

## Care and hope in lived futures: locating futures through heritage

Empty, instrumental futures (Adam & Groves, 2007; Michael, 2000) are a feature of societies around the world. Hoardings surround new housing developments promising leisure and contentment. Banks and insurers advertise security and protection for those we love. Firms offer shareholders efficiencies and future growth; educational institutions promise economic returns to potential students; computer science start-ups hold out hope of preventative diagnoses and cures for intractable illnesses.

These kinds of offered futures have a number of distinctive characteristics. They are general and mobile, found across the world in societies with different features and histories, unconnected to the particular relations that constitute the context in which they are encountered. They project the existing ends of the present forward, in ways that leave other possible desirable ends unexamined. They are contingent on the economic value attached to them by those groups whose interests they support, and can be replaced by other futures should these be valued more highly. They offer hope and care, but depend on underlying ideas about the future that make this offer impossible to fulfil.

This presentation describes a way of locating (Sandford, 2013) alternative futures in particular contexts, in ways that place what matters and what is cared for at their heart, and which frame times yet to come as ‘future presents’ rather than ‘present futures’ (Adam & Groves, 2007). It examines the place of the past in constructing futures, and suggests that the attitudes towards to time and subjectivity underpinning ideas of the past and the future are the root of these instrumental futures. Consequently, it suggests that, for researchers concerned with recognising and constructing futures of hope and care, working with heritage rather than history is more appropriate. But it raises, also, some difficult questions for anticipation researchers working with heritage: whose heritage is being noticed (Hall, 1999)? What future contribution is made by contested, difficult, or unrecognised heritages? And what different kinds of past futures are revealed through working with heritage?

To make this case, the paper draws on a number of related areas of research. First, I recognise some of the ways in which the academic study of history and the future share perspectives, noting their common capacity to work with counter-factuals, to draw on different forms of evidence, to challenge projective and deterministic thinking, and to see causation as produced through complex networks of interacting structures (Briggs, 1978; Bradfield *et al.*, 2016;

Green, 2012; Staley, 2007). Second, I describe the use of history within futures studies and foresight (Bussey *et al.*, 2012; Patomäki & Steger, 2010; Wagar, 1993) and the appeal, for futurists attempting to account for all possible causal influences, of working with universalising grand narratives. Third, I describe key aspects of the way history works in society, noting the secular and analytic character of historicisation, and its roots in modern conceptions of knowledge (Hodges, 2010; Nandy, 1995; Nora, 1989; Ranjan, 2017; Rogers, 2015). Fourth, I recognise the common ground between critiques of historicised accounts of the past and instrumental accounts of the future, principally the attempt to excise the subject from the construction of knowledge, and a particular temporality, ‘clock time’ or Benjamin’s “homogeneous, empty time” (Hamacher, 2005; Jennings & Eiland, 2006). Fifth, I draw on work from history, philosophy, and the sociology of time to offer descriptions of “ahistorical thinking” (Jennings & Eiland, 2006; Nandy, 1995; Nora, 1989), “thick presents” and “latent futures” (Adam & Groves, 2007; Poli, 2017) and “lived futures” (Adam & Groves, 2007), alternative ways of imagining time and subjectivity which characterise the relationship between past, present and future not as linear but as “fractal” (Groves, 2017), and which attend to the particular relations between people, times and places through which care emerges as a fundamental constituent of the future. Finally, I review recent work in heritage studies (DeSilvey, 2017; Harrison, 2015, 2016; Harrison *et al.*, 2016; Harvey, 2001; Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983; Holtorf & Kristensen, 2015; Lowenthal, 1998) to illustrate the ways in which this stance towards time and care is embodied within heritage and heritage practices.

Taken together, these various strands support a central argument that researchers concerned with anticipation ought to be concerned with identifying and elaborating lived, rather than empty futures, and that this will be made possible not by ignoring the past, nor by engaging with the past solely through historical perspectives, but through using heritage as a means of understanding what is cared for by, and what matters to, particular communities and societies. Lived futures depend on an understanding of the world as a continually unfolding set of processes, as does recent work within heritage studies concerned with change and transformation (DeSilvey, 2017; Harrison, 2016; Holtorf & Fairclough, 2013): in such a world of generative structures and processes, the future is never over, being followed by future futures, all likewise embedded within complex and changing causal networks. The future is never finished, in other words, and from this arises the utopian (Levitas, 2013; Siebers, 2012) aspect of hope (Ojala, 2017), which keeps the future open, not in an abstract, instrumental sense, in which the future is uninhabited, separate from our being, and open for conquest, but in the Heideggerian sense (Heidegger, 2010) of a necessary and prior condition for dwelling in

the world. Working through heritage offers researchers the opportunity to recognise past hopes, latent futures, alongside those that sustain us in the present.

Thinking about anticipation through heritage allows researchers to connect with the reflexive, axiological, subjective nature of ‘ahistorical’ thinking, ensuring that a place is reserved for the authors of lived futures, in contrast to the abstract, empty, unauthored futures of global capital. And it offers researchers concerned with anticipation a practical way of identifying places and communities with which to work, providing a disciplinary frame through which to make visible the priorities and objects of concern that are embedded in such places and communities: thinking with heritage can provide something for researchers to work with, obliging the conversation to face and grapple with circumstances unfolding in real life by engaging with particular futures, rather than the general, off-the-shelf future imaginaries that might otherwise be the focus of discussion. Above all, it offers the possibility of drawing on both anticipation and heritage studies to develop an anticipatory practice concerned less with pasts and futures, and more with meaningful presents.

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