

Uninherited Heritage: Tradition and Heritage Production in Shetland, Åland and Svalbard

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Abstract: Heritage implies inheritance, a community-negotiated concept defying easy historical determinism. Utilising Ronström's distinction between tradition and heritage, this paper uses case studies from the islands of Shetland, Åland, and Svalbard to analyse how the uninherited nature of some heritage can influence its reception by the local community. These receptions vary and influence attempts to develop heritage under the world heritage ideal or for tourism, which is so vital to many island communities. Local governments and tourism professionals often interpret heritage objects differently than do local communities. Although heritage can be created without community consent, local support cannot be taken for granted. This paper argues that heritage-promotion initiatives should take into account the special issues surrounding uninherited heritage.

Keywords: heritage; islands; tourism; Shetland; Åland; Svalbard

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Introduction

All history – including the history presented here – selectively interprets unknowable past events. Heritage production is an historical process that creates and maintains ownership over a particular past. As Tunbridge and Ashworth write, when people produce heritage, 'the present selects an inheritance from an imagined past for current use and decides what should be passed on to an imagined future' (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996, p. 6). The essentially intangible concept of inheritance seems to be central to

heritage, and it is this that distinguishes both tangible and intangible heritage from other forms of tangible and intangible culture.

What, then, happens to cultural objects that are not subject to claims of inheritance? This paper explores local engagement with uninherited heritage, defined as potential or existing heritage objects that are claimed as inheritance by neither the local communities in which they reside nor any particular external group. Such objects either do not seem to be heritage at all or can only be construed as heritage generically, for example, as supranational or world heritage. The Northern European island communities of Shetland (UK), Åland (Finland), and Longyearbyen (Norway) serve as case studies for considering various reactions to such heritage.¹ These case studies are based on a combination of ethnographic and historiographic research.²

Tradition and heritage

Owe Ronström of Gotland University has produced a conceptual model that focuses less on heritage *objects* and more on the processes involved in their selection and production. Eschewing the tangible/intangible heritage labels, he utilises the Swedish concepts of ancient lore (*fornminnen*), tradition (*tradition*), and heritage (*kulturarv*), all of which are usually labelled 'heritage' in English today. The distinction Ronström draws between tradition and heritage complements and enhances the applicability of Smith and Waterton's observations on *intangible heritage* and *the authorised heritage discourse* respectively (Smith 2006, Smith and Waterton 2009).

For Ronström, 'While tradition tends to use time to produce "topos", place, and distinct localities ..., heritage tends to use place to produce "chronos", specific pasts that are more loosely rooted in place'. Tradition usually centres on 'customs, rituals and expressive forms' and heritage on 'monuments, groups of buildings and sites'. Tradition and heritage deal in different emotions, with tradition producing 'a longing for and mourning over lost good old days, together with commitments to honour a specific local past' and heritage evoking 'a much more generic past that you may pay an occasional visit to without much nostalgia, obligation or grief' (Ronström 2008, pp. 8–9). Tradition is thus an exclusive quantity: entrance into tradition requires a position in its genealogy, requires becoming part of the community of interlinking people that turns *geography* into *place*.

Using these categories of 'production of collective memory', Ronström analyses how Gotland (Sweden) as a whole is claimed as inheritance by rural tradition promoters and urban heritage promoters. Heritage has the upper hand in the town of Visby, where restoration and building codes have turned the town centre into a homogenous medieval heritage product (Ronström 2008, pp. 4–6). Ronström asserts that:

If tradition produces the local, heritage is clearly tied to larger units, such as the nation, Europe, or as in World Heritage, the entire world. Not everybody can have or appoint heritage, which is why heritage production, to a much higher degree than tradition, is in the hands of specially approved professional experts who select what is to be preserved according to certain approved criteria. ... Heritage tends to 'empty' spaces, which makes it possible to refill them with all kinds of inhabitants. In Visby, the Middle Ages is rhetorically populated with people of diverse origins, Germans and Swedes, jokers and jesters, tradesmen, knights and violent kings. But the space does not belong to any of these people. Heritage resists local people's claims for indigenous rights. While tradition can be produced locally, the production of 'heritage' is centralised and produces something beyond the local and regional, beyond the distinctive, the ethnic and the multicultural. It is everybody's and therefore nobody's. (Ronström 2008, p. 9)

This model's tradition/heritage dichotomy is useful outside of the Gotland context. Unlike the tangible/intangible dichotomy, the tradition/heritage distinction promotes a procedural consideration of historical production. For example, that quintessential Scandinavian inheritance product, the folklife museum, which holds a hazy middle ground in the tangible/intangible heritage system, benefits from a tradition/heritage analysis: there are significant procedural differences between heritage-oriented national folklife museums like Stockholm's *Skansen* and Århus' *Den Gamle By* on the one hand and tradition-oriented local folklife museums on the other, regardless of the fact that both types can be housed in old buildings, include performance traditions, and may be either rural or urban. In the case studies below, we will use Ronström's tradition/heritage distinction to shed light on some difficult issues involving inheritance of the past.

Shetland

Shetland (pop. 22,000) is a North Atlantic archipelago in the United Kingdom. The Northern Isles (Orkney and Shetland) were first settled by a Mesolithic people from mainland Scotland, and the Iron Age saw the construction of stone buildings, including round towers called *brochs*. Later, the islands were exposed to Pictish cultural influence, again from Scotland. Norwegian pirates arrived in the Northern Isles around 790 CE, leading to large-scale Norse settlement in the following decades. Whether the Norse drove out, assimilated, or exterminated the native population is unknown, but regardless, their settlement resulted in the islands possessing an almost purely Norse culture (Grydehøj 2008, pp. 178–179).³ In about 875, the Northern Isles entered the Norwegian state, and Shetland retained a primarily Scandinavian culture for the next four centuries, after which Lowland Scottish cultural influence increased (Wiggen 2002). Orkney and Shetland were transferred to the Scottish crown in 1468 and 1469 respectively, and by the mid-1500s, Shetland was undergoing rapid Scottification, leading to the eighteenth century extinction of the islands' Norse language (Barnes 1998).

Language loss need not imply loss of cultural distinction from Scotland. However, following the triumph of Scots English, it is difficult to locate Shetland cultural features that are distinctively *Scandinavian*, and by the early 1800s, few Shetlanders considered themselves Norse (Cohen 1983, pp. 316–318). Concurrently though, ethnic and cultural Norse Romanticism, previously a minor strand in British literature, blossomed in England and mainland Scotland, becoming a prominent nineteenth century literary trend.

Scottish Romanticism was not focused solely on Vikings. Sir Walter Scott was instrumental to both Lowland and Highland Romanticism, and this author's 1814 visit to Shetland was formative for Norse Romanticism as well. In 1822, Scott published his novel, *The Pirate*, which has as one of its principal settings a sixteenth century Shetland castle that was already in ruins in Scott's day (see Figure 1). Scott gave this castle a Viking historical context, naming it 'Jarlshof' (*Earl's Court*) and attributing it to 'a Norwegian chief, an ancient Earl of the Orkneys' (Scott 1889, p. 3). He thereby transformed a Lowland Scottish building into part of the emergent Viking ideal with which Scottish intellectuals were to imbue Shetland. In the decades following *The Pirate's* publication, Jarlshof became a favoured tourism site for visitors who saw in the ruins Scott's world of Viking descendants (Wawn 2000, pp. 66–83).

Only in the mid-nineteenth century did many Shetlanders themselves begin making Norse cultural links. Anti-Scottish sentiment, blaming the islands' poverty on the misgovernance of Scottish landowners, substantially predated Scandinavian associations. Nevertheless, as links with off-island intellectuals strengthened in the 1860s and 1870s, the external Norse ideal began taking hold internally. By the 1890s, exultation of Viking inheritance was prominent in Shetland's burgeoning literature, and it has been an aspect of local self-identification ever since (Cohen 1983).

One might expect Jarlshof to remain a focal point for present-day Norse sentiment. Inheritance, however, is not static. Subterranean prehistoric structures were discovered near the castle in 1897, and subsequent excavations unearthed Bronze Age, Iron Age, Pictish and Norse houses. Jarlshof is a multiperiod archaeological site, yet its pre-Norse ruins are the most visually impressive, ranking Jarlshof as one of Northern Europe's best-preserved Bronze and Iron Age villages. The remains of another multiperiod site, Old Scatness, have been discovered nearby and gradually excavated within the last decades. The recentness of Old Scatness' excavation has permitted the archaeology to be structured as heritage from the start: replica pre-Norse houses stand alongside the ruins, facilitating generic prehistoric roleplaying, in which visitors try their hands at reinvented Pictish crafts and listen to stories from costumed employees. Jarlshof and Old Scatness operate as a single heritage unit, with visitors viewing remains of the past at Jarlshof and *experiencing* this past at Old Scatness.

Today, Shetlanders feel far more Scandinavian than they did in Scott's time, yet Jarlshof is no longer considered Norse inheritance. Perhaps justifiably, since the Norse eradicated the islands' indigenous culture, today's Shetlanders do not view themselves as inheritors of pre-Norse culture: they feel little emotional attachment to, and are but infrequent visitors of, pre-Norse sites in general. For Shetlanders, Jarlshof has transformed from a Lowland Scottish site to a Norse site to a pre-Norse site.



Figure 1. Jarlshof, Shetland, with pre-Norse ruins in the foreground and Lowland Scottish castle in the background. © A. Grydehøj, 2007.

Archaeologically speaking, Jarlshof is pre-Norse, Norse, *and* Lowland Scottish. Similarly, among Shetland's other visually impressive pre-Norse sites (like Mousa Broch and Clickimin Broch) are a number of archaeologically significant but visually unimpressive Norse sites (like Viking Unst and Jarlshof itself). Nevertheless, since only the visually impressive sites are exploitable for tourism by the local government and tourism bureau, the promoted tourism strategy has failed to engage most Shetlanders, for whom only the islands' traditions – Norse lifestyle and customs – possess meaning. The local authorities' inability to adapt to this has hampered tourism initiatives (Grydehøj 2008).

This is not a problem in Orkney, which possesses a similar cultural history: in contrast to Shetlanders, Orcadians claim inheritance over *their* islands' pre-Norse archaeology (Lange 2007, p. 37). The Shetland government believes that Orcadians embrace pre-Norse heritage because it has been marketed internally for decades, and it is implied that constant internal promotion of Shetland's pre-Norse sites will eventually spur local appreciation (Grydehøj 2008, p. 182). Nevertheless, Orkney and Shetland

differ in more than just marketing. Similar though the Orcadian and Shetland pasts may be, the archipelagos' local identities underwent divergent development. Orkney's literary golden age began in the early 1800s, when many archaeologists still believed that Northern Scotland's pre-Norse inhabitants had been of Scandinavian extraction. Although this theory was later disproved, Orcadian identity matured in a historiographic context that permitted dual acceptance of Norse *and* pre-Norse inheritance (for example, in Barry 1805, pp. 79 and 92–93).

In contrast, Shetland's late nineteenth century literary flourishing coincided with the brief heyday of the Edinburgh anthropologist David MacRitchie, who posited that the British Isles' 'non-Aryan' aborigines had been hairy, dark-skinned pygmies who had lived in subterranean hollows (most influentially in MacRitchie 1890). In terms of Shetlanders' self-identification, the indigenous inhabitants never stood a chance: local authors contrasted them with tall, blond, heroic Vikings, and even today, despite so much archaeological evidence to the contrary, many Shetlanders believe that the pre-Norse peoples were dwarfish barbarians.

Following Ronström, the use of Jarlshof and Old Scatness shows heritage's universalising tendencies, for anyone can role-play at Old Scatness, regardless of inheritance. What makes Shetland so interesting is that the heritagisation of these sites is uncontested by tradition since Shetland's Norse tradition has little to say about pre-Norse sites at all. No genealogical connection is claimed, and the pre-Norse peoples are decontextualised from their geography: Shetland was not *Shetland* before the Norse arrived. Promoters of Shetland tradition thus have no qualms about abandoning archaeology to heritage, to the world at large. One could not expect Shetland's government to be aware of this complex cultural history, but there *is* awareness that few Shetlanders identify with the aborigines. The assumption of Orcadian-style engagement with pre-Norse inheritance is wishful thinking, and the official strategy for developing a strong tourism brand will continue to be troubled as long as it counts on community support for pre-Norse heritage development.

Åland

The Åland archipelago (pop. 27,000), an autonomous region of Finland in the Gulf of Bothnia, was culturally Swedish even prior to the Medieval and Early Modern era of Swedish sovereignty over Finland itself. The 1809 Treaty of Fredrickshamn resulted in Russia acquiring Åland and Finland, and

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fearing Swedish attack on Åland, Russia constructed Bomarsund fortress (completed 1832). During the Crimean War, Franco-British troops destroyed Bomarsund, and at the war's end two years later, the victors offered to return Åland to Sweden. Not considering itself capable of defending the archipelago, Sweden declined the offer, instead opting for a decree of Åland's demilitarisation at the Treaty of Paris. In 1917, the Russian Revolution collapsed Finnish central authority, leading Finland to declare independence and encouraging Ålanders to move toward Swedish reunification. The Finnish parliament passed an Autonomy Act granting the archipelago a form of self-government in 1920, yet the Ålanders, desiring reunification, rejected this autonomy. In 1921, the League of Nations reconfirmed Åland's demilitarisation and Finnish sovereignty over the islands but required the strengthening of the Autonomy Act, including, among other things, provisions for Swedish language preservation (Johansson 2006, pp. 38–48).

Åland is wealthy in potential heritage, including Kastelholm castle and numerous Medieval and Early Modern churches. The archipelago's sophisticated, Russian-built capital, Mariehamn, also appears perfect for heritage exploitation. Furthermore, Bomarsund fortress, now ruined, is one of the islands' most impressive historical structures.

Interestingly, however, these sites have not been turned into heritage. Although considerable cultural intermingling between Swedish Ålanders and Russo-Finnish soldiers and public servants was inevitable during the years of Russian control, any results of this go unmentioned in the official tourism materials. Unlike in Shetland, however, where a site like Bomarsund might simply fail to register in the communal consciousness (for example, Shetland's *British*-built Fort Charlotte) or be permitted to pass over to heritage (for example, Shetland's *Scottish*-built Scalloway Castle), Ålanders have ahistorically reinterpreted Bomarsund and claimed it as a tradition site.

The Åland Museum describes the fortress as a memorial to the archipelago's vaunted demilitarisation, a strategy replicated on the VisitÅland tourist bureau's website: 'The Russian fortress in Bomarsund was an incredible structure before the British and French destroyed it during the Crimean War in 1854. This was an event that founded the Åland demilitarisation.' Åland's devolved postal service even printed sets of postage stamps in 2004–2006 commemorating the 150th anniversary of Bomarsund's fall and Åland's eventual demilitarisation (see Figure 2). The focus on the defeat of Russian militarism may be a stand-in for the more sensitive issue of

Finnish sovereignty. Bomarsund's 'Russian' defenders were, after all, Finnish soldiers, and Bomarsund's very status as a ruin emphasises Åland's political and cultural independence from Finland. The local community has claimed inheritance of the site in a way that links it to local tradition rather than to Russo-Swedish political (as opposed to cultural) conflict.



Figure 2. 2005 Åland postage stamp, reproducing a panel from an 1859 comic by Fritz von Dardel. The scene portrays tourists visiting the ruins of Bomarsund (reproduced with permission from Posten Åland).

Shetland's local authorities have sought to tamp down anti-Scottish sentiment because this is believed to jeopardise the islands' tourism and development potential (Grydehøj 2008). This problem is common in subnational jurisdictions, as Pitchford notes regarding the Wales Tourism Board's attempts to avoid anti-Englishness and Welsh nationalism:

Unless it downplays Wales' distinct culture and national identity in its domestic marketing, the Board risks alienating the main consumer of its product, and bringing one of the country's most important industries to its knees. This is a classic tourism dilemma, ... having to decide how much pride they can afford. (Pitchford 2008, p. 122)

The Welsh and Shetland tourism authorities have decided they cannot afford much pride. Åland's authorities evaluate the situation differently: here, nationalism is a centrepiece of not only local identity but also local

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autonomy, which hinges on being 'more Swedish than Sweden' (Sundback 2006, pp. 79–81). Ålanders' outspoken anti-Finnishness may offend the Finnish, but then again, Åland – with its tax-free transnational maritime industry – does not *need* Finnish tourism, at least not at the price of jeopardising cultural autonomy. Hence, despite Åland's wealth of historical sites, the community resists heritagisation. Both the devolved government and Ålanders in general seem largely united in promoting tradition instead: Bomarsund is eloquent of *Åland*, not of nineteenth century military history, and despite the potential for developing Mariehamn as a quaint maritime heritage town, it is full of symbols of the islands' autonomy and twentieth century ascendancy. In Åland, time gives meaning to place, not the other way around.

Longyearbyen

Longyearbyen (pop. 2,000) is located on Spitsbergen, the largest island in the Svalbard archipelago, and at 78° north, it is one of the world's most northerly settlements. In 1920, an international treaty granted Norway sovereignty over Svalbard and gave its signatory countries the right to carry out economic activities in the islands. Although Svalbard was the site of seasonal whaling starting in the 1600s, its permanent settlement came with the 1906 founding of Longyearbyen by the American-owned Arctic Coal Company, which was sold in 1916 to what would become the Store Norske coal company.

In the first year of Store Norske's Svalbard operations, the settlement had 141 inhabitants, increasing to 511 by 1926. Longyearbyen's population grew steadily, yet it remained a 'company town', and up through the 1955 census, the percentage of women among Longyearbyen's population was stable at 6% (Evjen 2001, p. 21). However, in the mid-1970s, Longyearbyen began a slow normalisation, which included the Norwegian state's purchase of Store Norske. Nationalisation did not represent a basic change in Longyearbyen society though, as the vast majority of residents were still employed by Store Norske on shifts of a few years' duration. Local government was non-existent, and the Norwegian-appointed governor had complete jurisdiction. As Evjen writes:

As long as the Norwegian settlement in Svalbard was viewed purely as a means of exercising Norwegian sovereignty and foreign policy, few people thought along the lines of local self-government. ... People were generally satisfied with making good money and paying low taxes; lack of political influence on development of the community was a small

price to pay. There was not much of a community to develop either: It was more or less a workplace. (Evjen 2001, p. 36)⁴

In the 1990s, however, the creation of an arctic sciences university and the opening of Svalbard to tourism permitted Longyearbyen's development into an economically diversified community. Hotels, shops, restaurants and bars were established, and in 2002, Longyearbyen received limited self-government.

Tourism makes Longyearbyen's outsized service industry possible, and with tourism comes the desire to promote heritage. Most non-cruise ship visitors come to undertake some form of adventure tourism, prompting the industry to promote the rough lives of Svalbard's early miners and trappers and Svalbard's history of arctic exploration. Thus, the Radisson SAS Polar Hotel houses the Barentz Pub, named after Svalbard's discoverer; the Kroa restaurant, run by the Basecamp Spitsbergen tour operators, has photographs of old-time miners hanging on the walls and is furnished with massive log stools and tables; and the restaurant/disco, Huset, features a replica mining shaft, complete with a mining mannequin. Additionally, some of Longyearbyen's older buildings are protected, and the iconic, now-retired coal tramway has been left standing.

Longyearbyen's residents – primarily working as miners, public servants, students and in service and hospitality – still tend to be young and transient, and only a small minority have local ties going back more than a few decades. People are constantly coming and going in Longyearbyen, with the town's 2008 population turnover rate standing at 23% (Olsen 2009). People cannot even *plan* on living out their lives in Longyearbyen because Svalbard possesses no care homes, and residents are legally obliged to leave upon becoming infirm. Speaking of Longyearbyen's residents, Holm writes:

Do we know who we are? Of course not, except that we are just visiting, that the situation is temporary, that no matter how happily life is described in questionnaires, it is nevertheless a life in transit. A life where the question of when you are going to travel back south is just as everyday as a child's question of what's for dinner. ... Longyearbyen is not a permanent place. (Holm 2001, pp. 128–129)⁵

This transience makes tradition difficult to sustain, and the town's heritage is rarely acquired by default (birth or long-term residence).

Nevertheless, residents embrace local heritage and work to traditionalise and exert exclusionary rights over it. For example, nightlife establishments like Kroa and Huset – despite their overt heritage promotion and, in the case of Kroa, ownership by a tour operator – are seen as belonging to the community and not to tourists. Anecdotally, the arctic environment allows locals to feel inheritance for a past that took place under the same harsh conditions. Regardless of the comforts Longyearbyen enjoys from its disproportionately large service sector, even many short-term residents feel they are living the tradition of the early miners and explorers – and that tourists who spend a few days in town do not possess rights to this tradition. Because tradition is primarily maintained via outward-oriented heritage products though, tourists' demands are formative for tradition, with the latter reflecting – rather than inspiring – the former.

Longyearbyen is a sort of folklife museum in which residents/workers play roles from the town's past and are slightly disdainful of the tourists responsible for paying the museum's operating expenses. Life in Longyearbyen may attract specifically the sort of young people interested in such roleplaying: tax benefits and high wages might be the primary motivations for immigration, but a sense of adventure is a prerequisite to actually making the move (Holm 2001). People who join this small community are encouraged to enter into the local tradition, as expressed by universalist heritage, despite the glaring artificiality of this heritage's interpretative devices, which are not limited to Huset's pick-wielding mannequin. For example, the bulky wooden furnishings in Kroa seem more to belong to a trapping lodge in Alaska than a miner's mess hall in an inland village on a completely treeless island.

Although residents support heritage via tradition, their support may be difficult to harness for development since few of them have any material stake in Svalbard's long-term future. For most residents, Longyearbyen's inheritance is essentially transient, and though old buildings and other heritage-developed structures are appreciated, an individual's commitment to them is limited to how long that individual remains in town. Additionally, since political involvement here is so young, even residents with long-standing local ties might feel limited material – rather than emotional – ownership over Longyearbyen.

Uninherited heritage

For Ashworth (2002b, p. 238), the essential question regarding a heritage object is 'Whose heritage is this?' Ronström (2008) takes this answer as a given ('Everyone's and no one's') and instead asks 'Whose tradition is this?' It is only upon answering these questions that we can get to grips with disinheritance and contested interpretations of the past. Shetland, Åland, and Longyearbyen offer examples of communities that are dealing with largely uncontested heritage over which no *particular* local or national groups advance claims of inheritance. How do we interpret such uninherited heritage in light of Ronström's statement that 'Heritage production may be a globalised phenomenon but it nevertheless needs to be approached also as a local phenomenon, which necessarily leads to local or emic understanding of heritage' (Ronström 2008, p. 7).

It could be argued that Shetland's major archaeological sites – bereft of perceived links to Shetland identity – are not heritage sites at all, even if comparable Orcadian sites *are* heritage. Purely archaeological sites might possess some kind of universal value (a sentiment expressed in Orkney's UNESCO listing), but are they really heritage in the absence of anyone claiming inheritance, in the absence of an identity discourse (Smith 2006)? It is not as though there is a Pictish diaspora community living outside of Shetland and visiting Jarlshof to be reminded of its ancestors' glorious past; the Norse settlement turned Shetland's pre-Norse society into a cultural dead end. This does not mean that Jarlshof and Old Scatness should be levelled or converted to holiday homes since they do, after all, exert a strong generic pull for visitors who desire an emotionally uncomplicated experience of the past. However, the detrimental effects of the local authorities' expectations of community enthusiasm for heritage development underline the importance of understanding the nature of inheritance.

Sometimes, communities can imbue sites with traditional importance exceeding their generic heritage value and, by their local support, can expand heritage development opportunities. For example, in Newfoundland (Canada), many people feel traditional links with the island's Norse settlers even though, unlike in Shetland, this settlement was short-lived and had no direct influence on the island's later population. Thus, Newfoundland's Norse archaeological site, L'Anse aux Meadows, is promoted locally and internationally in spite of its irrelevance to any group's historical development. In a 2008 article on divergent attributions of world heritage value, Philip Hayward expresses unease about how L'Anse aux

Meadows' brief Viking history has overshadowed Newfoundland's own indigenous archaeology. In terms of *inheritance*, however, the issue is unproblematic: the Vikings belong to the European maritime cultural history with which most present-day Newfoundlanders associate themselves. In the abstract, local indigenous sites may be just as deserving of heritage status, but it is unsurprising that Newfoundlanders would rather enshrine Norse tradition. One could see this as a fortuitous coincidence of the interests of local tradition and universalist heritage.

Similarly, Ålanders' inheritance rights to Bomarsund go unchallenged in this relatively homogenous community, and wider heritage does not threaten Åland's nationalist tradition. The Longyearbyen example, meanwhile, shows how, in the absence of claims of genetic inheritance, communities can sculpt exclusive tradition out of generally accessible heritage rather than out of the past itself.⁶ It is thus impossible to generalise about local reactions to objects and sites that are ripe for heritagisation yet lack any particular inheritors. Shetlanders simply ignore such sites, Ålanders traditionalise them, and Longyearbyen's residents heritagise them on the way to traditionalisation. Historical determinism exists only very abstractly as far as heritage and tradition creation are concerned. Indeed, the one common factor in these three cases is that the local reaction contains a degree of ahistoricism that justifies traditional reactions to uninherited heritage development.⁷

Tunbridge and Ashworth (1996) provide the useful concept of *disinherited heritage*, which holds that the very idea of inheritors presupposes someone's disinheritance. The similarity between disinheritance and lack of inheritance is, however, only superficial. Our case studies present different challenges for heritage workers than does the issue of one group attempting to disinherit another. Claimants to Shetland pre-Norse heritage have not existed for 1200 years; Åland's built sites play a very minor role in the Russian, Swedish, and Finnish national consciousnesses; and Longyearbyen's past inhabitants and their descendants are no more disinherited than today's transient residents and their descendants will be within a few years. The dissonance instead lies in competition for resources by the tradition-promoting majority and the heritage-promoting local government in Shetland; the potential that actors within Åland may someday want to use heritage to expand Åland's tourism product; and the local existence of a desire – not yet accompanied by a will – to somehow exclude tourists from Longyearbyen's combined tradition/heritage product.

It is vital not only to recognise that certain objects possess heritage dissonance but also to understand why such dissonance exists. If heritage producers want to convince local communities that uninherited heritage development is valuable and that all parties could benefit from a balancing of heritage and tradition, from the promotion of heritage to the exclusion of tradition, or what have you, local promotional campaigns must be developed with the special circumstances of uninherited heritage in mind. For example, Shetland's pre-Norse population built structures that are now promoted as heritage both locally and externally. Most Shetlanders rarely think about these structures because temporal distance and late Victorian anthropology have caused them to dismiss the islands' indigenous population. Certainly, Shetlanders do not reject the heritage because they are ashamed of the actions of their putative Viking ancestors. They are merely indifferent, neither supporting these sites nor hindering their development. A prolonged campaign might convince Shetlanders that the archipelago's indigenous population possessed an advanced and fascinating civilisation and that its archaeology is their heritage. However, such a campaign risks *adversely* affecting pre-Norse heritage: If Shetlanders are divested of the belief that the Norse conquered barbaric pygmies, this Norse romanticising community may take on a perpetrator role. Trying too hard to help Shetlanders inherit pre-Norse archaeology could replace indifference with hostility and lead to self-*disinheritance*. It is no coincidence that, at present, those Shetlanders who are most strident about the slaughter of the pre-Norse peoples are also those who most publicly mock claims to Viking inheritance.⁸

As for Longyearbyen, assuming an unchanged societal structure, the heritage's uninheritedness may prevent the town's interpretational devices from developing beyond Disney-type, over-the-top folklife representations. In a community in which not only tourists are tourists but residents are tourists as well, locals may simply lack the time for subtle heritage and traditions.

Conclusion

As these examples show, when it comes to uninherited heritage, it is not just a matter of how much pride a community can afford but also how much past it can accommodate. Although the thought might be anathema to many, preservation of somehow nationally or globally valuable heritage sites may sometimes be impeded by increased local knowledge of these sites. Who would benefit if the Vikings became the ravagers of Jarlshof, or if military heritage transplanted nationalist tradition at Bomarsund, or if

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Longyearbyen lost its kitsch? Large-scale, historically 'complete' information campaigns are not a panacea for indifference or opposition to heritage development.

Recognition that tradition and heritage are locally determined and always evolving is a precondition for their effective preservation and exploitation (Ashworth 2002a). Ronström's (2008) model has helped us see how a single site or custom can be exploited in different ways and for different ends, sometimes successively and sometimes simultaneously. Furthermore, his tradition/heritage distinction has shown us that just because a heritage site is preserved and interpreted, it does not necessarily follow that the local community imbues the site with the same type of meaning as does the world at large. Brochs, fortresses, and coal tramways may exist, and continue to exist, whether local communities want them or not, but inheritance emanates not from sites and objects themselves but from the complex webs of cultural history contextualising them. Heritage promoters should take this cultural history into account before embarking on initiatives involving the local community, initiatives that could prove fruitless or even detrimental to their objectives.

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Notes on contributor

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Notes

1. Space limitations prevent discussion of individual contributors and dissenting voices, but all communities present an internal variety of reactions to heritage and tradition. The identities described refer only to the *most prevalent* local identities. Indeed, locally contested identity is central to my Shetland example. Where I comment on local identity without further citation, this is a result of my own ethnographic fieldwork (see n. 2).
2. I have conducted historiographic research (comparing past and present locally and externally produced primary source texts) in all cases though particularly with regard to Shetland and Orkney. *Shetland and Orkney*: I lived and worked in Shetland for seven months in 2007 while conducting ethnographic fieldwork with University of Aberdeen's Elphinstone Institute. This fieldwork included semi-structured recorded interviews with 75 Shetland residents (for a more detailed description of my method, see Grydehøj 2008, p. 188). I undertook three months' ethnographic fieldwork in Orkney with the Evergreen State College in 2001, and I made a shorter visit in 2008. *Longyearbyen*: I undertook three months' ethnographic fieldwork in Longyearbyen with the Evergreen State College in 2001-2002, and I made a shorter visit in 2006. *Åland*: My knowledge of Åland is based on short-term observation and the work of other researchers.
3. Debate continues regarding the fate of the Northern Isles' indigenous peoples. In contrast to Caithness, the Hebrides, Isle of Man, and Ireland, there is little evidence of lasting cultural (material, linguistic, and customary) continuity between the Northern Isles' Pictish and Norse periods (for example, Fellows-Jensen 2005, pp. 100–102).
4. Translation my own.
5. Translation my own.
6. Although there are no objective links between genetics and inheritance, perceived genetic inheritance assists feelings of cultural inheritance. For example, some of my Shetland contributors mention their 'Viking blood' and similar pseudo-genetic concepts, which conceptually buttress Scandinavian identity against a lack of Scandinavian cultural markers.
7. By ahistoricism, we mean an historical interpretation that does not reflect past events as accepted by some kind of scholarly consensus. Past events hold an objective truth, and our awareness of this truth is greater or lesser as the case may be: For example, varying interpretations are forwarded regarding the absence of Pictish cultural continuity in Shetland, yet we are more secure in thinking that the Picts were *not* barbaric pygmies.

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