

The Place in Our Hands

The Grassroots Making of Cultural Heritage

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Introduction

Cultural heritage work can happen outside the traditional institutions and safe-keepers of culture. The *SPICE* project ran in four places in England where communities are collaborating to achieve social change to improve their environment. The project's goal was to investigate grassroots work on place and the nature of creativity in communities as they take cultural identity into their own hands.

The formal creative economy is well mapped and plays a significant part in Britain's profile. However, there has been less research into how informal cultural heritage practices shape the neighbourhood, how these practices preserve or identify cultural heritage, and how they creatively support the development of community. Indeed, these activities are more often overlooked than seen as a fertile bed for creativity and entrepreneurship.

We started the *SPICE* project to address this gap, using co-research principles to emphasize our interest in the co-construction of place. We then let interactions take their course, documenting activity and opinion. We were mindful of the mismatch that the American community designer Hester (1993) describes; that is, the potential discrepancy between a community's sense of what is culturally important and what the local planners consider as significant in the same location. The goal of our project was to learn together what our self-selected groups considered to be significant in their area and what they were doing about it. Given the DIY nature of our enquiry, we were also prepared to see the construction of cultural heritage through community activities (by contrast with its recognition and protection, which are more customary relations to objects, places and processes considered part of history).

In this chapter, I consider the sustainability of choices and the situated nature of the creativity we experienced. I will use the case study of a digital archive that featured in the project – a repository for local images of a northern village. In this way, the chapter will articulate some of the practical tensions to be encountered in making DIY cultural heritage work sustainable. The chapter then reflects on this place-shaping as a challenge for more formal cultural heritage institutions and municipal bodies.

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Background to SPICE

SPICE (Stimulating Participation in the Informal Creative Economy) ran for a year in 2011, funded by the British Arts and Humanities Research Council as part of an intersection in the council's work between fostering Connected Communities and exploring the Creative Industries. The idea of the informal creative economy emerged in discussions about local place-oriented practices that are neither wholly commercial nor immune to the economic pressures on people and groups making change in twenty-first-century Britain. Thus, the project concerned itself with 'place-shaping', a recently-coined phrase (e.g. Lyons 2007), and the politics of identity. As Silverman and Ruggles (2007: 3) point out: '[H]eritage is [...] intertwined with identity and territory, where individuals and communities are often in competition or outright conflict. [...] [A]t stake is the question of who defines cultural heritage and who should control stewardship and the benefits of cultural heritage.'

For the research team, the term 'place-shaping' acknowledged the relations between activity, history, geography and politics. It put us in mind of political geographer Massey's insights that space is the product of interrelations; it is 'constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny' (Massey 2005: 9). Following this, space is always 'in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed', meaning that we might 'imagine space as a simultaneity of stories-so-far' (2005: 9). While 'place' is usually seen as a more phenomenological or lived encounter with geography (e.g. Tuan 1977), it is apparent here that Massey does not treat space as mere Euclidean dimensions. For the descriptions of place-shaping that I am using in this chapter, I borrow her sense of co-constructed and political space, the space through which such shaping of place happens.

There are different ways that place can be shaped. Much of the place-making literature comes out of a planning tradition and takes a literal approach to 'making' – the design or modification of built environment (see Palermo & Ponzini 2015, who review much of this writing). But the people in this chapter do not have the power to make their place in this literal way. Instead they have the potential for influence.

Consequently, their making is largely the imaginative work of recognizing what is valuable and how things might be enhanced or protected, then taking action to make that happen. They are unusually capable of performing the recognition that Hester talks of when he identifies four stages of becoming aware of sites of local significance: threat, legitimization, collective awareness and consecration (1993). In an ad-hoc way they are designing for the change they want to see (Light & Miskelly 2008), siting their activities at points that they have the vision to recognize as locally significant in history, geography and culture, and able to become more so.

To sharpen the understanding of place-shaping, I borrow from the French anthropologist Marc Augé a neat definition of places being shaped. He talks of 'anthropological place', which is 'established and symbolized' and holds within it 'the possibility of the journeys made in it, the discourses uttered in it and the language characterizing

it' (Augé 1995: 81). These are constructions that are meaningful to people as places, and Augé alludes to how they are constructed: they are established and symbolized. They are not only built. And, returning to Massey, I note that, though a place

... may have a character of its own, it is absolutely not a seamless, coherent identity, a single sense of place which everyone shares. It could hardly be less so. [...] If it is now recognized that people have multiple identities then the same point can be made in relation to places. (Massey 1994: 153)

Our criteria for choosing our spaces of operation were simple: we wanted to span the geography and economic profile of England and understand how such places might influence local sustainability. But we also had the goal of starting the research quickly and competently and this implied that our destinations had to be areas that we knew fairly well. After some mapping of intersections between the lie of the country and our personal connections, the research group agreed to work in London, Oxford, Sheffield and East Cleveland. In other words, our spaces were already spaces of connection as much as location.

The areas where fieldwork was conducted

The research group wanted to span the geography and economic profile of England and understand how such places might influence local sustainability. After some mapping of intersections between the lie of the country and personal connections, the research group agreed to work in London, Oxford, Sheffield and East Cleveland.

- **London:** a globally influential city of 8 million people where every nation and type of person can be found, where some of the world's biggest financial deals are done, a mixed economy flourishes, and affluence and poverty coexist in neighbouring streets.
- **Oxford:** a smaller city on the north-western edges of the well-to-do south-east of England functioning as a major tourist destination and given a high profile by its university and associated historic colleges. The colleges own much of the centre of the town and dominate the local political scene.
- **Sheffield:** one of England's larger cities (600,000 people), set among hills in the centre-north of the country and split on lines of class, with bigger, older houses to the west. Another area where the economy was largely dependent on steel, it is reinventing itself after the closure of the major works.
- **East Cleveland:** a rural area of north-eastern England with many villages housing ex-steel workers, ex-miners and their families, extending to the coast. Historically, the dominance and, then, the collapse of heavy industry has left the region beleaguered.

In order to emphasise the cultural inheritance that each place entails, participants were moved between the regions. By bringing people to encounter the places they were hearing about, we changed the role of place in the sessions from a given quality to a co-created phenomenon; from a backdrop to an emergent property of activities.

Who we would work with in each area was less easily defined, but again related to what we knew of an area and what local people knew of us. Undoubtedly, trust (even

at one or two degrees of separation) influenced people's willingness to participate. We kept open the definitions of 'informal', 'creative' and 'economy' but qualified the practices that interested us as relating to cultural heritage. In this, the research group was supported by the European Convention definition of cultural heritage as 'resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions'; including 'all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time' (Council of Europe 2005).

This definition plays up the importance of cultural heritage to people on the ground, rather than the institutional keepers of the material culture that has often come to represent it. Cultural heritage work can make a contribution to community cohesion; the Heritage Lottery Fund review, for example, notes that 'The historic environment seems to create a positive sense of place amongst its inhabitants' (Maer et al. 2016: 19). Yet most guidance does not specify who should be active in determining heritage, whether it is communities themselves or whether it is sufficient for institutions to value communities' cultures by providing access to facilities to encounter it. Our interest was strongly with people making cultural heritage for themselves on their own terms.

Active or passive, attending to cultural heritage is clearly a component of social living and even a way of tackling social exclusion (see Perkin 2010). But, adopting our definition, it is also the source of a great many fringe activities (such as blogging about local activities, running themed walks or community gardening), which can be seen to constitute a kind of informal creative economy around the more formal heritage undertakings of major historical and cultural organizations. These 'homespun' activities can add considerably to the charm of visitors' experience of, and locals' sense of connection to, place. These activities do not only build social cohesion but may also contribute to the local economy (Stern & Seifert 2007). Indeed, this kind of engagement has been recently fuelled by the rise of social media and can promote digital as well as social inclusion. YouTube hosts videos marketing the rebirth of local produce festivals, while Facebook announces campaigns to protect the local environment. There is some evidence that these less formal activities can act as a launch pad for a new wave of creative practitioners, some of whom build social enterprises or businesses; others of whom feed existing institutions (Williams 2005). And the economies in evidence include time, enthusiasm and even bartered goods, as well as ones in which money has changed hands.

The period of study coincided with the appearance of a strong community-based Do-It-Yourself (DIY) trend, 'the Maker movement' (e.g. Gauntlett 2011; Anderson 2012), with its own emphasis on community construction, sustainable practices and creative uses of technology. This has focused on DIY digital initiatives, older craft-style activities and the emerging dedicated 'spaces' to support these, such as hackerspaces and makerspaces (Smith & Light 2017). Could we see the work we were doing in this light too? A critical difference was our focus on working on place and environment and participants' goals of having impact in the community by shaping place, rather

than teaching and learning about crafts and tools. The actions we describe in this piece are closer to citizen innovation (Light 2014), where the focus of the activity is locale-wide and based in relation to the civic and social infrastructures of the area. Yet, an interest in artisan practices also speaks to appropriation of cultural heritage, so it is perhaps useful to situate our activities in this constructionist framing. Place-making is also a creative practice.

Informed by these thoughts, a group of three academics and two independent community partners produced a plan for four ‘encounter’ workshops over the course of a year, one in each region. At each, we would invite people from different areas to meet each other with a view to sharing practices. We presented the concept of the ‘informal creative economy’ to groupings of people taking initiative in the areas we had chosen and invited them to become stakeholders in the research. Our goal was to let regional differences have maximum play in the way that we worked. Having secured considerable interest from local people who identified with our term, we handed over the design of the workshops to a local organizing committee in each region.

Wakkary and Maestri (2007) attribute ‘resourcefulness’, the creative re-use of artefacts and the physical surroundings, as a building block for everyday design. And Light and Miskelly (2008) discuss the work of designing one’s environment from the grassroots perspective and conclude that obstacles to the flow of designing, such as funding difficulties, local apathy and changing conditions, become part of the design challenge, so that the process as well as the outcome is constantly renegotiated. We wanted to make a project design that allowed maximum flexibility for each group to negotiate process. The project can therefore be seen as an example of how social activists could co-research the design of future social and physical landscapes, drawing on their knowledge of the past, the area and what practices work to draw in others.

Introducing the workshops

The workshops took place in four distinctive, widely-flung English locations (London, Oxford, Sheffield and East Cleveland) bringing different geographies, histories and economies together. We sited activities in warm, well-resourced places that were chosen for their relevance to the host’s work and shared heritage. They included a housing association’s activity room; a former mine manager’s house that had recently become a new enterprise’s meeting room; a café next to a disputed piece of land; and, the ‘community’ lab of a grassroots technology project.

Participants were mostly enterprising individuals or those representing community ventures with little formal organization but with strong local networks. Participants identified as social entrepreneurs, artists, photographers, poets, trainers, local authority staff responsible for the cultural sector, retirees, small businesses and members of the voluntary sector. Their activities involved ‘place-shaping’ activities, such as guided walks, making hyper-local sites, campaigning for the regeneration or protection of local

resources and community-generated tourism: activities not formally related to cultural heritage through any cultural institution and outside the main cultural industries' economy. Yet, every activity reflected the definition given earlier, in that the focus was on collective resources. Collectively we established a series of principles by which we would run events to let local differences surface. These included that workshops would:

- run locally, planned by an organizer on the ground and their helpers
- learn from the last workshop, but not stress consistency or comparability
- offer value to the participants, not just produce research findings

For each workshop, we invited people from the other three locations to visit, to give the occasion for the visitors to make a journey across country – bringing a sense of transferring out of region and encountering new circumstances. Most had never visited the locations to which they were being taken – and certainly never seen the activities that were being described – so the groups incorporated more detailed outdoor visits and 'sight-seeing' in each workshop as we progressed.

Three visitors came from each of the other locations to each workshop, to join hosts where the particular workshop was taking place. As well as the local organizing committee, other local people with a stake chose to join in, so numbers reached about 20–25 at each event. To make the most of getting people together, each event ran over a night, starting at lunchtime on the first day and finishing at about three o'clock on the second afternoon, in time to ensure everyone could get home again. As is common with these hybrid research occasions, much of the bonding work was done outside the official workshop times, at supper or with drinks in hand.

At each event, hosts presented examples of their activities and discussed practices with the other practitioners, who provided feedback. The co-research aspects found multiple outlets, with more-or-less pragmatic outcomes:

- 1) People discussed how their place-shaping activities could be made more sustainable – either financially or in terms of social support, drawing on their own experience to help others.
- 2) People explored the relationship between different agencies in an area (such as government, local government, third- and voluntary sectors) and how the profile of a region plays out in the degree of public sector support for grassroots activity.
- 3) People reviewed aspects of their work that might be considered creative and how creativity related to cultural heritage and the local economies round it.
- 4) Relatedly, they also considered what the 'informal' might mean in terms of economics, sustainability and creative practices.

This produced clusters of engagement around practices, places and money, and some discussion of their intersection. For instance, a librarian on the point of retirement in East Cleveland had been building a digital archive of historical photos for a nearby

community. He had been receiving, digitizing and posting photos at no cost during his spare time while working for the library. But the transition from work to retirement had caused him to re-evaluate who was receiving the value from his archiving work and he discussed the possibility of different business models with the panel of visitors from other parts of the country. We will return to his story below.

Learning about an area, either through visiting or through showing it to visitors (and thereby seeing its potential with fresh eyes), worked well in complement to these 'peer surgeries' where hosts and guests exchanged ideas.

At the first workshop, the visitors were inspired by a film presentation made in the old virtual reality world *Second Life* of the local jetty in Skinningrove, a village situated on a major coastal path along the North Sea in the north-east. Our hosts in East Cleveland were intent on driving real-world regeneration of the jetty by showing what it could become, using the potential of *Second Life* to act as a prototyping tool. The coastal path is well used by tourists, but nothing in the village of Skinningrove encourages them to stop and spend money. The rebuilding of the jetty would cost millions of pounds, since it is a long concrete jetty sticking out into the sea and was badly damaged during World War II. In the re-creation, it is re-imagined with new features, such as a bandstand and a dock for pleasure boats, as part of turning it back into a resource for the community and tourists. The campaign has been running for over ten years and largely succeeded in its goals when, in March 2015, funding was announced to rebuild it (Robson 2015), but at the time of the workshop, in 2011, it was still regarded as a dream.

After a presentation about the jetty, where its future was envisaged, the visitors asked to walk along the real jetty to experience it for themselves as a place. In this way, participants challenged the abstraction of the material they were hearing about and reinstated it as a lived phenomenon. They spent lunchtime making videos on the jetty with the local councillor leading the campaign, which they brought back to the group to discuss. This began a theme about the value of experiencing place first-hand.

The next three workshops were then designed to include more dynamic elements, to orient and extend the experiential elements of the workshops. We joined a group that takes visitors to see London's city centre through the eyes of the homeless. In Sheffield, a walk with the council's public art officer showed how redevelopment paid tribute to the industries that had once made the city rich, and two artists illustrated their plans for a guided historical walk with poetry and visual art along the river. In Oxford, an author of local history books described how the ex-working class suburb in which we stood had been a persistent nuisance to respectable life, while activists took us past the closed boatyard that they were campaigning to save.

In Oxford, at the last of the workshops, we were housed on boats and spent the evening picnicking in a river meadow only accessible by watercraft. Being on a boat (on which some of us slept) was again a means of giving insight into relations with the local environment, in this case, land, water and how people had made the waterways their home.

The disputed Oxford boatyard is boarded up, with neither boats nor users, because, for nearly ten years, it has been the centre of a conflict between developers (who wish to put up flats in this last remaining corridor to the edge of the river) and the local community (who oppose their plans). To our hosts, who were part of an activist group that was lifted bodily out of the boatyard at the point of its closure, it remains a noteworthy place, albeit one of conflicted ownership, hidden behind large boards.

They evoked this, and how the boatyard could function again or exist as a place in others' experience, using film and discussion, but also by showing the canal, the river and introducing us to boater clientele. This also introduced ideas of the different economies that operate locally, such as the economies of trust and barter that run among the riverside dwellers and the labour of maintaining boats for love, as well as living space. Visitors learnt how their hosts felt the boatyard's significance, noting how slowly the boats can travel and what this then means for the boaters who live on the river, who have to travel for three weeks for the annual overhaul necessary to keep their boat afloat because they cannot use a local facility.

We also met a range of boat-dwellers, whose lifestyle is threatened by this lack of amenities. They are unloved by the city council but contributing to the city by giving a picturesque ambiance to that part of town, recognized in works such as Phillip Pullman's *Dark Materials* trilogy. Not many residents and few tourists come to understand these issues directly. This points to an intrinsic ambiguity in the campaign, which is ostensibly about a piece of land but is actually about people's lives and livelihoods. We saw the similar concern for land as enabler of place and livelihood in the story of the jetty, and, throughout the project, place was closely linked to social and economic sustainability.

Again, since the project, the campaigners have made progress. The campaigners have persuaded the council to hold out for a scheme that includes a boatyard. The owners of the land have now committed to reinstate it in their plan for riverside apartments – with an Italian-style piazza giving public access to the water (Fantato 2014).

A case study of digital heritage

Thus, a key focus for the groups in coming together was transition: making the change you want to see before something unseats you from your goals. The informal creative economy is precarious and volatile, whether experienced as an activist or entrepreneur. Several shifts took place during the course of the year-long project, as might be expected in groups managing uncertainties over which they have little say. Every shift – in personal status, political development or opportunity for progress – changed people's relationship to place and, with it, their feelings about their environment, their group allegiances and, ultimately, how they perceived themselves and were perceived.

As described, the two major campaigns that ran through the project have now been largely successful, making the change the campaigners worked for. Some people were able to see the appearance of new authority and stability in doing the work they cared

about. But some of the tales were about decreasing sustainability, where burn-out and lack of volunteer effort, loss of access to small pots of funding and the need to get a 'proper' job all reduced people's effectiveness at engaging with the heritage issues that were, nonetheless, close to their hearts. The advent of the digital was impacting as well, such as on the life of one photographer who could no longer turn his back catalogue of photographs into a livelihood.

We now return to the librarian, mentioned at the start of the chapter, who was archiving local pictures for the community using new digital means. He was, you will recall, thinking of seeking payment to continue creating the village's digital resource out of people's old photos, but to do so, he needed to work out who would get value from the activity.

The local archive of pictures he was creating had become well known as a community resource, with hundreds of photos available online. This led to a change in his relationship with the community, running alongside a change in his professional circumstances as he faced retirement. He began with a trickle of photos but, now, people were unearthing whole collections. The ex-librarian, as archivist, had boxes containing hundreds of local photos handed to him with the expectation that he would be grateful for the additions, digitize them and add them to the collection. It became a local way of dealing with the photos left after someone's death. This volume of material, of course, represented a volume of work – especially as not all photos were labelled.

There is also the small, but significant, cost of keeping the technical side of the archive running and the back-up needed to be responsible for it. While social media tools help with all of this, even knowing the best combinations for safe, effective, cheap archiving takes research. There is effort needed to keep abreast with developments once such awareness is no longer part of one's job. So, even if one has more time to devote to it, the cost in time and money looks different to a retired person.

The librarian's section of the East Cleveland workshop focused on what might be a reasonable way of resourcing the continuation and expansion of the archive. Locals mostly attach value to it because it is a free resource that gives them a sense of their history, but it is of little practical value to them. Many local people do not use the archive, even though they are proud of it. They may be taking photos to the archive to please its founder, who loves the locality, or to do something useful with a form of outmoded media that would otherwise go to waste. They may be motivated by the age of the images or what is captured in them, but they may not know or recall much about the content of the pictures. None of these motivations make this a service that people would want to pay for – either to see their photos uploaded or to use the system to view others. Only those in a position of greater overview, such as the ex-librarian, see the value that giving a sense of history and building an idea of place offers, beyond the comfort of access to one's old pictures.

At the local workshop, having established these parameters, the group talked about sponsorship. If it is not possible to use a subscription model or to ask for payment for a service offered by this private collection – and our host rules these out – might

taking advertising on the site work? Could a more formal institution be brought in and some kind of grant secured? Would this be a good way of thinking too about legacy issues? In this way, the design of livelihoods was negotiated as part of considering how the service contributed in terms of cultural heritage and its potential longevity.

In speculating on possible future activities including a formal institution, we also had to recognize the magnitude of what that transition could involve: transfer of editorial control, merger with other collections, lack of situated knowledge, loss of local ownership (perhaps with an attendant loss of goodwill in donating and editing), and a change of its value in generating local participation. Without confident economic support, the archive might not thrive in more formal hands, especially if its presence as an on-the-ground resource could not be maintained. There are many examples of collections languishing once out of their founder's hands (for example reported in Maciejewska & Graczyk 2013). It is a useful exercise to imagine this transition, to see the value of hyper-local engagement and to acknowledge the change in function as well as in status in any transition from informal to formal institutional structure. While it may be a source of pride for visitors to see their archive on museum webpages, it may not be the co-creation of place that taking redundant pictures to the librarian once was. As Light and Miskelly (2015) note in writing about another project, local cultures that emphasize shared resources – and shared making and supporting of shared resources – are qualitatively different from those where the infrastructure is beyond the reach of local people. But, as always, it needs vision and championship to get these transitions underway.

Again, there is a success story to report. Participation in the *SPICE* project did not solve the issue of how to manage the future of the archive, but it did help the custodian see the value he was providing and allow him to judge the value that this held for him as his life changed. It became apparent that his project needed heirs to help out, rather than absorption into a bigger frame, because part of the merit of the pictures was not so much in their content but in the act of preserving them. The archive is still running well, having grown considerably. It is now supported by three people, including the retired librarian, in a new home away from the library. And it has been successful in winning sponsorship to keep it running from a local branch of a major supermarket.

It is noticeable that all the successful projects described here found ways to bring money (at differing scales) into the neighbourhood to make the changes they had identified. It took the work of multiple agencies to bring off local goals, but, in each case, the force of local commitment determined the direction travelled.

Learning from the workshops

Given the varying schedules and agendas across our workshops and the modest numbers involved, it is not appropriate to generalize our findings. It was not, for instance, participation in the workshops that led to these multiple successes. Even if

reflecting together changed the course of action in some way, it would be impossible to disentangle this tiny thread of influence from the bigger weave of the campaigners' hard work over many years. It might be fairer to say that the people who participated in the workshops were particularly disposed to seek out networks, learn as much as possible and use it well.

So, what follows here is indicative learning that came out of our encounters, some of which concerns working together and some of which attends more to the themes of cultural heritage and informal creative economies.

There was a general tendency to reflect more lucidly on activities through comparison with someone else's and the same could also be said of perspectives on place. The workshops offered a stimulus for creative reflection by connecting practitioners engaged in similar work and giving them the opportunity to study each other's contexts and ambitions.

A meeting of interests

Empathy for others' situations was a discernible outcome of meeting this way. It is hard to appreciate others' circumstances and the mere act of going to see someone else's territory raised informative similarities and differences and led to expressions of fellow feeling over ambitions and struggles. For instance, the visitors from East Cleveland, up in the north, were at pains to offer support to the Oxford boatyard campaigners on hearing of their efforts, assuring them that if they had seen anything about the campaign they would surely have joined forces. The next presentation by the Oxford group concerned the national media coverage that the campaign had received, leading the visitors to reflect, with chagrin, that they had probably seen those news sources with no interest in the campaign until they knew the stakeholders. Being together created solidarity. Our next project looked at whether empathy could be created by using podcasts of local activities and sharing them. It showed that little interest could be generated where there was no existing stake in others' work.

Creativity as product and process

The session in Sheffield addressed the themes of creativity and (in)formality particularly, and an analysis of audio recordings compared discussions here with other comments collected across the workshops. Following exercises to talk about these aspects, we used a simple coding scheme to identify passages of talk that gave accounts of process, how the speakers identified themselves and their practice and how others contributed to that identification. In looking at these, we can learn more about how cultural heritage is being constructed by local movements and how it shifts in and out of relations with bigger and more visible social, cultural and economic entities.

Participants described creativity in two dominant ways in the Sheffield workshop, with a further articulation coming through our discussions about place-shaping at a more abstract level.

The first understanding of creativity in the group was quite a traditional one: as the product of one's labour and making something original. This included artworks, photographs and books associated with the creator's environment. The digital archive existed in this space, in making a new resource. The group hoping to rebuild the jetty identified with this form of creativity too, in that they were designing a new feature in the landscape and building in *Second Life* to show their plans to others. This was the 'product' view. (Interestingly, despite their clever use of *Second Life* as a prototyping tool, they did not see the adoption of that process as part of their creative achievement.)

The second form appeared in the work of people who did not associate their output as creative but felt they conducted their business creatively. One participant had set up a business recycling building waste and architectural salvage, employing young people with a difficult past, which he also saw as recycling. Another had set up a social enterprise using the former mine manager's house for exercise classes, school trips and residential workshops. Both had used the cultural resources around them with ingenuity to contribute to the regeneration of the area and build their own businesses and, in a region with little employment, to create employment opportunities for others. The Oxford boatyard campaign identified with this kind of ingenuity, since they were always devising tactics to stay one step ahead of the council and property developers with whom they were in tension. This was a more process-related view of creativity.

In the meeting of the two forms of creativity, creative practitioners of the more conventional type found encouragement to think about how to make their practices sustainable. The group organizing tours of London to meet (and be guided by the perspective of) homeless people living rough in the centre is a difficult one to categorize, seemingly containing elements of both, as well as some careful thinking in terms of the ethics of the situation. In being creative economically, they provided money to a very-hard-to-reach group who sit outside the British social and economic safety net by being 'of no fixed abode', but the teams have to be very transparent in their dealings so as not to appear exploitative.

Last, bringing all the participants in the workshops together, we identified another sort of making, with no discernible output in the immediate moment but with an energy that acted to cohere participants from very different places and walks of life. Everyone at the four events was motivated to engage with *place* in a constructive fashion and to enrich the environment in which they live for themselves and others. When Lyons wrote his report on the changing role of local government, he defined place-shaping as 'the creative use of powers and influence to promote the general well-being of a community and its citizens' (Lyons 2007:3). Although he was talking about the role of the public sector, we can see something of this creativity in the activities of our co-researchers. They were imagining how things could be different, discerning features that could be made significant, and invoking an enhanced sense of place in their imagination and ambitions. At another level, they were motivated to make these changes a physical reality and were enlisting others in their pursuit of their goal. This creative thinking about place does not map directly onto their creativity of process or

product. But the force of our co-researchers' visions was helping to constitute place for themselves and others.

In considering these approaches, we are reminded of design thinkers Wakkary and Maestri's exploration of creativity as resourcefulness, the building block for everyday design (2007), and Light's citizen innovation (2014), where people decide to design their own solutions to the energy crisis.

Informal economies

We had promoted the workshops as addressing the 'informal creative economy'. So we expected to attract people at the borders of formal institutions, or outside them. There are many economies that might be relevant here: Cahn's core economy – which values the work of making society, such as domestic and unpaid labour, and can be seen in time-banking, where people trade in hours not money (2009) or the sharing economies that Benkler discusses where alternatives to formal currency drive production and innovation (2004). In British political parlance, the 'informal economy' is one in which you do not declare your work and you do not pay taxes. We meant something different in *SPICE*, something that acknowledged Cahn, Benkler and social resource management. Informal economies, therefore, appeared in several guises.

Those in employment with a formal structure, such as working for a voluntary or public sector organization, identified informality in their style of engagement with others, bringing about social change by balancing organizational objectives with local community interests, and being flexible in these dynamics. This allowed for creativity and open interpretations of what cultural heritage might be and could become. Here, the project impacted by showing people in the public sector a broad range of local activities that had not been formerly understood as cultural heritage work.

By contrast, people working freelance tended to have more options in organizing their cultural heritage work, sometimes blurring the line between professional and activist status. Other groups with a similarly ambiguous status were retiring or retired people, who might be professionals in the field but no longer paid, such as our librarian-turned-archivist. Consequently, we were working with many people who were not formally engaged in making a living through their relationship with cultural heritage. Here the emphasis on neighbourhood networks and connections with other groups was strongest. The groups cohered for the purposes they had commonly identified, such as saving the boatyard or rebuilding the jetty. They could be called upon to attend meetings and their impact on their locality could be profound, but, as organizations, they had no formal constitution.

Last, there were those who existed casually at the fringes of the commercial economy, occasionally benefitting from the sale of handmade books about the region or guided walks. This lifestyle was so informal as to be without contracts: they might have acquired their relationship with heritage as a by-product of making-do. This group, which included some boaters and some homeless people, was involved in cultural

heritage (in a highly informal way), yet was also part of what others perceived to be 'colourful', such as part of the heritage in Oxford to be preserved. The Oxford contingent, including boaters, did not regard their collaborators like this when they argued for a way of life, but in invoking their history and their inclusion in literature (such as Phillip Pullman's works) they looked to cultural heritage as a means of enlisting support. This pointed to a different ambiguity – asking us who the subjects of cultural heritage might be. When we shape place, how are we defining ourselves and/or others? And how might we be sensitive to the multiple definitions needed?

Conclusion

The story of the archive offers the prospect that value may come from focused collective activity related to place rather than preservation of materials for their own sake. At a time when 'making' is high on the agenda and spaces to encourage 'making' are popping up in cities, sponsored by industry, local government, universities and smaller DIY subscription groups, it is interesting to look more broadly and ask how we make space for ourselves in an increasingly privatized and mediatized world.

Hyperlocal activity on a manageable scale is one answer. Extended campaigning to create belief in a local vision is another. In my definition of space, I turned to Massey to show that it is a political concept. *To make space for ourselves* carries a double meaning – a sense of the place-shaping at local level that has been described here but also, perhaps, the need to claim space for community interests back from developers and governments with other plans. The latter definition is particularly relevant to the two southern cities, where land is expensive and community activity comes in spite of formal development plans and sometimes in resistance to them. By contrast, in the northern examples, community initiatives supported regeneration or flourished in the neglect that lack of funding or vision had created.

There is no one place to be claimed – for each of us there is an act of symbolic construction to recognize the points that matter to us and these will change as our interests and needs do. Yet, this project shows that by understanding cultural heritage as a Do-It-Yourself phenomenon, in which groups of people organize around place for social, cultural, environmental, economic and political ends, we can give a rich account of the interrelations 'from the global to the intimately tiny' of which Massey speaks (2005: 9). I have mentioned the journeys made as part of the project, the discourses and language characterizing it, how place was recognized and established. These are also artisan practices; these are also DIY-making.

In conclusion, we are left with a number of questions. How can cultural heritage be something that anyone can construct locally and potentially use as a livelihood? How does such DIY place-shaping activity relate to other forms of construction, such as exploiting local history for commercial gain? Although the activities of the Skinningrove jetty group are not aimed at direct profit, the estimated figures for re-

development are in the same league as those of the theme park developer and they envisage pleasure boats docking at the jetty as part of turning it back into a resource for the community. Will it make a profound difference that the ideas and effort came from local campaigners? Of course it will, but it would be naïve to ignore the splits that run through most neighbourhoods, with redevelopment causing some of the most intense differences in opinion.

The jetty, still unusable (as it will be for a while), is a public resource in the imagination that everyone has access to. It is a part of the place because, like the land around it, people feel at home with it and it meets the earlier definition that, ‘inherited from the past, [... it is] a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions’. In this respect, it is much like the boatyard. It does not fully exist, but the actions of the group defending and promoting it have caused it to be a highly significant, if out-of-bounds, place. People are being creative with their environments, both in what they are seeking to do and in the act of imagining possibilities. And we might also ask, conversely, whether particular environments cultivate creativity, and, if so, of what kind. People are mobile, but it is not possible to take the place you love out of its local jurisdiction. You can only work to change the prevailing attitudes and the potential of its future.

Through their precarious yet ambitious attempts to make this engagement count, either with big schemes or little interventions, everyone in *SPICE* was forging links between their actions, the history of the area and a wider economic narrative. What such an analysis draws attention to is the way that informal networks, appropriated tools such as digital media, and social and physical structures interrelate to produce the places described above, ‘constituted through interactions’ where space is always ‘in the process of being made’ (Massey 2005: 9). It shows some of the challenges, but also some of the opportunities for those people who stay light of foot.

SPICE was intended as a co-research opportunity, and one offering an opening to people who are not normally called on to reflect on their practice. But it could also be seen as an incubator, a small test-bed for different forms of social and civil engagement in the fabric of the places that people live in and care about. As an approach, it produced dense material for study and showed the importance of providing experience of place directly and reflectively in the design of encounters. It also used contrasts in space and place more abstractly to reveal its nature to visitors. It showed us some of the ambiguities that exist if we consider cultural heritage, creativity and the economy from a grassroots perspective, how not only livelihoods but identities depend on such efforts. If we consider it using Massey’s insights, we might regard the project as space in itself, as a structure made from encounters that are simultaneously about space (space to breathe, space to flourish, space for social justice) and constitutive of it.

This work is not finished. We know that changes in the legislation of the country, the distribution of the means of production, the economic viability of certain actions and concern about environmental issues, to name only a few of the factors that are ever in flux, mean that much will have changed for our evolving entrepreneurs even

since this last account here. But we leave their stories now, recognizing that there will always be a ‘simultaneity of stories-so-far’ (Massey 2005: 9) in any story about any place-shaping and any engagement in cultural heritage.

Coda

When I first presented these ideas to a meeting of formal cultural heritage organizations, some of the museum professionals looked doubtful at this co-option of cultural heritage. Others questioned me about what they could introduce into their museum to connect with these developments and the people leading them. Yet others told me about the displays they had mounted of local archaeological finds.

I pointed out that our events, situated at the places that the groups felt best showed off their initiatives, had involved staff from local government innovation and culture departments. These staff had attended because they were keen to understand how such work could be fostered. They had stepped out of their institutions and joined in. If you take your staff badge off, you become just another citizen interested in the place in which you live, I pointed out. But none of the people I was addressing looked convinced.

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