

N8 Heritage North | 9th July 2013 | Durham University

On 9th July 2013 Durham University was host to N8 Heritage North- the first in the series of AHRC/N8 workshops organised as part of the 'New Thinking from the North' project. The initiative aims to identify the ways in which academics and practitioners in arts and humanities can collaborate with local authorities and communities to help drive economic growth in the North.

The day opened with Ian Lyne from the AHRC discussing AHRC's engagement in heritage projects, the place of heritage in the AHRC strategy, as well as support available via the Research Council for community heritage and cultural engagement. Examples brought up by Lyne included the Joint Programme Initiative as an example of international perspective on heritage as well as AHRC's Care for the Future theme and the pilot scheme of the Cultural Engagement Fund to support local engagement and partnerships.

The opening session was followed by a provocation by David Petts raising questions about how decisions about heritage should be made, a group discussion and a series of plenary presentations showcasing a range of projects run by or in cooperation with cultural and heritage institutions. The range of initiatives discussed spanned projects focusing on tangible as well as intangible heritage, engagements with architecture, archives, performance and music, long-term high-budget initiatives as well as smaller, local engagements, but key themes and concerns kept re-emerging during the day.



Figure 1: A Slide from David Petts' presentation addressing questions of interests of different groups engaged in heritage

Questions of **how we define heritage** (Petts) and **whom heritage is for** (Helen Graham) brought forward issues of defining groups typically accounted for as a 'community' in the context of heritage initiatives- **whose heritage** do we talk about when we talk about heritage?- was a question that

dominated a number of presentations during the day. Problematising the issue further and addressing questions of ownership, Vicky Crewe opened the afternoon session raising the notion of ethics of using a particular community's heritage as a source of entertainment. As Crewe pointed out, on the example of All Sorts of Wickedness project run in Sheffield, violence, sex and crime make for great stories. But do people whose communities and whose histories are represented through these aspects of their past want them to be used as a representation of their heritage, for others to be entertained by? A related issue has been address by Neil Jackson discussing heritage concerns that arise when dealing with building design and the importance of community involvement in planning applications. Issues raised by both Crewe and Jackson reverberated clearly in Helen Graham's talk as well, stressing the importance of balancing the relationship between life and (heritage) research.

Issues of cultural ownership and even legality were also key to Simon Pople's presentation on the Miners' Strike. This project drew on both the enormous BBC archive of broadcast and unbroadcast material and on oral history: thus making intangible heritage tangible through preventing the disappearance of testimony. Issues here of **representation and memory** are deeply contested and are also closely intertwined with the heritage of a community: the production of the resource *Strike Stories* enables a continuing engagement. The difference between tangible and intangible heritage was also made to seem more permeable in Fay Hield's presentation on the Transmission of Musical Heritage. Music is understood differently as heritage by such bodies as the Heritage Lottery Fund and UNESCO; the performance of traditional music is a means of safeguarding its heritage in the future. The research model is one of co-production of research through such projects as Soundpost, Babelsongs and Arts on the Run.



Figure 2: Soundpost Singing Weekend, as discussed by Fay Hield

What transpired, then, was the need to recognise the diversity of communities and interest groups engaged in heritage projects. The notion has proven a prevailing concern during the workshop and was identified as a key factor in **decision-making** processes governing heritage-oriented initiatives.

David Petts raised questions about the possible ways of balancing the range of interests and needs of those engaged in heritage projects, while Helen Graham stressed the role of elected officials in the decision making, alongside professionals, academics and local communities. The issues of catering for the needs of different interest groups were also apparent in Seif Al-Rashidi's talk about managing

UNESCO World Heritage site in Durham, where questions of reconciling the needs of a religious site (Cathedral), university premises (Castle) with their role as heritage site and a tourist attraction were raised as a challenge, and one that significantly impacts the way decisions about heritage are being made.



Figure 3: Durham UNESCO World Heritage Site Visitor Centre

The levels of any community's engagement and its interest in active participation in heritage projects were raised during group discussions. The nature of local community engagement at Durham Cathedral could be considered as an example. The site, as Al-Rashidi pointed out, is deeply embedded in the local community and as a result issues of community engagement is not so much a key challenge, but the nature of the engagement of local residents with the site is significantly different to that of the tourists. Durham residents' engagement may be different from that of someone interested in a broad range of heritage aspects of the site. Hence, how do the dynamics of engagement and decision making change when we work with different groups, what changes when we work with individuals or communities of practice rather than local communities? And, as David Petts asked, what skills do we need to successfully engage with different groups?

Group discussions raised the question of **what counts as a decision about heritage**, and different kinds of heritage-related decisions have been identified, driven by legal, political and economic factors, all carrying wide ranging consequences to local and national community and identity building. Petts also observed that different decisions are often made about different types of heritage. Also addressing the issue, Al-Rashidi brought up the question of economic concerns in the context of the Durham Cathedral, stressing how these inevitably govern how heritage is managed (the example of the redevelopment of Cathedral gift shop is a case in point).

When addressing questions of decision making in heritage, Graham proposed a concept of mapping and modelling heritage as a messy system to be used as a framework, one oriented towards recognising heritage as an abstract system of criteria, within which decisions can be made, and justified, through application of a range of different models (those proposed by Graham include what she referred to as 'from within', 'experimental' and 'interrogating' strands).

Sustainability and funding issues have been identified as another key factor influencing the way heritage projects are shaped and run. But what happens when the project ends? What influence does

closing down of a project might have on all involved? What might it mean to academics, institutions, local communities?

Kimberley Marwood and Bob Johnson identified research as a method of creating sustainable heritage. In their talk on Action Heritage, Marwood and Johnson discussed practices of researching that are transformative, ones that form and transform individuals and communities- an approach that stresses action rather than outcomes of a research process, focuses on the importance of a reflective practice and the need of understanding the practice from within. With the Roundabout project as one of their case studies, Marwood and Johnson put forward a research model that actively created a community instead of simply offering an insight into a community. Research also formed an important part of the sustainability model for heritage brought forward by Vicky Crewe, who suggested keeping social enterprise as a business and a creative and research venture at the same time.



Figure 4: Roundabout project

Online presence, e.g. blogs were suggested as a great, cost-effective way of keeping the project going and ensuring greater and sustained outreach and information dissemination but issues with finding authors happy to contribute has been brought forward as a potential challenge (Petts). Social media also emerged as an important tool in the context of discussions about **impact** and heritage.¹ How to create lasting impact and how to ensure impact beyond the project were two concerns that formed the basis of numerous discussions during the day. Graham stressed that impact is not just something that happens after the project while David Petts pointed out that recognising that not everyone who engages in heritage has REF and impact at heart as a core interest is crucial! Differences between what impact means for academics and practitioners also emerged, with Moira Lindsay discussing impact from practitioners' perspectives on the example of Liverpool Victoria Gallery. Questions of impact and collaborative research were addressed, with Lindsay talking about issues that might arise in the context but also stressing potential benefits of, for example, working with PhD students holding AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Awards. Issues of possibilities and tools for measuring impact and ways impact is

¹ These and related issues will be address during the second N8/AHRC workshop in the New Thinking from the North series - Digital North scheduled to take place in Sheffield in the 19th September 2013.

manifested were also raised. Lindsay referred to visitor feedback and statistics on numbers of returning visitors as potential means of measuring impact in a gallery context.



Figure 5: Archaeologist Base Camp at John Garstang exhibit, Victoria Gallery and Museum, Liverpool. (As Moira Lindsay explained, the Camp was added to the exhibition as a result of visitor feedback)



The day closed with Keith Bartlett discussing **The Lindisfarne Gospels** exhibition in Durham. Bartlett addressed a range of important concerns that have to be considered when implementing a project of that scale, among them: publicity, ticketing, transport and space management, presence within the city, on the local as well as national level, community engagement and lifelong learning programmes. With 100,000 visitors, issues of security, multiple stakeholders and the need to balance with customer care and visitor interests were addressed as key and, as Bartlett explained, it was essential to commit to a large amount of capacity testing before the exhibit could be launched.

As the biggest partnership in Durham of its kind so far the exhibition has posed multiple challenges but also forms an important model for future projects and serves as a key initiative to build upon. As such, questions of **lasting impact** and **sustainability** are crucial in the case of the project itself. Bartlett raised questions about the legacy of the Gospels in Durham and discussed plans that are currently in place for writing a 'Gospels Book', a manual of **good practice** that would make implementing similar projects possible and much easier as well, stressing the importance of similar **knowledge transfer** initiatives for sustainability. Further planned collaborative projects include 'Rebellious North', around the anniversary of Magna Carta in 2015.

Figure 6: Lindisfarne Gospels Durham Logo

Storify of tweets from the day: <http://storify.com/kajamarczewska/n8-ahrc-heritage-north>

The N8 Research Partnership is a consortium of the Universities of Durham, Lancaster, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield and York

www.n8research.org.uk

APPENDIX 1- PROGRAMME

9.30 Registration

9.50 Welcome

10.00-10.30 **Ian Lyne (AHRC)**, AHRC Support for Community Heritage and Cultural Engagement

10.30 – 11.15 **Provocations** (various speakers):

‘How Should Decisions About Heritage Be Made?’

11.15-11.30 Tea/Coffee

11.30-1.00 **Plenary presentations: Heritage, Museums and Galleries**

Helen Graham (Leeds), Heritage Co-Design

Moira Lindsay, Curator (Art) and **Leonie Sedman**, Curator (Heritage) Liverpool Victoria Gallery, Museums and Impact

Kimberley Marwood and **Bob Johnston** (Community Heritage, Sheffield), Action Heritage

Seif Al-Rashidi (Durham), On Running a World Heritage Site

1.00-1.45 Lunch (With musical accompaniment)

1.45-3.00 **Parallel workshops**

Intangible Heritage

Jonathan Pitches (Leeds), CDA Miners Museum and National Media Museum

Simon Popple (Leeds), The Open Archive and the Miners' Strike

Fay Hield (Sheffield), How Musical Heritage is Transmitted

Tangible Heritage

Vicky Crewe (Sheffield), Performing the Past

David Petts (Durham), Heritage in the Community

Neil Jackson (Liverpool), Architecture and Heritage

3.00-3.50 **Dr Keith Bartlett (Durham), The Lindisfarne Gospels Exhibition**

4.00/4.30/5.00 **The Lindisfarne Gospels (at Palace Gree**

APPENDIX 2 - RELETED PROJECTS/PROPOSED COLLABORATIONS

Natalie Mears, natalie.mears@durham.ac.uk

I am principally interested in the portrayal of historical figures and the performance of historical events in modern operatic productions, specifically, though not exclusively in respect to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but would like to conduct my research within and alongside wider issues of performing the past, whether through drama, re-enactment, etc. My interests lies both in research questions -- such was what it can tell us about how producers of and actors in performances shape public perceptions of historical figures and events and how public expectations themselves shape what those producers and actors do -- and in 'impact' issues about people's engagement in an artistic format that is often perceived as elitist and difficult. I would hope to develop a research network/project on performing the past and I am already discussing the possibility of co-editing a collection of essays on this theme with Professor David Dean, co-director of the Centre for Public History at Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.

Dr Oliver Johnson, o.johnson@sheffield.ac.uk

The Museum of the Great Outdoors: a city-wide initiative that explores the relationship between Sheffield and the Peak District National Park and the role of outdoor sport and recreation in the formation of the modern identity of the city. What communities have emerged around outdoor activities and what do they contribute to the cultural and economic life of the city? How and why do these communities engage with the great outdoors and how can access be opened up to a wider cross-section of Sheffield's population? Please get in touch if you have any suggestions or would like to get involved.

Dr Martyn Hudson, Martyn.Hudson@newcastle.ac.uk

I would like to develop more work together on the variety of AHRC music streams with a possible regular seminar on the many aspects of northern music particularly linking in some of the work at Sheffield with that at Newcastle and creating an e-network of individual scholars in the N8.

USEFUL LINKS

www.publicengagement.co.uk

<http://codesignheritage.wordpress.com/about/>

www.soundpost.org.uk

<http://musicalheritage.group.shef.ac.uk>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/knowledgeexchange/leeds.pdf>

www.live.org.uk

<http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/research/research-projects/strike-stories/>

<http://www.roundabouthomeless.org/>