended an alternative learning center in Hadley but who live in surrounding towns. During the research discussed in Chapter 2, I learned that the threshold for obtaining insider status in town is more complex than one’s street address. Several informants introduced themselves in similar (somewhat facetious) form: “I’ve lived in Hadley for 25 years, so I’m just a newcomer.” Typically, multiple generations afforded insider status, but even an informant who descended from one of the town’s original Anglo settlers didn’t claim the coveted “old-timer” status. On the other hand, a farmer who recently moved to town and implemented several progressive and atypical farming programs is well esteemed and treated as part of the “old-timer” group. In that these labels and their assumed differences

in perspectives are masked in official Hadley heritage commemoration, I expanded my criteria for participation to consciously include these differing points of view among the photographers and their photographs.

Similarly, I crafted the documentary photography assignments to engage with themes that were absent or obscured in official heritage commemoration and presentation in town: notably, the perceived differences in perspectives and values between outsiders and insiders; the active threats to heritage in town; and the temporal dimension of cultural change (i.e. picturing past, present, and future contexts for the town's heritage). The six prompts in order were:

1. Hadley's heritage is...
2. My Private View
3. An Outsider's Perspective
4. Endangered
5. Gone but not Forgotten
6. Hadley's Future

The photographers were not given the full slate of prompts at the beginning of the project so that they couldn't curate their photographs for future prompts. Eighty-seven photographs were officially released to the project by the seven photographers and two photographs were contributed by two online participants via the project's participatory web-based exhibit (Labrador 2011b; also see Appendix A).

### **The Trained Eye: Photography, Landscape, and Memory**

The bus passed over the first monument. I pulled the buzzer-cord and got off at the corner of Union Avenue and River Drive. The monument was a bridge over the Passaic River that connected Bergen County with Passaic County. Noon-day sunshine cinema-ized the site, turning the bridge and

the river into an over-exposed *picture*. Photographing it with my Instamatic 400 was like photographing a photograph (Smithson 1967:52; emphasis in original).

Robert Smithson's 1967 photoessay, "A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey," satirizes the nostalgia of landscape touring through an unemotional blow-by-blow account of his self-guided tour of the "monuments" (e.g. steel bridges, concrete highway abutments) of modern Passaic (Lippard 1997:54; Rasor 1994). His recollection of encountering the Union Avenue Bridge (quoted above) refers to the body of visual knowledge we bring with us when viewing the environment, which enables us to appreciate the view as a scene (i.e. a "*picture*" or landscape). Although poking fun at the compulsion and redundancy of tourist photography, Smithson's photograph of a photograph represents the preconceived notions we have of what constitutes a photographic landscape and how our eye has been trained by previous imagery, including paintings, photographs, film, advertisements, and even other landscapes. Moreover, it hints at the complicated interplay between landscape, photography, and memory (see, for example Baer 2000, 2002; Huddleston 2002; Schama 1996; Stilgoe 2005; Wells 2011).

Cosgrove (1985), citing the research of Kenneth Clark and J.B. Jackson, traces the idea of landscape to Northern Italian Renaissance artists who created a new art form that applied the developing geometrical theories of perspective to depict space in a way that spoke to the emerging bourgeois mercantile class. From its beginnings, landscape painting was a "visual ideology" (i.e. a "way of seeing" [Berger 1990]) that objectified the world in a way that granted the viewer's eye a God-like perspective and was legitimated by scientific principles of spatial arrangement (so that the representational form becomes interpreted as "realistic") (Cosgrove 1985; Snyder 1980). This aesthetic development occurred synchronously with major advances in European cartography,

exploration, and colonial expansion, and the changing philosophies of subjecthood and property during the 16th–17th centuries are reflected in the new perspective granted to the viewer of landscapes: an individual, separate (and distinct) from nature, who can look [down] upon the world and ideally survey the order man brings to the chaos of nature (Casey 2002; Cosgrove 1985; Williams 1980). Thus, landscape art reflected and reified the social relationships between humans and between humans and the environment. The idea of landscape quickly moved beyond the framed canvas to the real world, enabling the appraisal of certain views as scenic as well as their artificial design and creation; a visual ideology that lives on today (Cosgrove 1985).

The genealogical roots of landscape stress a static representation of space and time; change is difficult to depict in the landscape painting genre, which is why Cosgrove (1985:57) critiques spatial sciences (such as geography) for having assumed this ideological feature. However, the integration of environmental sciences in the humanities and social sciences bred new perspectives on landscape in the latter half of the twentieth century. For instance, the development of environmental history and processual archaeology directed points of inquiry toward the historiography of human adaptation to the environment and the material vestiges of the feedback loop between humans and their ecosystems. Landscape was seen as a dynamic setting for human action and cultural and natural change with many possible points of intersection. These scholars contributed a temporal dimension to the landscape concept. More recently, postmodern turns in geography, history, and archaeology stress the experiential dimension of landscape: the phenomenology of transforming space as place and a critique of landscape as a cultural

construct inscribed on the environment. In short, postmodernism added a subjective subjectivity back into the frame of landscape.

Contemporary scholars of landscape blend the temporal and experiential dimensions to focus on memory and the ways in which human activities are inscribed on the landscape. For instance, Tilley (1994) stresses the contingent aspects of memory and place: we remember within spatial and temporal contexts just as we experience places within space and time. Landscapes thus accumulate these layers of activities and experiences to be accessed via our memories in the present moment of observation and inscription; as Lowenthal (1975:6) observes, “the past is not only recalled; it is incarnate in the things we build and the landscapes we create.” In turn, we rely upon “the past,” in the form of both collective and individual memories, to make sense of contemporary landscapes (Lowenthal 1975).

Our minds’ eyes have been trained to view our environment as landscape and to interpret landscapes in spatial *and* temporal terms. When Smithson observed Passaic’s Union Avenue Bridge, he identified picturesque qualities on the basis of the “visual ideology” of landscape (Cosgrove 1985) and a shared lexicon of visual cues that signal the monumental: the conscious memorial of history in the penumbra of the forgotten past. Yet, what of Smithson’s photograph of a photograph? While photographers project the visual ideology of landscape through their viewfinders, photographs themselves are not simplistic reproductions of reality. Rather, photographs are “traces” of their subject matters: “Unlike any other visual image, a photograph is not a rendering, an imitation or an interpretation of its subject, but actually a trace of it” (Berger 1980:50). Photography “fixes” the subject matter in time, at the instant that the photographer chooses (Berger

1972, 1980). Photographs don't simply capture the world as is; photographs record the observations of the photographer in time and space.

Although easy to assume that a photograph depicts reality—through its capturing of a moment of light, it in fact, does not. When Smithson remarks that the monument looks like a picture, he is referring to the visual ideology of landscape; however, when he feels like he is taking a photograph of a photograph, he is referring to the visual lexicon of photography—not reality. Photographs depict their subject matter in particular ways that human vision cannot reproduce. First, photographs are framed; that is, there is an imposed and finite border, unlike human vision, which is “unbounded” (Snyder 1980:505). Second, our eyes are incapable of focusing beyond the center of our view, whereas photographs depict a sharpness of focus and delineation among objects across their entire plane (Snyder 1980:505). Finally, the color of photographs can range far beyond the human eye's capabilities: from monochromatic sepia to high contrast hyper color (Snyder 1980:505).

Thus, when photographs evoke memories and speak to us of the past, they do so not because they reproduce what we have seen before with our own eyes, but because they represent what we anticipate we should have seen (Berger 1972, 1980; Snyder 1980: 509; Sontag 1977). A photograph carries meaning both in terms of what is shown and what is absent: “A photograph is effective when the chosen moment which it records contains a quantum of truth which is generally applicable, which is as revealing about what is absent from the photograph as about what is present in it” (Berger 1972:181). In other words, we take for granted that the photograph represents a moment in time (i.e. the mechanically-aided observation of the intersection of space and time), and we



comprehend photographs in terms of our personal and collective memories, much as we do with landscapes. In this way we can find both presence and absence congruous and incongruous with our expectations (as derived from our memory banks). Viewing a photograph is like encountering someone else's memory trace: the extent that the depicted subject is congruous with our own expectations is in part a measure of the alignment of shared memory. Much like Nora's (1989) *lieux de mémoire* and Connerton's (2009) memorial, photographs represent certain remembrances while marking what we have forgotten: "All photographs are there to remind us of what we forget... Because each one of us forgets different things, a photo more than a painting may change its meaning according to who is looking at it" (Berger 1992:192). As Berger observes, the "arrested moment"-ness of some photographs speaks to the alienation of the viewer from the historical context depicted (Berger 1980:57).

Among the Photovoice images of Hadley, perhaps the two that best capture this phenomenon are Jesse Shotland's *Fresh Sweet Corn* (2011; Figure 1) and *Local Pump* (2011; Figure 2). Taken in response to the first assignment, "Hadley's heritage is..." Shotland's photos consciously play off of the dissonance between visual reality and photography to evoke memory. *Fresh Sweet Corn* depicts a private farm stand selling corn. The image is a grainy black and white with a soft focus directed toward the center plane of view, which is emphasized by the circular vignette applied to the border. A similar treatment is given in *Local Pump* but with a subtle color effect meant to evoke vintage Kodak film.



Figure 1: *Fresh Sweet Corn*. (Photo credit: Jesse Shotland 2011)



Figure 2: *Local Pump*. (Photo credit: Jesse Shotland 2011)

Both images are purposefully nostalgic; the 1940s font on the sign in *Fresh Sweet Corn* and the boxy mustard-colored gas pump aid the effect. The viewer might not even

notice that Shotland has manipulated *Fresh Sweet Corn* to erase modern artifacts such as telephone and electric wires. Their absence completes the photograph regardless of whether the wires would truly have been present during the time period referenced. The graininess and soft focus are meant to lessen the hyper-real focusing capabilities of photography. The desaturation of color, especially in *Fresh Sweet Corn*, evokes nostalgia through its reference to earlier black and white media, but also evokes memory through the paradoxical effect Berger (1992:192–193) theorizes:

The sharper and more isolated the stimulus memory receives, the more it remembers. The more comprehensive the stimulus, the less it remembers. This is perhaps why black-and-white photography is paradoxically more evocative than colour photography. It stimulates a faster onrush of memories because less has been given, more has been left out.

Shotland parodies vintage/retro photographic techniques to transform contemporary landscapes as historic. Asked to photograph Hadley's heritage, Shotland self-consciously created a memory trace of a memory trace by removing detail from his contemporary photographic observation to allow our memories to fill in the rest. The present day subjects: an active farm stand and a newly installed gas pump, are thrown backwards in time, and Shotland uses his medium to play on our learned visual ideologies of landscapes and photography to capture a perceived continuity of Hadley's rural heritage. Both Smithson and Shotland layer photographs in photographs. However, whereas Smithson opted for a starkness to satirize the monumentalizing of the steel bridge and its wooden sidewalk—a sweeping away of the curtain to reveal the alienation of modernity, Shotland chose a creative playfulness to engage collective memory—a deliberate erasure to cajole the mind to connect the temporal dots between Hadley's past and present. For those who recognize the two landmarks that Shotland memorializes, the

images bring a smile—a slow nod of recognition—a bit of laughter once they realize that’s So-and-So’s new gas pump—a faster nod—that’s it—and isn’t that something.

### **Heritage, Distinction, and Branding**

When presenting my dissertation prospectus, a committee member wondered whether the Hadley photography project would elicit redundant images of the same iconic scene: a tobacco barn and its plowed fields. The commenter had good reason to wonder since the scene is familiar to anyone who drives the streets of Hadley and was oft-repeated in 350th literature, parade floats, and on the Preserved Farmland road signs erected across the town (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Preserved Farmland sign and its visually redundant context. (Photograph by author)

As though to prove this point, two photographers, in response to “Hadley’s heritage is...” took virtually identical photographs (Figure 4–Figure 5). Not only did they photograph



the same scene of a tobacco barn, plowed fields, and hills in the background, they photographed the same barn, from nearly the identical perspective (Windoloski chose to “frame” her image with a nearby tree while Remer stepped away from the tree to snap her photo; the women were not together at the time).



Figure 4: *Old Barn*. (Photo credit Debbie Windoloski / Hadley 2011)



Figure 5: *Forever Farming at the Base of the Mountain*. (Photo credit Emily R.C. Remer 2011)

Interestingly, while the photos are similar, the photographers have chosen to emphasize different, and somewhat contradictory features embedded in the scene in their photographs' titles (see figure captions). Windoloski's title focuses on the tobacco barn, which has fallen into disrepair as seen with the missing slats, overgrown vegetation, and a third hole in the roof that has gone unpatched. The barn signifies the passage of time—a rural quaintness—a romanticism that is further evoked through the tree branches that form a natural vignette around the scene. Meanwhile, Remer's title focuses on the persistence of farming, as represented by the recently harvested field next to the barn. The scene simultaneously speaks to the history of farming and its present day reality in town.

These slightly differing perspectives represent differing takes on the paradoxical interplay of nostalgic timelessness and the ever-present material evidence of the passage of time that picturing heritage can present. While heritage connotes continuity, it must do so by speaking in temporal terms; that is, continuity must be marked across time, and thus must incorporate enough difference so that the similarity can be recognized against the backdrop of changing historical contexts (Wobst 1999:128). For continuity to be recognized, it must refer to the past and the present (and imply the future)—within itself. Lowenthal cites T.S. Eliot's description of this intertwining within historic narratives: “a sense of timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and...temporal together” (1975:11). The photographers' choice for motif of a recently harvested field and the old barn mixes past and present in an agreeable and iconic way in the public memory of Hadley.

The other photographs that comprise answers to the prompt, “Hadley’s heritage is,” are fairly consistent in their depictions of rural life and landscape. Of the sixteen images curated by the photographers for the online exhibit, six are of agricultural landscapes, two are of farm buildings, and four depict memorials (three in a cemetery and one historical marker). There is one image of a historic church and one image of an old brick building that still serves as a potato packing plant (although the photographer entitled the piece *Abandoned*). One photograph is a macro view of a cicada on a cornstalk. Finally, one photograph depicts a family picking tomatillos on a farm.<sup>8</sup>

Like Smithson’s (1967) encounter in Passaic, the photographers recognized these scenes as “pictures” that represent Hadley’s heritage, incorporating both present practices (e.g. plowing fields, picking produce) as well as vestiges of earlier times (e.g. ruins of tobacco barns, gravestones). The similarity between the photos points to some of the unconscious ways in which community members learn to recognize their heritage in a fairly standard range of visual tropes, and how this has been successful in Hadley to the extent that two photographers, one who has lived in Hadley for much of her life and one who recently moved to town, can share a nearly identical view. To share a conscious, “official” heritage memory, one must learn the standard heritage lexicon of a place—eyes must be trained to recognize the elements that, when brought together, form the “distinctive” landscape of past and present mingling together and pointing toward a

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<sup>8</sup> This is the only photograph in the final selection to show people, which represents an unintended bias due to the IRB’s requirement to gather signed photo releases from all identifiable photographic subjects (and the photographers’ discomfort in collecting such signatures).

future. And, within the traditional, didactic heritage paradigm, one must associate that lexicon with one's own sense of belonging to the place and its community identity.

In this way, heritage is similar to a trademark, and is one reason why it lends itself to easy commodification as part of place-based marketing strategies. A trademark, such as a logo, holds value not in any natural claim that a company can make to it (e.g. originality), but in the investment in what U.S. law identifies as "goodwill," that is, the extent to which the trademark comes to signify the company's identity (248 U.S. 90 1918; Desai 2012). A strong trademark is one that immediately invokes the company's reputation in a consumer's mind; the worth of the golden arches of McDonald's has little to do with the aesthetic qualities of a rounded yellow M, but a lot to do with the reliability and familiarity of the sensory experience of consuming, say, McDonald's fries when compared to Burger King's or your mother's. Goodwill is created through repetitive transactions with the consumer that reinforce the brand's distinguishing characteristics (compared to the competition) while maintaining a high threshold of internal homogeneity in order to provide the consumer with an assurance of predictability in future transactions.<sup>9</sup> This is similar to how the social process of heritage produces ontological security and why the gravitational pull of standardized heritage lexicons can be so great, especially as the objects of heritage become commoditized.

Hadley residents share a well-defined lexicon of what constitutes their town's identity as identified in the Photovoice photographs, focus group interviews, and my ethnographic observations around town. These include rural landscapes, scenic views,

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<sup>9</sup> See (Ritzer 1999) for a deeper theorization of this process and a discussion of its broader social impacts.



natural beauty, the interplay of people and their landscape, a strong sense of community, the practicality of citizens, open space, a small-town atmosphere, and agricultural traditions and products. Yet, these features rarely stand on their own; in conversation, they are often discussed in contrast to other places to highlight and legitimize their distinction. If Hadley is rural, then one would assume that a more densely populated, cosmopolitan locale is both different and less desirable (Hummon 1990). In other words, community identity must be distinguished from the “Other,” i.e. the often stereotyped and essentialized image of those communities which are seen to pose the greatest risk to the integrity of one’s own (both in the threat to the home community’s distinguishing characteristics as well as from the intrusive arrival of new people and alien memory communities).

I found that this “Other” was close at hand; Hadley residents discussed their neighboring (and “daughter”) community of Amherst more often than any other geographic locale outside of Hadley (Figure 6). Amherst, which was originally part of Hadley, has a greater population density than Hadley due to the presence of the University of Massachusetts and Amherst College within the town’s borders. According to census statistics, Amherst’s population density expanded dramatically in the second half of the twentieth century and now has seven times more people and 16 times greater population density than Hadley. In contrast to Hadley, Amherst has a distinctive town center with a concentration of commercial and civic buildings. Although not an urban

metropolis by census standards, to Hadley residents, Amherst represents urban and suburban traits when compared to how they recognize their own town's rural character.<sup>10</sup>



Figure 6: *The Town In Between*. (Photo credit: Emily R. C. Remer 2011)

While Amherst is also very active in open space and farmland preservation, Hadley community members focused on elements of Amherst that represented contrast with their own town. For example, folks complained about the perceived differences in public works, civic services, high taxes, and farmland:

Informant 1: And in the winter, the minute you cross the town line, you're hitting pothole after pothole after pothole. It cost me \$900.00 and some odd bucks because I broke all kinds of springs and hammers. And the minute you come to Hadley, not one pothole anywhere. Roads are plowed, they're well taken care of. That's the big difference.

Informant 2: Yeah, absolutely.

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<sup>10</sup> For an in depth ethnography of perceived rural, suburban, and urban character traits and associated values, see (Hummon 1990).

Informant A: I went to the Amherst Post Office today. I can't believe it. It was about 8:45, the line was forming; the window wasn't open.

Informant B: I know. But the lines—always the lines.

Informant A: I couldn't understand it.

Informant C: Don't ever go to the Amherst Post Office. ... I think they are terrible.

Informant: [recounting a conversation had with friend from Amherst] "Every time I drive through Hadley, I curse Amherst." He said, "Why don't we have that here?" You know, they're paying twice as much in taxes as we are.

Informant: It would be like Amherst or Northampton that've lost all their farms.

Informant: We're not in Amherst, fortunately.

Community members also spoke of misconceptions that Amherst residents had of Hadley (making fun of Amherst's "cosmopolitan" attitude toward its "provincial" mother), such as this story told about a new coffee shop that opened in Hadley:

Informant: We are at the Esselon Café. You know, it's really a cool place. It was with people from Amherst, I think; and they looked around and they said, "This is too good for Hadley." [Laughter from group]

While these conversations focused on perceived differences, the subtexts of the stories didn't dwell on the perceived failings of Amherst, which were accepted as part of *its* essential character. Rather, they served as cautionary warnings of elements that shouldn't be allowed to invade, replace, or dilute the distinguishing characteristics of Hadley. In other words, the differences that community members focused on in their neighboring town represented risks to their own shared identity.<sup>11</sup>

The power of official heritage to shape local identities depends upon its internal "legibility" and its clearly marked boundaries between "us" and "them" (Scott 1998;

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<sup>11</sup> See Glassberg 2001 for similar examples of this conscious differentiation within other Western Massachusetts neighborhoods.

Yúdice 2003). Thus, heritage can be a socially constraining force, especially as heritage elements are objectified to signify identity and belonging (and perhaps even more so as that objectification is solidified through the commodification of tourist attractions, “local” products, and souvenirs). As elsewhere, nonconforming elements of Hadley’s heritage are ignored, veiled, or projected on to external places such as Amherst.

While the issue of *what* belongs in Hadley is often confronted in contrastive language with neighboring towns, the issue of *who* belongs in Hadley is less often discussed. Residents recognize old-timers and newcomers as two basic groups of community members. Newcomers remain outsiders until they learn how to negotiate recognition from the established members of the community:

Informant: Boy, I can remember...when we first got here, our tax bill seemed high, and Albert Williams<sup>12</sup> says, “Go call Robert Fleming.” So Robert came over and says, “Look. Go see the assessor. Tell them I sent you.” We went down with our tax bill...and he said, “Oh are you the ones with the kids? You live next door to Albert, next to Ida.” Here, the tax bill was cut in half.

But, not every newly arrived resident seeks old-timer status; some—particularly those with strong family or ethnic ties on which they depend for economic and cultural survival—may even find strategic use in remaining outsiders. Such was the case with a successful member of a newly arrived ethnic community:

Informant: His name was Henry—let me tell you about him...we didn’t have a record of the occupation of his [business]. ... So I went to see him and he says, “No speak English. No speak English.” Two weeks later, I’m at East Mountain waiting to tee off; there’s only two of us. So they bring in the third to join us and it’s this—it didn’t hit me at first, but he’s speaking perfect English, you know, two great giant Big Berthas in his bag and stuff, and he says, “Well, my name is Henry. I own the [business] in

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<sup>12</sup> All names have been changed.

Hadley.” And I thought, “You son of a bitch,” you know. Two weeks ago he couldn’t speak English. [Group laughter]

Henry’s story is humorous in how he skillfully manipulated his identity in differing social contexts with the members of the town bureaucracy. But for the most part, outsiders are unwanted and community members communicate this in various ways:

Informant 24: I once saw a bumper sticker that said, “Now you’ve seen Hadley”

Informant 35: “Go home” or something.

Informant 24: “Go home,” “Go Away,” or “Don’t come back.”

...

Informant 40: That’s great. Somebody told me they should have a trailer park at one end of town and a bad, rundown cemetery at the other end.<sup>13</sup>

Informant 24: That’s great.

When community members questioned this position, they were met with tension and attempts to shut down conversation:

Informant U: I have a mixed feeling. I think it’s a great town to live and I welcome at a limited pace [chuckle] so few families coming in. The schools can only take so much and the infrastructure at the water treatment plant. So growth has to be slow. But I don’t like that we’ve kept out working people. I don’t like it that there’s no affordable housing so that a guy who’s a mailman, or a cop, or a teacher can’t afford to live in the town...

Informant V: How do you do that?

Informant U: By having smaller houses, probably smaller lots, and maybe even apartment buildings. Hadley doesn’t allow apartment buildings, you know, unless you’re a—

Informant: V: I guess.

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<sup>13</sup> This statement, which was implicitly understood by the focus group participants, implied that by placing undesirable landscape features that stereotypically symbolize rural blight on either end of the town’s major thoroughfare, visitors would be dissuaded from venturing further into town or consider moving to the town. Ironically, such features (e.g., an adult video store and a “dead mall”) used to bookend the town’s east-west thoroughfare of Route 9, which has since been revamped (the video store removed and replaced with a new town welcome sign and a more commercially-successful set of malls). However, this was not commented upon in the context of the tongue-in-cheek suggestion.

Informant U: So that's nice for the White folk, but it's not necessarily good for the community at large. I know it's uncool to say that, but I kind of wish they were—

Informant V: Yeah. All of this has been discussed over the last 50 years, you know. ... Everybody's entitled to an opinion and someone will have an opposite opinion of what you're saying.

Informant X: Can we move on?

Informant V: Yes!

The group that is generally perceived as most alien to Hadley, and the people least discussed, are the “transient” farm laborers, many of whom are of African descent from the Caribbean and are either seasonally housed on the local farms or are bused in from more urban/diverse towns in the region such as Holyoke and Springfield. While these workers are essential to the maintenance of the active farmland that Hadley community members cherish as part of their heritage, they are rarely (and certainly not publicly the entire time I was in the town) recognized for their contributions to the vitality of the community.

One local farmer broke this silence with me one day when he introduced himself to me as a “farmer” and then corrected himself: “Well, we're more like Southern plantation owners—we get Jamaicans to do all the hard work.” He pointed to his rotund stomach and self-deprecatingly explained that things have changed: he's gotten fat from not doing the “hard work.” He then lamented the increased mechanization of farming as well as the reliance on chemicals and pesticides—nostalgically, farming just isn't what it used to be.

Throughout my research, Hadley informants identified the heritage of their town in terms of distinction and difference—that is, by what their heritage consists of as well as what it doesn't. The redundant imagery of the tobacco barn landscape, as exemplified by two nearly identical photographs taken by longtime and new residents, signifies that

which is present and cherished, and also represents a shared recognition of that which is (or should be) absent: exurban sprawl, immigrants, and migrant farmworkers who remain outside the frame of the photographed landscapes. In this case, the camera provided a conduit for the communication and interpretation of collective memory, and as the resulting photographs were discussed, participants relied upon the concept of distinction to identify and discuss their heritage identity. While on the surface distinction appears to revolve around difference, it is as much reliant upon similarity. The tobacco barn landscape is distinct because viewers perceive it to be rare elsewhere and unusually prominent in Hadley. Yet, this heritage distinction is also a reflection of community members' anxieties about how their landscapes and identities change throughout time.

### **Place and Placelessness**

One day, a few years before beginning this dissertation project, I was driving in Hadley and came to an intersection. Four completely flat parcels of land were laid out around me at a perfectly square 4-way stop sign. The yellowing stalks of corn were what my mother would call, as tall as an elephant's eye (by the Fourth of July). A nineteenth century farmhouse stood at one corner next to a red gambrel barn. In a flash I was at the corner of Washington and Munn Roads back in my hometown in Ohio. In that one moment I nearly believed I could turn left and reach my old high school or turn right and find my best friend. While the moment passed, I was left with a residual fondness for that corner in Hadley where my eyes no longer saw the mountains in the distance and instead remembered the Western Reserve landscape of my childhood.

This experience speaks to the power of our place attachments and the ways in which we view present landscapes through the lens of our personal *and* collective

memories. While heritage mediates group identity and belonging, memory mediates place, making space knowable and familiar. Thus, in considering an ethics of shared heritage, the significance of place (i.e. “spirit of place” [Turgeon 2009]) should not be essentialized as what it is not, nor should it be determined only by the acknowledged “old-timers.” Rather, it should be measured in terms both personal and collective by the ever-changing assemblage of associated community members.

While the tobacco barn landscape is a publicly valued “place” of Hadley, officially emblematic of the town’s heritage distinction, and therefore exhibits little variation in public renderings, places of personal significance in Hadley exhibit the widest variation. In this realm, Hadley community members were encouraged in various stages of my research to form their own associations and values based on personal memories.

When asked to take pictures of “My Private View” in town, photographers snapped a range of images. In order to capture the personal aspect of these views, some photographers moved away from the scale of landscape to the macro scale of elements on the landscape. For instance, India Meyers’ *A Foggy Morning* (2011), *Clover* (2011), and *Through the Grass* (2011), as well as Eli Catlin’s *Milkweed* (2011) and *Milkweed 2* (2011), and even Emily R.C. Remer’s *Bird Landing* (2011), focused on small details such as blades of grass or dew on milkweed within larger landscapes to signify what they claim as their own perspectives in Hadley—and that their personal attachments are formed on a more intimate scale. Many of these images, especially those taken by teenagers, were taken on or near the Rail Trail, which serves bike commuters and recreationalists. The only two interior photographs also belonged to this set: Emily R.C.



Remer's *Check it Out!* (2011), which looks out on Hadley through the window of the library and Kelly Erwin's *Inside North Star* (2011), which captures an unusually quiet common space in her school building, an effect aided by the soft focus and exposure of her photograph.

These private views differ sharply and suggest the conscious exclusion of eligibility of intimate private memories from the wider public heritage imaginary (the standardized lexicon of which was dutifully illustrated in the series of photographs taken for the theme "Hadley's heritage is..."). For instance, Janice Stone's *Woods Path* (2011) is rather nondescript, as is Remer's *Bird Landing* (2011). The most divergent of all these images, however, was Jesse Shotland's *Wing Wong* (2011), which shows the storefront of a Chinese restaurant in town of the same name. For Shotland, Wing Wong is his favorite place in town—it's where he goes to get a good, cheap meal, and he has a fond attachment to this place and an accumulation of memories. But, this subjective, individualized perspective was clearly not shared by many viewers of the photos. To most, the standard, conventionalized images were the only appropriate ones for this theme. One woman even remarked to me at the exhibit about what a "shame" that place was [to Hadley].

To many insiders, Shotland's *Wing Wong* belonged in another set of images: those that depicted "An Outsider's Perspective." These photographs mainly consisted of images of Route 9, the major commercial and commuting thoroughfare that bisects the town. This commercial strip is often seen as Hadley's "Other" within. Five images showed cars driving on Route 9: Eli Catlin's *A Long Night in Town Goes by Fast* (2011), India Meyer's *Lights* (2011), Jesse Shotland's *Hello and Goodbye* (2011), Debbie

Windoloski's *Heading to the Mall* (2011), and Janice Stone's *Traffic and Commerce* (2011). Kelly Erwin captured the bus commuter's perspective on Route 9 in her *Waiting for the Bus* (2011). Commercial establishments were also pictured such as Emily R. C. Remer's *The Walmart Strip* (2011) and Janice Stone's *Joe's Pumpkin Patch* (2011), which shows a Disney-fied version of a U-Pick pumpkin stand at Trader Joe's. Kelly Erwin's *We Are Bigger than We Look* (2011) was a tongue-in-cheek commentary: the commercial sign is in a prominent location on Route 9, and while it is meant to denote the size of the advertised nursery, Erwin uses it to comment upon how outsiders miss out on the true extent of the town. This was verified by focus group participants:

Informant 1: Most people don't know the rest of Hadley exists.

Informant 2: It's true.

Informant: As Bernie said earlier that about 75% of people don't realize that there's anything beyond Route 9, and I think most of us hope that it continues to be that way.

Thus if the tobacco barn landscape is the emblematic symbol of placeness in Hadley, Route 9 is the emblem of placelessness, so much so that Glassberg used a photograph he took of Route 9 in Hadley to represent contemporary theorizations of placelessness in *Sense of History* (2001:119). Prevailing critiques (Augé 1995; Harvey 1989; Miles 2010; Soja 2011) cite placelessness, the inability to "develop and sustain an authentic sense of place," (Glassberg 2001:118–120) as a syndrome of American commercialization and link it to their assertion that Americans lack a historical consciousness. The commercial landscape is primarily viewed in negative terms as sprawl (when occupied) or blight (when abandoned). Yet Shotland's *Wing Wong* is incongruous with shared landscape values surrounding place and placelessness in Hadley. Although several businesses in town are fondly thought of (e.g. a popular Polish lunch

counter, the local watering hole, a “pretty cool” coffee shop), the locally-owned Chinese restaurant represents a generic placelessness that most community members don’t value both because of its alien cultural and ethnic associations and because of the assumed sameness of Chinese restaurants everywhere.

Ironically, it is that sameness that give commercial landscapes their distinctive power to superficially dilute place-based identity: architecture, parking lots, and the shopping experience are faithfully reproduced wherever they occur (Augé 1995; Miles 2010). When you walk into a Target in Hadley, you might as well be walking in to the Target that sprang up down the street from my childhood home in Ohio. The reproduction of design across the landscape may provide welcome and predictable experiences to visitors, and perhaps even signify a shared sense of national or regional identity, although increasingly that identity is more likely to be brought about by shared roles as consumers rather than citizens (Miles 2010; Putnam 2001). Thus, while place is mediated by memory, so is placelessness. The generic qualities breed such familiarity that their distinction melts away. This was captured by Eli Catlin in his photograph, *Could Be Anywhere* (2011) (Figure 7), which depicts a hotel along the Route 9 corridor. Catlin cleverly exposed the photograph in a way that obscured all geographically identifiable data such as license plates and even the hotel’s name. This leads me to suggest that placelessness may not be the opposite of place, but represents those values and embodied practices that are consciously excluded by official memory communities in their lexicon of place and heritage. Catlin’s hotel is meant to be a home away from home—recognized and experienced the same in Texas as in Massachusetts, and in this way it is anything but one’s own home.



Figure 7: *Could Be Anywhere*. (Photo credit: Eli Catlin 2011)

Towns resist placelessness through planning bylaws such as requiring design reviews to attempt to blend the commercial landscape using particular architectural elements. For instance, the hotel in Catlin’s photo exhibits the symmetry, rooflines, neoclassical columns, paint color, and paned windows that comprise Hadley’s design guidelines. But, as previous critics have noted the decontextualized architectural elements, when mashed in with the logistics of contemporary commercial design, form a postmodern pastiche that parodies historic architecture as a theme park might (Klingmann 2007; Venturi et al. 1977). Adding a cupola to a hotel doesn’t create place; as one informant noted, having a “colonial style” Walmart doesn’t change her opinion that it’s a blight on her landscape. Nor do those people who wield the design bylaws feel they have much of an impact on the real issues:

Informant 7: Then we say, “You can—it has to be this color. It has to do this,” and then they put a building that looks like the [local business]. And we’re—you know.

Informant 8: But, what can you do?

Informant 7: And we only have so much that we can do. And then, there’s the [new building going up]...

Informant 8: ...Just what we need [sarcastically].

Informant 7: It looks awful, but we don’t—we can’t say, “No, you” we can’t say, “we hate this. We don’t want you to be here.” ... All we can do is say, “It can’t be this color, and it can’t be too tall, and it can’t be—the lights, blah, blah blah.”

Hadley community members have a complicated relationship to the placelessness of Route 9 that reveals how placelessness, like place, is culturally constructed, mediated through memory, and maintained through a shared ethics. In fact, following Gibson-Graham’s directives for rereading, I suggest that Route 9’s placelessness is critical to enabling and sustaining a shared heritage ethics in town. Whereas the neighboring town of Amherst provides a foil on which Hadley community members can project the undesirable and threatening elements of their own identity, Route 9 is undeniably within their town’s boundaries and is of central focus to outsiders who view their town. Thus, the Route 9 corridor presents an opportunity for Hadley community members to confront their history of making the Route 9 landscape and to actively discuss the internal values represented by Route 9’s placelessness. In other words, Route 9 pushes the heritage issue in town because it provides evidence that threats to the community’s ethics are not simply exerted by outside forces (e.g. outside developers), but are part of complex histories that implicate community members. Rather than omit it from local heritage commemoration (such as the 350<sup>th</sup>) as non-heritage or non-place, Route 9 should be reintegrated into such narratives.

Conversations about Route 9 were the most passionate that I witnessed—more so than the enthusiastic discussions of what makes Hadley special. The Route 9 corridor is both actively embraced as that which makes the rest of Hadley possible and actively disowned as part of the town’s character—oftentimes by the same person within the same conversation.

Informant: What commercial development has done for Hadley is it’s made their tax rate so attractive to people in Leverett and Amherst and other places that would’t think of living in Hadley move to Hadley, so you have to balance...it’s all on Route 9 and there it is, and the rest of the town is pretty much like it was 50 years ago, pretty much. So, it’s a balance. You either wanna pay Amherst taxes or you have Route 9 commercially developed.

Informant: It’s a trade-off. I think it worked well for Hadley. If Hadley hadn’t allowed this [Route 9] to go on, there wouldn’t be farms here....It’d be like Amherst or Northampton that’ve lost all their farms.

Informant: If all you focus on is Route 9, you’re not looking at Hadley. That is not Hadley. It’s a part of Hadley, a small part.

Informant: ...they know that Route 9 is not Hadley.

Informant 1: I was driving down Route 9 yesterday, I guess, maybe today, I don’t know, and I—there’s a whole stretch now that’s just a big mess ....And I thought, well now, just take this whole road, just take it, and build it up and let it be what it is. And I didn’t feel that way. I’d never felt that way....I remember [a former selectboard member] saying, “Well, it doesn’t matter if they build these malls....And you can let them. It doesn’t matter, because then it’s already done. And now, it keeps the part where we are nicer, so they won’t build.” And I thought—I hadn’t really thought about that, but I haven’t forgotten... Well, that’s what’s happening. Route 9 is developed....But I don’t think [the businesses] pay enough taxes...

Informant 2: ...They use our resources tremendously.

Informant 1: Yeah.

Informant 2: I don’t think they give back equally.

Informant 1: Not that much.

Landscape and place are dynamic, socially-produced concepts; yet, so too are the commercial, “supermodern,” landscapes of placelessness (Augé 1995:78).

Informant: So there was the mall and then there was the new mall, and then there was the dead mall, and then there was the mall of the living dead, and then a whole new generation of these malls going through these different phases.

Such commercial non-places (or every-place) provide an important counterpoint to the standardized lexicon of rural place-making. That is, non-places are not vacuums of place, they are ever-present signifiers and reminders of that which should remain absent but in their presence prompt anxiety and social tension. Non-places are highly fraught and socially loaded places. In a shared heritage ethics, this tension between the nostalgia of place and the anxiety of non-place (and the corresponding senses of belonging and disassociation) should be centered in public discussion rather than conveniently outside of the photograph's frame (as in the *Commemorative Book*) or dismissed as "not Hadley" (as claimed in the focus groups).

### **Hadley's Future Heritage: Eden and Apocalypse**

Community members use heritage to anticipate the future in ways that quell insecurities about the unknown. The continuity of shared memories, identities, and places provides a sense of security and a roadmap for ethical choices. Just as one person finds the small town atmosphere of Hadley comforting, another can experience it as a stifling "boondocks," and yet another can experience this entire range of emotion in one lifetime as one informant recounted who returned to his hometown to retire. Whereas Wing Wong is Shotland's special place, to others, it's representative of ethnic intrusion or the undesirable elements of the placelessness of Route 9. Similarly, views of the future incorporate fears and hopes that aren't shared by all and attest to how the alienation of modernity, often theorized as an external threat, is not experienced as a single essential

reality by individuals—despite the official heritage imaginary that sees past and future as moral opposites.

The difficulty of publicly expressing less dualistic, personal views of Hadley's changing identity was made clear when the volunteer photographers were asked to capture images of Hadley's future. They were at first stumped, being attuned to heritage representations that freeze time to preserve a timeless, clearly defined essence. Not to mention the greater challenge of how one can fix in time that which has not yet occurred. This presented a much larger task than the previous assignment, "Gone but not forgotten," for we more readily see traces of the past than we see harbingers of the future. But, a shared heritage ethics implies a moral imperative to liberate ourselves from essentialized images of "the past" that are somehow more authentic or authoritative than the historical conditions that truly threaten to undermine the cultural, social, and economic foundations of community-building. Doing so will enable an ethics in which the heritage imaginary is an inclusive and expansive space of hope rather than an exclusive and contracting space of reaction and fear. Our future's past, the traces of our future memories, identities, and places are present in our contemporary material surroundings and creative capacity. Wobst reminds us that our materialities are our "products and precedents" for our behavior (1999); the future, in a way, is inscribed now.

In this light, the photographs of Hadley's future heritage could be categorized in two camps: optimistic and pessimistic. The optimistic images represented symbols of hope, continuity, and adaptability. Eli Catlin's *Finn* (2011) depicts a young child cradling an adult-sized guitar, indicating an intergenerational transmission of knowledge, and Emily R.C. Remer's *Teach Your Children* (2011) implicates the educational system and



parents in her command. India Meyer's *The Youth* (2011) depicts a group of teenage girls walking down Route 9 holding hands: symbolizing the bonds that are maintained among her peers, upon which the future rests (even amid the placelessness of Route 9!). Several photographs depicted farmland under active preservation or prioritized for future preservation efforts such as Janice Stone's *Vision of Future Great Meadow Protected from Development* (2011) and Emily R. C. Remer's *Forever Farmland* (2011). Emily R.C. Remer's *We Support Local Agriculture —Be a Local Hero* (2011) emphasizes continuity and community values coupled with instructions. Janice Stone's *Future Farms—APR and CSA* (2011) speaks to the capacity of Hadley's farmers to adapt to changing conditions—from integrating solar panels on tobacco farm roofs to reconfiguring risk management through community-supported agriculture.

While optimistic visions offered directives, pessimistic, dystopic images were warnings. For instance, Kelly Erwin's *Empty Parking Lot* (2011) and Eli Catlin's *Caution* (2011) question the limits and implications for further development of Route 9 with Erwin's photo reminding residents of the life cycles of malls and dead malls. Janice Stone's *Future Solar Farm* (2011) shows a sheep pasture slated for development by the University of Massachusetts Amherst, whose towering dormitories loom over the otherwise peaceful view in the background. Along the same lines, Windoloski's *Disappearing Bucolic Views* (2011) echo Catlin's image of endangered land in *For Sale* (2011).

The dichotomy of ethical directives and warnings was captured nicely in Jesse Shotland's *Wasteland / Paradise* (2011) (Figure 8). In this diptych, Shotland shows two images of the same view of a soccer field, corn field, and housing project. Through

photo-manipulation, Shotland expresses divergent paths for the landscape's future. In this way, Shotland de-essentializes the march of time and the progress of modernity (which underwrites alienation) by posing the two futures as possible, and perhaps implying that it could go either way—whether by chance or human intervention is left to the viewer to imagine. Shotland's diptych pictures the potential of the future in landscape form. In this way, he playfully inverts our visual ideology of landscape and photography to enable us to imagine forward in time rather than back. His image invites creativity about how we plan to arrive at the Paradise view and actively avoid the Wasteland and reveals that every landscape holds the capacity to change in ways toward place and placelessness—and that these views may in fact be different matters of perspective within an ethical framework rather than material difference.

Thus, the Hadley Photovoice project demonstrated the central heritage-related concerns and desires of a rural community experiencing persistent and sometimes painful social and economic change. The project attempted to dig deeper than the official heritage imagery canonized in the *Commemorative Book*, which both marks the alienation of a living heritage ecosystem and masks the dynamism of the lived experiences of ongoing social, material, and ethical life. By combining photography with public ethnography, the Hadley Photovoice project documented the complex intertwining of landscape values, collective and private memories, emotional attachments and disassociations, and community identity boundaries. These meanings are often transmitted through standardized heritage lexicon, which inscribe distinction upon the landscape. However, this distinction relies upon presumptions and identifications of

differences and similarities that carry social implications for those who intrude upon or unwittingly cross such boundaries.

In “rereading” Hadley’s heritage—both in images and conversation—I found that the landscape most explicitly distanced from the town’s official heritage was also ambivalently regarded as the means to maintain those elements that were most highly valued as distinguishing characteristics of Hadley’s heritage. The “non-place” of Route 9 was not a vacuum of meaning nor the antithesis of Hadley’s placeness but a highly fraught locus for place and identity to be delineated, contested, *and* reproduced. Thus, shared heritage ethics must incorporate the future of such “non-places” into discussions of and plans for the future of any place’s heritage. Doing so may not only address the sustainability of such economic relationships (e.g., that the taxes collected from Route 9 businesses are only able to support heritage conservation efforts in other parts of town as long as those businesses are successful) but also transform the anxiety, fear, and resentment associated with non-places into a healthier regard of landscape, identity, and heritage as holistic and historically-contingent concepts. Such a transformation may be necessary in supporting an ethics in which the future becomes a creative and hopeful space that welcomes internal difference *and* distinction and the publicly interpreted past accrues many facets as community members publicly interpret or communicate their personal experiences in light of collective memory.



Figure 8: *Wasteland / Paradise*. (Photo credit: Jesse Shotland 2011)

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