

Abstract for Anticipation Conference 2019: 'New Ideas Sessions.'

Harriet Parry (MA) University of Brighton, School of Humanities.

Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Funded PhD Design Star candidate 2018-2021.

Title: Affective Heritage Futures: Community Connection and Inclusive Evolution.

When imagining places for communities to thrive and convene, architectural and design innovators invariably embed utopian visions of the future in their concepts. But what of the spaces and places that have been *preserved* for future generations to inherit? Unstable but enduring in that preservation, these valuable places are consistently ascribed a retrospective cultural interpretation imposed by officially defined notions of historical import. My research seeks to democratise how we understand community connection to sites of local heritage and its role in future identities, and finds affinity with the ideas presented in Moshen Taheri Demneh and Dennis Ray Morgan's recent article *Destination Identity: Future Images as Social Identity* (2018). They ask '[w]ho owns the future?'(p.54) when we consider how positive social changes can be made, and this question I argue, is intrinsic to how we evaluate cultural heritage. In globally anxious times, what and how we preserve has become a key discussion in heritage research and policy as our history rapidly piles up in our present (Harrison, 2013). Although policies are trying to respond to this climate, many sites are still excluding or if not, struggling to include the diverse communities that they serve.

My current research revolves around two heritage sites in the south-east of England, that represent British military history and the post-WW2 social housing movement. The work seeks to understand and articulate how diverse contemporary communities experience the cultural materiality of these sites on an embodied, sensory level. The Victorian Newhaven Fort on the Sussex coast is in a period of redevelopment and enmeshed in the struggling town's identity and Wyndham Court, a 1960's block of 'utopian' Brutalist council flats in Southampton, is through its listing, unable to adapt to contemporary needs of the residents. The research crosses disciplines and

boundaries to include the various material, social and cultural networks that constitute place and asks what are the affective qualities that define if people connect to or reject these sites? This work seeks to include non-representational modes of communication, the qualities and networks of affect and moves to represent that understanding in a way that disrupts how we think about 'heritage'.

Demneh and Taheri argue that 'Images of the future create social value and power', and those images are related to historical actions (p.55). Heritage sites have the opportunity to support individual and collective identities, but often appear to remain in representational stasis, regularly alienating the energies that move around them and entangle with their affective qualities. Alongside a rich textual analysis, I will be creating 'scenographic' visualisations of those encounters so stakeholders can better understand how and why communities might embrace or reject sites. I hope this will inspire new ways of thinking around how to participate in the design and development of heritage for the future. This in turn will stimulate positive cultural connections that craft the narratives which Demneh and Taheri argue engender shared visions of collective and connected future societies (p.59).

References

Demneh, Mohsen Taheri. 'Destination Identity: Futures Images as Social Identity', 2018. *Journal of Futures Studies*, March 2018, 22(3): 51-64.
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Publication

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e-mail: h.parry1@brighton.ac.uk

Linkedin: www.linkedin.com/in/harriet-parry-0110131b/