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To cite this article: Robert Johnston & Kimberley Marwood (2017): Action heritage: research, communities, social justice, International Journal of Heritage Studies, DOI: [10.1080/13527258.2017.1339111](https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2017.1339111)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2017.1339111>



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Published online: 12 Jun 2017.



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Action heritage: research, communities, social justice

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ABSTRACT

Societies are unequal and unjust to varying degrees and heritage practitioners unavoidably work with, perpetuate and have the potential to change these inequalities. This article proposes a new framework for undertaking heritage research that can be applied widely and purposefully to achieve social justice, and which we refer to as *action heritage*. Our primary sources are semi-structured conversations we held with some of the participants in three heritage projects in South Yorkshire, UK: members of a hostel for homeless young people, a primary school, and a local history group. We examine 'disruptions' in the projects to understand the repositioning of the participants as researchers. The disruptions include introducing a scrapbook for personal stories in the homeless youth project and giving the school children opportunities to excavate alongside professional archaeologists. These disruptions reveal material and social inequalities through perceptible changes in how the projects were oriented and how the participants thought about the research. We draw on this empirical research and theorisations of social justice to develop a new framework for undertaking co-produced research. Action heritage is 'undisciplinary' research that privileges process over outcomes, and which achieves parity of participation between academic and community-based researchers through sustained recognition and redistribution.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 20 March 2017
Accepted 28 May 2017

KEYWORDS

Heritage; community;
participatory research;
inequality; recognition

Introduction

At the beginning of a heritage project in which one of us (KM) participated, a class of primary-age school children (10 and 11 years) were asked the question 'Are you researchers?' All said 'no'. After a week spent finding out about the history of the place where they lived and the people who had lived there, the same class were again asked the question: 'Are you researchers?' Without hesitation, they enthusiastically replied 'yes'.

Our article is a consideration of this transformation and what it means to participate in heritage research and be recognised as a researcher. We will propose a new framework for undertaking heritage research, which we term *action heritage*. We develop an argument for action heritage using the example that opened this article, a school in Rotherham, UK, and two further community heritage projects in nearby Sheffield. All three were part of a wider project funded by the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) called Research for Community Heritage (RCH) (Vergunst et al. 2017). RCH was supported through the AHRC's Connected Communities programme, which explores new

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humanities-based approaches to deepening our understanding of communities (Facer and Enright 2016). For RCH, Connected Communities joined with the UK's Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and encouraged community organisations to work with academics and develop year-long heritage projects. RCH at the University of Sheffield involved academic researchers from a wide range of disciplines (including archaeology, education, history, linguistics, literature and music) working closely with 14 community organisations.

Through RCH, we aimed to work with organisations that had not previously engaged in heritage research, whether due to lack of capacity or a sense that it was 'not for them'. By taking this approach, we were shifting the focus for collaborative research away from established heritage groups that were already confident and effective in gaining HLF funding and working alongside professional heritage organisations. These established organisations include local history and archaeology societies, and 'friends of' groups that look after cherished places such as parks and cemeteries. By shifting our attention towards groups that had not previously engaged with heritage research, we found ourselves working with communities that were underrepresented in our university and in the community heritage discourse in our region: for example, Muslim and Hindu women's organisations, a mountain rescue team, a refugee support charity and a homeless hostel for young people.

Alongside partnering with non-traditional heritage groups, we also sought inclusive ways of collaborating during the research. We adopted a co-production research model that allowed multiple voices to be heard and respected as the research progressed, and that recognised and benefited from expertise across all the constituencies who participated in the research. Co-production has both a specific meaning for certain fields within the social sciences (e.g. the delivery of public services: Ostrom 1996) and is employed as a catch-all term for a wide spectrum of participatory and collaborative research models (Facer and Enright 2016, 82–89). Because of their wide variety of objectives (although all within the field of heritage), our projects followed the latter course and worked within a broad formulation of co-production rather than its more specific definition. Applying this method, we partnered with community groups from the inception of the projects, we addressed the barriers that we perceived were impeding participation from community organisations, and we created a wide variety of outputs for diverse audiences (such as videos, interpretation panels, booklets and music) rather than prioritising academic articles or conference presentations.

At first inexperienced and naive, we gradually became more skilled though rarely comfortable in our attempts at co-production. An insight that emerged for us was that *researching* heritage shaped how we – both university and community participants – understood ourselves and our agency within the social relations of the project and with respect to wider society. The practices and processes of researching became a means of enfranchising participants, and of revealing and contesting inequalities within and beyond the projects. Through RCH, we personally began understanding research in new ways and subsequently sought to do research differently: 'critical understanding leads to critical action' (Freire 2002, 44).

We use this article to explore the act of co-researching with three distinct communities and their involvement with RCH. We begin by tracing the links between heritage, social action and social justice. We then explore these links in conversation with our co-researchers from three projects. We conclude with a new framework for undertaking heritage research, called action heritage. Action heritage prioritises processes rather than outcomes, and aims to increase social justice by widening participation in research and challenging the inequalities in how we do research.

Heritage as action, as socially active research

As a discipline and practice heritage has changed fundamentally from its more traditional associations with rather narrow nationalistic, institutional, and bucolic manifestations of the past (Harrison 2013). While these manifestations of heritage still exist, and in certain places still predominate, the term 'heritage' has been appropriated in many more settings. Heritage is now acknowledged as a resource distributed across society, with working-class heritage, community heritage, Black and South Asian

heritage, amongst the more fragmented geographies of contemporary heritage discourse in the UK and internationally (Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2016). There is a further shift in thinking that interests us: heritage is no longer conceived as stable and uniform, and is instead 'related to human action and agency, and as an instrument of cultural power' (Harvey 2001, 327). Heritage is a process involving actions such as remembering, commemorating, communicating and passing on knowledge and memories. 'Doing heritage' does not simply refer to the preservation or celebration of the past, it also involves negotiating and making decisions about the past in the present (Heritage Decisions Research Team 2015). The inherited past is part of political, community and personal discourses in the present, and it is a structuring condition of our future. It is a 'social and cultural process that mediates a sense of cultural, social and political change' (Smith 2006, 84). In these terms, heritage can be both a condition of social action and a form of social action:

if heritage can be a form of cultural capital and a way of connecting people with each other and the environment that surrounds them, the promotion of heritage or involvement in heritage can be considered to be a form of social action. (Harrison 2010, 245)

It is a small step to move from recognising heritage as social action to specifically directing that action towards social justice (e.g. Byrne 2008; Newman and McLean 1998; Sandell and Nightingale 2013). Indeed, it has been argued that there is a moral imperative to address issues of economic and social inequality through heritage activities (Kiddey 2017; Smith, Shackel, and Campbell 2011, 1). For example, retrieving and celebrating working-class heritage is 'intrinsically linked to projects of protest and social justice' because of the historical suppression and erasure of these histories (Smith, Shackel, and Campbell 2011, 13). In an archaeological setting, the Colorado Coalfield War Project exhumed the class struggle of the Ludlow massacre to raise awareness of the present-day struggles of working families (McGuire 2008, 189). The massacre occurred in 1914, when the Colorado National Guard attacked a temporary encampment housing 1200 workers and their families who had been evicted from their company properties. The archaeological project used students' participation in archaeology to teach them about the importance of labour rights, class relations, and their rights as workers. Such political activism is intrinsic to the application of various strands of participatory research in archaeology, museums and heritage more widely (e.g. Atalay 2012; McGhee 2012). Participatory research involves community and institutional participants collaborating either equally on projects or with community participants taking the lead. Such research has particularly strong roots in postcolonial contexts where indigenous rights have come to the fore as a response to deep-rooted and stark structural and value-based inequalities.

Indigenous heritage offers case studies where the dissonant qualities of heritage are irrefutable and the inequalities in recognition and representation are easily visible. Outside these settings, in western Europe for example, the divisions between 'experts' and 'communities' remain valid even if the lessons learnt from indigenous heritage projects cannot be directly translated and applied (Smith and Waterton 2009, 141). By way of response, Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton have worked together on a subtler theorisation of how social inequalities can be challenged through heritage policies and practices (Smith and Waterton 2009; Waterton and Smith 2010). They largely draw upon Nancy Fraser's work and specifically her status model of recognition and its application to social justice (e.g. Fraser 2000, 2003; Lister 2008). Political theorists use recognition as a normative concept to mean the recognition of differences in identity and status between groups within society. Fraser argues that addressing inequalities through the recognition of collective identities alone can lead to the simplification and reification of those identities. For example, there are now many instances in the UK and internationally where working-class communities, once under-represented in established discourse, have been foregrounded in museums and at heritage sites. While a valuable rebalancing, defining working-class heritage can also homogenise complex identities, and reify and enhance divisions between communities. Rather than addressing inequalities, representing a specific working-class heritage can marginalise groups still further from mainstream discourse. Fraser proposes an alternative to this identity model of recognition. In her status model she argues for recognition through parity of participation, which addresses

inequalities by bringing subordinated groups and individuals into social life as peers or full partners in social interaction: 'redressing misrecognition means replacing institutionalised value patterns that impede parity of participation with ones that enable or foster it' (Fraser 2000, 115).

Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton, rightly we feel, present Fraser's theory as a strong normative framework for guiding policy and practice in the management of heritage and working with communities (Smith and Waterton 2009; Waterton and Smith 2010). This framework recognises and enables parities of participation between and within communities and seeks to redress inequalities in how decisions about heritage are made and how heritage is represented and communicated. By connecting heritage with social action, theorists can explain how people who have been historically and culturally excluded can engage with heritage as a way of building a sense of their shared identity in the present (Harrison 2010, 259).

While we agree with this in principle, we also identify something missing from this formulation. Forging links with the past necessarily involves communities in a process of discovering, learning and producing new understandings about their past. Heritage for social action might involve the use of unofficial heritage activities or the challenging of existing heritage practices, but heritage researchers build their counter-narratives using oral histories, archaeological discoveries and historical archives. Despite the importance of the research underpinning representations of heritage, the term 'research' is rarely used in heritage studies literature. Perhaps this is because it carries exclusive associations with academic and institutionalised heritage discourse. For us, RCH was about a decentring, or dispersal, of research and the acknowledgement of 'shared epistemologies' (Pahl and Pool 2011) between community and university-based researchers.

We use the remainder of this article to consider the place of research within a selection of the projects completed during RCH. Our primary sources are semi-structured focus groups we held with some of the participants in three RCH projects in Sheffield and Rotherham: a homeless hostel for young people (Roundabout); a primary school, with children aged 10–11 (Portals to the Past); and a local history group, where many of the participants are middle-aged or retired (Heeley History Workshop). We selected the three projects to be broadly representative of the different constituencies and types of projects we worked with during RCH. We chose focus group interviewing as a method because we wanted to understand a range of different experiences that participants had of research within the projects, and we judged that the interactions within the groups would result in strong, multi-dimensional responses (Krueger and Casey 2009, 19, 20). We also believe that the group conversation was a logical continuation of the collaborative culture that existed during the projects – it made sense to reflect collectively on co-produced research. Our aim during the conversations was to draw out participants' experiences of undertaking heritage research as a collaboration between community organisations and universities. Specifically, we sought accounts of where agency to undertake research resided within the projects and how if at all this agency changed during the research. Each conversation lasted around one hour, and they took place in late 2013 (within 2–3 months of the completion of the RCH projects). They were recorded and transcribed, and the participants gave their consent following research ethics processes approved by the University of Sheffield.

We began the conversations with a brief introduction and then followed three lines of discussion: (1) Who was doing research and what kind of research were they doing? (2) How, if at all, was heritage different as a framing device or as a theme within these projects compared with the organisation's usual activities? (3) What changed because of the project? We chose these as guiding topics as they addressed the status of research, researchers and heritage in the projects – in only one case (Heeley History Project) did the community group have prior experience of undertaking research on their heritage. We kept the conversations informal and allowed the sessions to be led as much by the participants' interests as our own. We analysed the transcriptions of the conversations with qualitative analysis software using a basic thematic approach, which allowed us to identify and compare the different ways in which the participants talked about their experiences of heritage and research.

Better than doing nothing

Roundabout is a Sheffield-based youth charity. They maintain a hostel as an emergency or medium-term residency for young people who are homeless. During the HLF-funded project, one of us (KM), together with academic historians and literature specialists, helped the hostel's residents to research the history of their hostel, which is a protected (Grade II Listed) building dating to the late 1700s. Together the team devised a series of activities that involved the young people finding out about the building, the people who lived there and the local area. The transient nature of the hostel's residents (they normally stay for up to six weeks) meant that only a few young people participated in more than one activity. These activities included a heritage trail, trips to local heritage sites and research visits to the local studies library and the university (Figure 1). As most of the young people would not remain in the hostel to see the conclusion of the project, the research process itself was privileged above potential outputs. The primary aim was to introduce the young people to the places and practices of research rather than on achieving tangible outcomes. Our conversation with the team at Roundabout included a youth worker, the CEO, the hostel manager and the artist-facilitator employed to produce a film about the project.

For Roundabout, who regularly organise activities for their residents, research formed another way to bring the young people into unfamiliar spaces, as Ben (BK), the charity's CEO, noted:

as an organisation we try and help people with their social skills and just doing things that they wouldn't normally do, going to places they wouldn't normally go to.

the library was good, it took them to somewhere they hadn't been before – it was personal, some people were researching their area and realised there was old pictures from their area and stuff and the university trip, again they went somewhere where they wouldn't usually go and mix with people they wouldn't usually mix with so they got a lot from that. (BK)

It was not only the young people who, by researching, were doing 'things they wouldn't normally do' and enabling access to 'places they wouldn't normally go.' The hostel staff and academic researchers were also on new ground:



Figure 1. A visit to Sheffield Local Studies Library during the heritage project with Roundabout youth housing charity. Source and image copyright: Justine Gaubert.

we all were researching, we weren't trying to push the young people to do the majority of the research but it was sort of out of my comfort zone as well so definitely it was out of theirs [...] I think altogether everybody contributed but the young people contributed massively as well, which was great. (RA – hostel youth worker)

I had to go and learn those things as well – so that's been for me, as a researcher, really valuable I think finding ways to do research differently but to communicate that with different people. (KM – academic researcher)

These reflections draw out the discomfort that may come from working with people and in places with which we are unfamiliar: 'because it was really intimidating for the young people, but equally I think the students were ... it was out of their comfort zone' (KM). Co-production does not necessarily start with an equality of access to resources, whether those be material or knowledge. Roundabout had clear expectations about where expertise lay, with the university providing 'the technical stuff of where to search and how to search', for instance, and in practice taking responsibility for devising the research activities.

Using established measures of research outcomes, the project produced relatively little new knowledge about the hostel buildings and their former residents. We failed, for example, to locate the original deeds and owners and only found out basic details about former occupants from census data and trade directories. Yet our conversation barely touched on these aspects of the project. Instead, nearly a third of the discussion was spent considering individuals' personal engagement with heritage and doing research: 'this project it kind of surprised me in that a lot of the people who I thought would never get engaged did seem the most engaged' (RA).

going to that library, I don't think any of them had gone to that library before, and certainly not into the local history bit, and you know, they might not go this year or the year after but in ten years' time they might go and say, 'I'm interested in my family'. (BK)

By forging personal connections, the young people made the past relevant to their lives. Their research operated as a means of exploring ways to belong, placemaking and anchoring in a fluid community and was a means of drawing freshly discovered and deeply set strands back into their personal histories. The young people compiled a scrapbook to document their connections with the hostel and the heritage project. The scrapbook wove together evidence from the library and archives with the young people's stories and their written reflections on experiences of the hostel:

I think in the beginning the scrapbook talks about just the hostel and the history of the hostel and what we have found out but then further on it goes into the young people's stories and messages, so hopefully they'll just carry on doing that and then when people come in nearly two, three years' time they'll realise that there was other people in the same situation that have come from the same backgrounds as them ... so hopefully it will keep evolving and getting added to. (RA)

The focus on storytelling during the scrapbook sessions encouraged the young people to record their experiences using their own symbols, methods and art forms (Kendon, Pain, and Kesby 2007, 17): 'food vouchers, cigarettes, life skills timetable ... just examples of their life at the moment at Roundabout' (RA). The participatory methods, introduced by the academics, foregrounded the links between personal experiences and the histories of the building and the community. It also provided a way to continue a reflective conversation between the young people around the theme of heritage and identity. This sense of narrative was less visible when different people took part in each of the participatory workshops. The scrapbook, on the other hand, enabled stories to unfold, to be physically layered, and to 'speak' to one another despite absences:

they'll have something long lasting in Roundabout other than just their file that we'll put on the computer, they'll have something that's tangible, you know a letter or something that they produced in the scrapbook...I kind of made a joke to them that I would phone them up in ten years' time and say 'remember when you said you would be doing this by now, what are you doing?' So it just makes them think about what they have got...their future, what they want (RA)

This experience may reflect a positive impact on the participants' well-being. In a study of the influences of heritage on the well-being of hospital patients, Erica Ander and colleagues identified 'personal memories and recollections giving a renewed sense of identity' as one explanation that patients gave for how heritage improved their well-being (Ander et al. 2013, 235). By engaging in research

and reflecting on their past and present circumstances, the participants constructed hopes for their futures. As Ray said, the project encouraged the young people to look at ‘the past and the present and where they are at in their lives’.

A place of possibilities

In *Portals to the Past* primary-age children (10–11 years) in Rawmarsh, Rotherham, explored the past by stepping through a portal built from timber by the project’s artist, Steve Pool (Figure 2). The portal acted like a time-machine. As they stepped through the portal, the children chose when and where in the past they wanted to research. Classroom sessions, led by academics from education and English literature, explored aspects of Rawmarsh’s history, including mining heritage through the texts of local author Arthur Eaglestone and Anglo-Saxon writing and culture. These activities were enhanced with a small archaeological excavation alongside play and improvisation outside in which the children devised their own short films to be screened in the classroom (see Pool 2013). The central premise of the project, designed in collaboration with Rotherham Youth Service, was to introduce children to the imaginative possibilities of history. Although academic researchers led the sessions, the facilitators invited the children to draw upon their existing knowledge of history and become researchers themselves. The portal, as described by Steve, was a ‘proposition’, a threshold that marked the boundary between past and present, fact and fiction:

the portal grew from the idea that the past wasn’t fixed. The idea of history was kind of under question because we weren’t looking for reality we were looking for the idea of time travelling – you could travel to the future or you could travel to the past. (SP – artist and educator)

Although prompted by academics and aided, in part, by classroom resources, the children were free to select their own period from history:

it’s critical that they found their own area of enquiry and then researched it themselves and that doesn’t necessarily mean that they went in books it could mean that they asked each-other what it could feel like to go down the pit or what it would be like to be in the war or what it would feel like to win the World Cup, so it was a very personally-centred research process. (SP)



Figure 2. School children from Rawmarsh step through the ‘Portal to the Past’. Source and image copyright: Steve Pool.

Kate Pahl, the academic lead on the project, explained why it was important that the children were co-researchers in the project. It made it possible for the children to appreciate the past as open, as a place of possibilities, as something creative in the present and for the future:

the children were finding their own heritage and their own past. What came out was a very imaginative space of practice. Having watched children use the internet in the past it has the effect of closing down the 'as if', the site of possibility. And my interest in the project has always been this idea of the past as almost like a 'not yet' future – it's a real kind of challenge to this concept of what history is. (KP – university researcher)

The research emerged as an interesting and evolving process, which countered some of the children's perceptions of history as immutable:

one of the things a child said about the [archaeological] dig was that they never knew what was going to come out of the dig and it's almost like you never know what was going to happen next and because experts kept appearing there was an on-going surprise element and then they went to the archives at the end. It almost felt like it was making history a different proposition from the proposition of it being a fixed thing, through the doing of it through the week; it was like going through the portal rethought history. (KP)

There was an important tension between the imaginative and open spaces that heritage offered and the authenticity of the experience and the agencies of the children. In terms of authenticity, the archaeological excavation is a particularly important example. The project began with the idea of simulating an archaeological excavation in a sand pit. This changed when two trained archaeologists joined the project and suggested they undertook 'real' excavations in the school's grounds. Kate recognised this as significant:

the dig began and it was beautiful, the dig, the children absolutely loved it and I was really excited because actually the affordances of the dig as an actual dig suddenly swooped over them because there they were finding clay pipes, they were finding coal, they were finding all of this stuff that was just incredibly generative. (KP)

This valuing of authenticity highlights that the experience of researching was transformed by greater equality in the roles that the children took on alongside the 'experts' and their access to the resources of knowledge and tools. Kate had doubts about whether the children could undertake the project, and particularly if they had the abilities to make the films. Yet, when challenged, the children responded positively and excitedly to the opportunities. This is one of the challenges of recognition, arguably, that it requires us to change our expectations or our assumptions about people. In recognising where knowledge and skills lie, we open the possibilities for empowerment:

I think the week was a kind of playing with their agency being in a new space and it was definitely a different kind of experience, which I think everybody who was involved in that week would say was quite different. The portal idea was part of that difference – it's the expansion of what you can do. You can go through a portal, you can be different, you can think differently, even with experts coming in. (KP)

A social fellowship

For our final conversation we visited the Heeley History Workshop, a local history group that meets weekly to discuss memories and stories relating to the parish of Heeley in Sheffield (Figure 3). Their project, *Social Life in Heeley and Thereabouts*, documented the recreational activities of people in Heeley during the twentieth century. They recovered memories of church life, Boys' and Girls' Brigades and street parties using photographs, documents and oral histories. Working with a filmmaker and photographer, the group produced a short film that communicated their findings and portrayed their research processes. The film revealed how shared histories combined with a passion for research creates networks and friendships or what Lilian (LH), the group's chairperson, refers to in the film as a 'social fellowship' (Thorpe 2013).

Although some members use the local archives for their research, the participants mainly collect their material from the community, as Lilian described:

it's amazing when you are doing research you'll find out something that links up with something, either that somebody else knew about or they were interested in and they got the chance to link with somebody else to get some more information and sometimes you can find almost that you are related to each other. (LH)



Figure 3. A meeting of Heeley History Workshop. Source and image copyright: Gemma Thorpe.

Lilian explained that participants return to the group for two reasons: ‘because they enjoy the social contact’ and ‘because they are interested in what we are finding and that they might have a link with more of the research that somebody might be doing’. This is a sentiment echoed by Sid who, in addition to attending to share his memories of Heeley, also ‘comes for the company’. The books the group produces are a combination of anecdotes, personal stories and family photographs set alongside archival research conducted by group members in local libraries and archives.

The group was motivated by an urge to document or retrieve something from the past that had been neglected or forgotten. They were lamenting the loss of social life in the area, particularly recreational activities that involved the community coming together in times of need or to celebrate Christian festivals. Lilian, for example, spoke about how in the past ‘a lot of people were more content that they are today, it wasn’t a materialistic world’. She described acts of neighbourliness as the ‘sort of thing that people look back to in the good old days’. Not knowing your neighbours and those in your own community can leave you ‘really isolated and lonely even if you are surrounded by people living in houses and that is so sad’.

They are forging a new community by coming together to research and learn from each other about their own pasts and the area’s history. This community of researchers became manifest through the participants’ shared connections with Heeley, whether or not they lived in the parish, and most critically through their help for one another (sharing expertise):

Some have become more interested in their family history because they have got help from other people. Jean, who has not been here today, she does a lot of work on family history and she’s done quite a lot for Janet whose grandparents and great, great grandparents lived here, she’s also done a lot on David’s family history research because he didn’t know a great deal about it. Sid has done quite a lot, not just on people in this group, but he’s done quite a lot for other people who visited the group and Roger’s done some of his own research and Jean’s done some of it. (LH)

Through research they have established what Derek, a member of the group, described as ‘a social gathering’. Although they are different people, they have built a community founded on an interest

in and an attachment to place and in asking and answering questions about that place. Their social fellowship is both a means of researching heritage and a response to a decline in cooperative social life that the group recognises in present-day Heeley. They are countering a condition that Richard Sennett and others have also observed: ‘modern life is ‘de-skilling’ people in practising cooperation’ (Sennett 2012, 8). The process of co-production (working with academics, filmmakers and students) and experimenting with new methods, such as filmmaking, storytelling and recording oral histories, revealed that although they were seeking to document a time when a sense of community was central to the social life of working people, that process forged a new community or fellowship of researchers (see Wenger 1998).

Disrupting misrecognition and maldistribution in heritage projects

We began this article with an explanation of heritage as a resource in society that is contingent upon and conditions social action. Heritage is caught up in political and cultural discourses on multiple levels, and influences power relations and identities in the present and into the future. Societies are unequal and unjust to varying degrees and the agencies of heritage management unavoidably work with, perpetuate and have the potential to change these inequalities. It is widely argued that because of this there is a moral imperative to appreciate and address inequalities in access, participation and representation of marginalised groups within society during heritage practice (e.g. Byrne 2008; Newman and McLean 1998; Sandell and Nightingale 2013).

While this principle might be relatively uncontentious, there is considerably more variation in and dispute about the best ways to democratise heritage, make it widely accessible and relevant, and part of a process for positive social change. We are particularly interested in the application of Nancy Fraser’s theorisation of social justice, in which she makes the case for accommodating both recognition and redistribution. Fraser’s work has received limited attention in heritage studies, although Laurajane Smith and Emma Waterton have employed it effectively to explain how parity of participation can foster ‘a heritage practice that identifies subordinate status within the management process and reconstitutes those groups so that they find an equitable position from which to interact *fully*, as peers’ (Smith and Waterton 2009, 81).

Our approach is distinctive because we have sought to understand the ways that *researching* heritage, as a practice, can plainly and self-consciously work towards social justice within and potentially beyond projects. We accept that our concern with community-based research aligns with Participatory Action Research (PAR) (Prasad 2014) and related community-based research models that are increasingly employed in archaeology, public history and museums (see chapters in Atalay et al. 2014; Facer and Enright 2016, 82–89). However, we would make a distinction between the prioritisation of achieving wider social change in PAR and the more diverse priorities within the community projects in which we were involved: for instance, documenting social life in Heeley and studying the archives and architectural history of a Georgian building. A second distinction to make is between the rather narrow disciplinary approaches that characterise public or community archaeology and public history when compared with the *mélange* of activity (as academics we might term it interdisciplinarity – though see below for an alternative term) that constitutes research within community heritage projects.

We used three case studies from RCH to explore the influence of researching within heritage projects. The case studies offer a method for expanding and enriching our initial observation about the role that research might be playing within the projects. They served a heuristic process through which we devised a framework for undertaking future projects. We term this framework *action heritage* and describe it in the following section. A key influence on the formation of this framework were ‘disruptions’ within each of the case studies. By disruption, we mean perceptible changes that took place in how the projects were oriented and how the participants (including ourselves) thought about the research. We think these disruptions reveal material and social inequalities within the projects. These disruptions share some characteristics and in other respects are specific to individual projects.

We will take a moment to review these disruptions and to relate them to the concepts of recognition and redistribution that are core to Fraser's theory of social justice.

Working with the young people staying at the Roundabout hostel, the disruption in the research process occurred when the residents began incorporating their personal stories into the scrapbook that the project used to document the research. The scrapbook emerged as a disruption during the conversation with the project team and in our reflections about the scrapbook workshop. The session and the scrapbook, as artefact, provoked greater participation and engagement from residents compared with the other activities. This represented a shift in the recognition of the residents and their stake in the project. We suggest there were two dependent actions that made recognition effective. The first was the emphasis in the scrapbook on personal histories rather than the building's story, which made the research more directly relevant to the participants and made their contributions more direct and accessible. This was itself dependent upon a recognition of the residents' stories as valid research within the project. The scrapbook also enabled a redistribution of a resource – the hostel's archive – from Roundabout to the residents. Ray, the youth worker, commented on the way the scrapbook differed from the residents' digital files held at the hostel by being 'tangible' and something the residents produced themselves. In discussing the experiences of care-leavers in Australia, Wilson and Golding (2016) proposed that the children should have greater participation in the creation of the official records of their time in state care. The scrapbook at Roundabout perhaps offers an example of how participation in the creation of archives might be enacted. This disruption illustrates how a shift in the project's objectives (away from the building and towards the personal histories of the residents) increased parity in the roles and status of the participants within the project and changed the character of engagement. It was a relatively unproblematic refocusing in the Roundabout project because the outcomes of the archival researches were thin and the 'standard' research activities (e.g. library visits) were less successful in attracting interest from the young people.

In *Portals to the Past*, the underlying idea of the project was disruptive in that it offered children an opportunity to be creative and imaginative with history: 'we weren't looking for reality' (SP). The disruption, in the terms that we are using here and which came out most clearly in our discussion with the project team, was in certain respects the least creative part of the project: the archaeological excavation. It showed that even when there are strong principles of social justice and co-production at the core of a project, as there was in *Portals to the Past*, misrecognition and maldistribution can still exist within components or activities. The excavation was initially planned as a simulation, where the children excavated objects hidden within a sand pit. Yet the archaeologists decided to open real excavations in the school grounds. This changed the dynamic for all the participants, both the children and the academic researchers. The shift from simulated to real excavation marked a recognition of the children's abilities to participate successfully in the research. We would also interpret it as a form of redistribution, because the children were given access to the archaeologists' tools and taught to use them: trowels, sieves and trays for artefacts. The excavation was successful because it yoked these aspects together: recognition of the children's capabilities to excavate, and redistributing the resources that make excavation possible alongside professional archaeologists. The real excavation did not remove distinctions between the adult professionals and the young researchers, but it did acknowledge where the inequalities lay and sought to ameliorate them.

The Heeley History Workshop offered the least potential for disruption as the group is well-established and has spent many years researching Heeley and publishing books about its history. Much of the project's expertise lay within the group, while the university brought academic researchers, students to help with digital recording, and a filmmaker. It was Gemma Thorpe's film about the project that became the disruption (Thorpe 2013). Rather than documenting the outcomes of the group's research – recreational activities in Heeley – she instead collected images and audio recordings of the group talking about the process of doing the research and reflecting on the character of the group itself. We remember feeling apprehensive when the film was shown for the first time, at a gathering to celebrate the end of the project. Yet the film was well-regarded and it stimulated a continuing discussion, which we took into our recorded conversation with the group, about the character of the social fellowship that

emerges through participation in the research. We perceive this as an example of how recognition and redistribution works within a community organisation through research: recognising one another's contributions and sharing knowledge and learning. This is not a smooth, unproblematic process. It brings out tensions between individuals, asymmetries in status and so forth. The point, though, is that the group perceives the fellowship as the normative state and one that is largely a consequence of the group's purpose: researching Heeley's heritage.

These three disruptions are examples of how acts of recognition and redistribution can influence the parity of participation within heritage research projects. The case studies also illustrate the ways that *researching* is socially active and empowering: it personally connects the participants with the heritage that forms the focus of the projects (at Roundabout, the young people's stories in the scrapbook became more important than the story of the hostel); researching opened up new (future) versions of the past for the children in Rotherham, and critically it was a heritage they controlled and created; and the local history group in Heeley found connections with one another, making and remaking their community in the present through their research into Heeley's past. These reaffirm for us that the practices and processes of researching heritage are transformative and create diverse social and cultural capital (see Graham 2002).

Action heritage

We conclude by generalising from our analysis of the RCH projects to present a framework for co-produced heritage research, which we term action heritage. Action heritage privileges process (action) over outcomes and addresses social inequalities through a dispersed and redistributive model of research practice. We identify four vectors to the action heritage framework: undisciplinary research, active rather than activist, with parity of participation, which is sustainable and sustained (Figure 4).

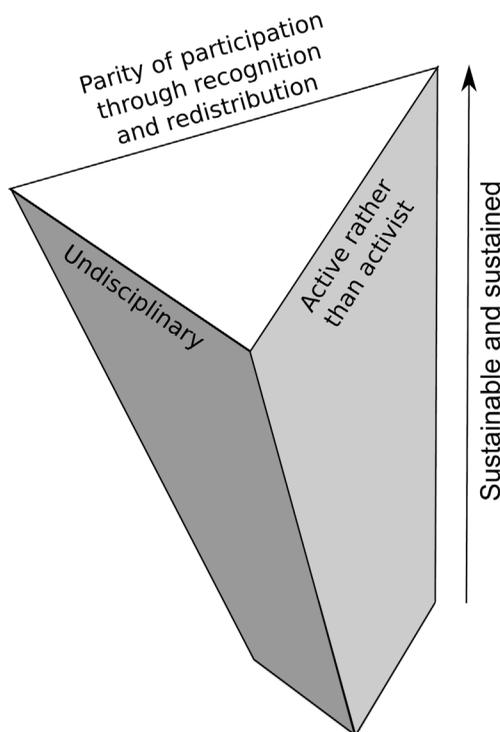


Figure 4. The action heritage framework.

Researching community heritage should be undisciplinary. As academic researchers within RCH, we were a multidisciplinary team comprising archaeologists, ethnographers, historians, linguists, literature specialists and musicologists. The project brought us to interdisciplinary spaces and into profitable collaborations with one another. Contrastingly, the community-based researchers understood but did not affiliate with the disciplinary differences we recognised as academics and which contributed to our identities during the project. They approached research questions and evidence without any prior disciplinary claims or boundaries. They were undisciplinary ('indisciplinaire'), to use a category within the taxonomy that Ayuko Sedooka and colleagues recently published (2015, 375, 376). We would suggest that the term 'heritage' has a powerful role in recognising the validity of this undisciplinary position and enabling the variety of activity that constitutes research within community heritage projects.

The second vector of our framework is the privileging of process over outcomes, which is to say emphasising the transformative experiences of researching over the impacts achieved from research results. This has been a prominent strand throughout this article, as we have sought to understand the ways that researching heritage, as a practice, can plainly and self-consciously work in more socially just ways. We accept that our framework aligns with PAR and related community-based research models. These models are founded on a commitment to working with members of communities that have traditionally been exploited or oppressed in efforts to bring about social change (Kindon, Pain, and Kesby 2007). They foreground the research process as a means of enabling social action: 'generating knowledge that is both valid and vital to the well-being of individuals, communities, and for the promotion of larger-scale democratic social change' (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire 2003, 11). However, we would make a distinction between the prioritisation of achieving social change in PAR and the more diverse interests and priorities within the community projects in which we were involved. In the case of RCH, where the projects were funded for a maximum of 12 months, it would be unrealistic to judge the success of projects on whether they achieved wider, large-scale social change. Such ambitions take time. However, we could undertake research about heritage that 'challenges unjust and undemocratic economic, social and political systems and practices' (Brydon-Miller, Greenwood, and Maguire 2003, 11) *within the research process*.

The third vector of our framework is the application of a dispersed and redistributive model of research practice. This model aspires to parity of participation in research by explicitly drawing on Nancy Fraser's theories about recognition, redistribution and social justice. Social justice is achieved by enabling full participation through equality of status and access to resources. In the context of heritage research, this means surfacing and addressing inequalities between community-based and institutionally-based participants. This must involve recognising the expertise that lies within communities and ensuring that the resources for research are fairly distributed to enable more equal opportunities to participate. There are cases of universities and funders that, in parts or whole, accept and support these principles. There are many more examples where structures and policies perpetuate inequalities through misrecognition and maldistribution. Coming from a university, our sense is that this is a challenge to universities and funding bodies to take responsibility for breaking down inequalities in who has opportunities to participate in research. Universities can achieve this in many tangible ways: for instance, by opening access to their research tools (such as libraries and archives) for community-based researchers, and bringing community-based expertise into research governance (Beebejaun et al. 2015).

Universities are amongst the institutions that should take responsibility for the fourth vector of action heritage: sustainable and sustained. The durations of the RCH projects we reviewed in this article were limited by funding and the consequent availability of staff in the partner organisations and the university. This made it difficult for us to achieve long-term legacies, although anecdotally we know there have been some (see Vergunst et al. 2017, 162–165). In the Roundabout project, for instance, the one participant who attended all the research sessions was also the person who the youth worker identified as most changed by the experience. Ours is not an isolated experience (e.g. Atalay 2012, 128–166). In their review of the Connected Communities programme, Facer and Enright (2016,

158) recommended to universities and funders that time is considered as ‘critical infrastructure’ for collaborative research: ‘time is to collaborative research what a supercomputer is to big data.’ We have incorporated time into action heritage as our foundational vector: sustainable and sustained collaborations.

We will finish by returning to the school in Rawmarsh that opened our article. Reflecting on the project, Kate Pahl said, ‘I do think there is something about the way [the children] did become experts and it did reposition them. I mean, I particularly remember this one kid talking about the miner’s strike and finding out how much he was earning and he said, “that’s shocking!”’. It is this repositioning of the participants as researchers that we believe was so powerful within RCH. Action heritage is our attempt to distill this repositioning into a framework that can be applied widely and purposefully to achieve social justice through sustained participation in research.

Acknowledgements

Research for Community Heritage comprised a wide network of researchers in both academic and community settings. For their contributions to the projects we discussed in this article, we would like to thank Ben Keegan and Ray Anderson of Roundabout, Trudie White, Justine Gaubert, Heeley History Workshop (particularly Lillian Haywood), Stephanie Liantzakis, Lousia Stokoe, Caroline Weston, Sarah Hollingdale, Gemma Thorpe, Karen Harvey, David Forrest, Kate Pahl, Steve Pool, Marcus Hurcombe, Hugh Escott, Christine Wallis, Rebecca Hearne and Sara Farey. The university-based researchers on our project were funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council’s Connected Communities Programme (grants AH/J013498/1 and AH/K007769/1). The community-based researchers were supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund. We are also grateful for additional support from the University of Sheffield’s Arts Enterprise initiative. We have enjoyed and profited from opportunities to discuss our ideas with colleagues at a Connected Communities symposium on co-production and social justice organised by Keri Facer, Andrew Miles, Pat Thomson and Tom Wakeford, and research seminars in Aberdeen, Dublin and Durham. We also learnt a lot from colleagues and collaborators who read and gave us feedback on earlier drafts of this article: David Forrest, Helen Graham, Karen Harvey, Dawn Hadley, Jane Hodson, Jeff Oliver, Kate Pahl, Toby Pillatt, Jo Vergunst and this journal’s anonymous reviewers.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by Arts and Humanities Research Council [grant number AH/J013498/1, grant number AH/K007769/1].

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