

Cultural Heritage Management & Conservation Conference



Book of Abstracts

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Sir Clive Granger Building
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Rene Bonifacio (University of Nottingham) • Katharine Ward (University of Birmingham)
Michelle Buckley (Coventry University) • Kathryn Birch (University of Nottingham)

How can autoethnography help keep cultural heritage alive?

*Al Meggs – University of Brighton
Archive & Accessibility – Paper*

Autoethnography is, ‘the art and science of writing one’s life and/or research practices, in relation to cultural principles, practices and products’, and ‘research, writing, story, and method that connect the autobiographical and personal to the cultural social and political’.

My recently submitted creative practise thesis (29 May 2025), *“Re(-)collecting cabaret. A queer haunted autoethnography of real, researched and imagined stories of cabaret past and present”*, stories an undocumented era of dance history, pertaining to British dancers working the cabaret nightclubs of Italy in the 1980s, from a personal perspective. It gives the reader insight into the world of a commercial jazz dancer in another country, and the impact of living in a small community, in all its messy glory, from within and without. As dancer/storyteller, I have insider knowledge - my lived experience - of the highs and lows of a dancer’s transient life in a foreign country. As audience/subject, I distance myself from the narrative, to observe the relationships and social dance of strangers thrown together in unfamiliar environments, and how interaction and/or rejection affects the microcosm of touring life, giving insight into this disremembered period of recent dance history.

How, then, can autoethnography be used within cultural heritage? My work is archival. I draw on memory, diaries, and letters to story my life, and use my firsthand knowledge to highlight, focus, and tell stories of this era of dance heritage.

Using examples from my recently submitted autoethnographic thesis, my presentation will look at the notion of lived experience writing, to engage a broader understanding of diverse cultures, whilst adhering to the necessary academic components of rigor, research, and referencing.

Perhaps we can help keep cultural heritage alive through personal experience storytelling, as a more inclusive means of engaging a wider audience.

More about Al...

An ex-dancer with a long career in live entertainment, beginning in cabaret and dance, through almost every department within theatre, Al has found himself in academia later in life. His work is rooted in storytelling and performance, writing on the margins of conventional academic practices. He writes in ways that are messy, raw, and unapologetically non-conformist, blending movement, voice, and presence to challenge traditional approaches to academic discourse. He keeps his naturally rebellious, inquisitive spirit alive, fusing spectacle with scholarship, cabaret with critique.

Māori Urban Landscape Conservation: Navigating Heritage, Identity, and Urbanization in Aotearoa

Bachir Zarif Keyrouz – Lebanese University
Place & History – Poster

Urban landscapes in Aotearoa New Zealand are layered cultural terrains where Māori heritage and worldviews intersect with contemporary urban planning. This article critically examines the conservation of Māori urban heritage as a culturally embedded, ethical, and forward-looking practice.

Drawing on Indigenous ontologies, it explores the historical, spiritual, and communal dimensions of Māori urban spaces—including marae, wāhi tapu (sacred sites), and traditional pathways—as living cultural landscapes threatened by rapid urbanization, infrastructural development, and planning exclusion.

Through case studies and critical analysis, the article highlights the tensions between state-led development and Māori land rights, emphasizing the need for co-governance, cultural impact assessments, and bicultural planning frameworks.

Successful models such as the Te Aranga Design Principles, the Ngāi Tahu Cultural Mapping Project, and legal personhood recognition of natural entities demonstrate how Māori cultural values can be effectively integrated into urban policy, design, and heritage conservation.

The article further underscores the role of education, community empowerment, and architectural innovation in fostering cultural continuity and resilience. It argues that Māori urban heritage conservation must move beyond preservation of physical sites toward embracing mātauranga Māori (traditional knowledge), relational ethics, and Indigenous agency in shaping urban futures.

In doing so, urban spaces can be transformed into inclusive, living environments where ancestral legacies and contemporary aspirations coexist.

Building new pathways of support for heritage educators

David Green – Nottingham Trent University

Education & Outreach – Paper

In the face of a skills shortage and volunteer crisis in the conservation, management and promotion of Cultural Heritage Places, a key element in filling the gap in personnel is encouraging young people to engage in activities at heritage sites and become aware of the significance of the tangible cultural heritage of their neighbourhoods. One of the aims of the 2013 England and Wales National Curriculum for History, was to create a structured format for heritage education under the title of 'Local Study' up to Key Stage 3 and programmes like Historic England's 'Heritage Schools Programme' were formulated to support Cultural Education after the 2012 Henley Report. In the process of developing support programmes for teachers to deliver these compulsory curriculum requirements, heritage organisations have varied in their success related to different Key Stages of the UK Curriculum. Primary school teachers seem to be well supported and engaged but there are few records and even less statistical data relating to heritage organisation interactions with KS3 (secondary school) teachers related to curricular support. The research project aims to analyse the nature of the support relationship between heritage organisation learning managers and Key Stage 3 History teachers, where it exists, by exploring the policies and practices of stakeholder organisations and develop through co-production by teachers and heritage organisations, networking and support solutions to provide a consistent and mutually supportive relationship between these groups of professionals. It is proposed that through more comprehensive support for teachers in the delivery of the Key Stage 3 (11–14 age group) Local History Study, young people at this formative stage of their educational development may opt to engage in volunteering activity and even plan for careers in heritage.

More about David...

David is a second year PhD student at NTU, has a passion for industrial heritage, and has 27 years experience in the teaching profession, with 5 years in secondary and 22 years in post-16 and adult education.

Minority language teaching and teacher training in the RISE UP case-study communities:

do Aranese, Aromanian, Burgenland Croatian, Cornish & Seto teachers share any experiences?

Eva Duran Eppler – University of Roehampton & RISE UP Horizon Europe project

Archive & Accessibility – Paper

This paper presents an innovative project that engages with local communities to create a safe breathing space for young members of European minoritised communities to perform in their language on screen and form intra- and inter-community ties. “Speaking on screen” is a joint initiative by the Horizon Europe Project RISE UP and the Erasmus + project HOW TIMELY in which members from both teams bring their professional expertise in Intermedial/Audio-visual Accessibility & Translation (AVAT) together to support young people to dubbing audiovisual content in minority languages.

The online workshop is going to be held in 4 sessions á 2 hours each. Participants are encouraged to work in teams of 2 or 3 speakers of the same minority language (ML) to acquire (or refine) their skills in revoicing in order to be able to transfer cultural material/footage into their minority language or make audio-visual content produced by members of their community accessible to other language communities. The skills to be acquired are creating a script template, recording and synchronization as well as voicing and synching. Special emphasis will be placed on doubt resolution at the beginning of each session, so everybody feels at ease with the topic and to provide a safe space to share experiences. A moderated forum for doubts and questions will be opened and moderated with the possibility to keep this forum active or create another channel (using existing platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn etc.) to impulse a community of ML amateur audiovisual translators.

The project is expected to contribute to the vitality of minoritised languages through enabling young community members to make digital media more widely available through Intermedial/Audio-visual Accessibility & Translation (AVAT), and strengthen inter-generational community ties and community identity through collaboration between young and older fluent speakers and/or writers of the minoritised language, new speakers and enthusiasts.

More about Eva...

Eva Duran Eppler is Reader in Linguistics at the University of Roehampton and Work package Lead for "Local deployment" of the Horizon Europe Project "Revitalising Languages and Safeguarding Cultural Diversity". She has been working on multilingualism in minority communities for the past 30 years and has published extensively on language contact and language maintenance. Through the Horizon Europe project her interests have to Cultural Heritage Management and Conservation.

Lotería and Latinx Lived Civics: Multimodal Cultural Heritage as Activism in Mexican American Communities

Gabriela C. Zapata – University of Nottingham
Cultural Traditions – Paper

In the USA, Mexican Americans constitute 61.7% of Hispanics, the country's second-largest racial/ethnic group. Despite this significant presence in American society, many face discrimination due to their skin colour and heritage (Funk & Lopez, 2022). To combat this discrimination and assert their rightful place in society, since the 1970s, Mexican Americans have engaged in distinct cultural practices. These practices, rooted in Mexican traditions, have become a vital means to address social issues affecting the community, preserve their heritage, and celebrate their contributions to US society (Davis-Undiano, 2017). This work explores one of these unique manifestations, the game of "lotería," a notable yet mostly unexamined practice.

"Lotería" is a Mexican game of chance, similar to bingo. The cards and boards feature images of objects, animals, and people related to Mexican history, society, and culture, accompanied by textual phrases that define what is depicted. This multimodal combination has given lotería a cultural value beyond that of a simple game. Since its late 19th-century inception, "lotería's" multimodal representations have been adapted to reflect regional differences and contemporary events as well as sociocultural trends (Núñez y Domínguez, 1932).

This paper investigates how Mexican American artists and grassroots organizations have appropriated original Mexican "lotería" versions to express their unique experiences, histories, and translingual identities, and to mobilize community members to participate in socio-political movements to confront discrimination and marginalization. Through a multimodal social semiotic lens (van Leeuwen, 2005), this work explores how text, image, and embodiment in contemporary "lotería" artifacts enact what Paiz et al. (2023) call "Latinx lived civics": The creative, everyday participation in civic life by historically minoritized communities. By situating these cultural artifacts within broader conversations on community engagement and inclusive representation, we seek to contribute to interdisciplinary dialogues on the evolving role of cultural heritage in shaping civic identity and action.

More about Gabriela...

Gabriela C. Zapata holds a PhD in Spanish (Linguistics track) from the Pennsylvania State University. She is Associate Professor in Education at the University of Nottingham. She also serves as the editor of the book series *Multiliteracies and Second Language Education* (Routledge) and co-editor-in-chief of the journal *Diversity & Inclusion Research* (Wiley). Her main research areas are Generative AI in higher education instruction, assessment, and teacher training; AI literacy; multiliteracies-based instruction (focus on Learning by Design); and multimodal social semiotics with a focus on Mexican lotería and taco trucks.

Teaching Beyond the Performance of Hope

Girinandini Singh – University of Cambridge

Identity – Paper

In this presentation, I explore the development of a museum session plan grounded in the pedagogical potential of affective theory, decolonial praxis, and in listening as a mode of embodied inquiry. I question what "'doing hope'" looks like, addressing the issues of coloniality in peace discourse (Acharya, 2022), moving the conversation towards a more nuanced and complex discussion of hope as an ongoing, relational practice, that addresses the static and 'completed' ideal state of peace (Bhambra, 2018) that is both insufficient and ultimately unsustainable. Engaging with decolonial practices of teaching, specifically in the museum context - I work to build a museum session plan founded on TJ Demos' concept of 'Hopeful Futurity' (2020) - troubling peace discourse by exploring ways in which hope can and should be continually enacted and engaged with as a live process.

The article is contextualised within a museum exhibition by the artist Issam Kourbaj (2024), called Urgent Archives, at Kettle's Yard, Cambridge. The exhibition explores themes of conflict, hope, and the ephemerality of peace; it begins with the conflict in Syria which resulted in the largest refugee migration and places it in conversation with the current conflict in Gaza. The museum space thus, becomes the relational field, where new ways of being, knowing, and doing hope arise, and where the difficult conversation around conflict and its impact can emerge through engaging with artworks, practices, and narratives, grounded in the socio-political conversations happening in and outside the museum, and the larger world. Using new materialism as a lens to engage with these entangled and shifting fields of relationality, ultimately I explore the nuances of hope as an alive process, asking the question - how do we co-construct meanings around large abstract ideas that are evolving and growing and in a constant state of motion if not by embracing the messy practices of learning/teaching in motion?

More about Girinandini...

Girinandini Singh (she/her) is a doctoral researcher, writer, and poet at the University of Cambridge's Faculty of Education, researching the ontology of listening and sound towards developing a deep listening pedagogy, exploring decolonial research practice methodologies, affective theory, and apocalyptic methodologies. She is part of the learning team in Kettle's Yard Museum and Gallery in Cambridge, where she conceptualises and builds formats of museum learning and community engagement. She is the winner of the Simms Prize from Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge.

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Assembly: kinaesthetically re-envisioning fragments of the Tavistock Institute's Archive

*Henrietta Hale – Coventry University Centre for Dance Research
Archive & Accessibility – Paper*

My PhD research explores relational practices with archive materials of The Tavistock Institute of Human Relations (TIHR), and its 70 + years of social science action research from a systems psychodynamic perspective. I encounter the archive records through an embodied and socially engaged creative process. Whilst I am not looking at conservation and management practices in a traditional sense, I propose that the re-envisioning, re-enactment and the resonant affects of using performance practices drawing from archival sources, is a form of conservation of heritages. Furthermore, the deliberate scrambling and mediation of bodily archives as personal and social heritages within historical artefacts, enables a critical reflection on how and which bodies and representations of thinking are missing from the archive.

My particular focus is on TIHR 1950's research within the socio-technical systems theory development and the effects of automation and higher mechanisation in factories. Immersing myself in fieldnotes from a sulphur recovery plant in Manchester in 1959, I observe resonances with contemporary pre-occupation about the speed of advancement in Artificial Intelligence.

Via a spoken lecture, punctuated with a series of short video documents that I have been assembling this year, I propose to examine what affective reverberations about the meaning of work can be generated using creative assemblage practices. The video, sound and image documentation of encounters with archive materials is mediated and reconfigured through layers, and sedimented with spoken word and video-editing practices. This reification of processual encounter is a form of re-archiving, bringing forth the TIHR heritages into the liveness of now, as a 'scrambling (of) time and matter' (Singh, 2018).

More about Heni...

Heni Hale is beginning her third year of a Collaborative Doctoral Award with Centre for Dance Research, Coventry University and Tavistock Institute of Human Relations, supported through AHRC via Midlands4Cities. She is currently also finishing a placement at Wellcome Collection - where Tavistock's archive is held - observing cataloguing and archival methods. Originally a performance-maker, and movement artist working collaboratively for nearly 30 years, she is a founder member of collective, Dog Kennel Hill Project, and has been an artist development facilitator, co-directing Independent Dance, in London.

Workshops as Sites of Reflection and Engagement: A Practice-Informed Approach to Cultural Heritage

Ilenia Atzori – University of Brighton
Place & History – Paper

Have you ever thought that a wall could tell us a lot about how people connect with heritage? In both Italian and English, the word "wall" carries layered meanings, functioning not only as a physical barrier but also as a metaphor for emotional, institutional, or conceptual boundaries. Expressions like "bringing the museum outside its walls" highlight the need for greater inclusion, while "building a wall" or "hitting a wall" suggest distance or obstacles. At the same time, walls can become platforms for expression through graffiti, murals, or projections, and markers of memory, delineating space or preserving traces of the past. But what if a wall became the starting point for a broader conversation about heritage?

This question lies at the heart of my practice-informed doctoral research, which began with a wall in the historic neighbourhood of Castello, Cagliari (Sardinia, Italy). The project explored how participatory workshops might foster more meaningful forms of audience engagement and encourage critical reflection on cultural heritage.

Rooted in my experience as a tour guide and shaped by drawing on principles from Freirean popular education, public archaeology (as developed in the Italian context), and reflective practice, the research created spaces in which community members could share what heritage meant to them. These workshops invited participants to engage critically with local narratives, exchange memories, question dominant representations, and reflect on their roles within heritage processes.

Methodological choices were informed by both fieldwork and research, emphasising the value of responsive, situated practices. By combining approaches from popular education, public archaeology, participatory methods, and psychogeography, the project highlights how interdisciplinary collaboration can support meaningful community involvement in heritage discourse.

More about Ilenia...

Ilenia Atzori is a PhD candidate at the University of Brighton, where her research explores cultural heritage as a socio-cultural construct and, consequently, a dynamic, participatory process. Rooted in her experience as a licensed tour guide and cultural mediator, her doctoral project focuses on community engagement with heritage in Sardinia (Italy) through workshops, oral histories, and creative, practice-informed methods. Drawing on multiple disciplines, her work challenges dominant heritage narratives, fosters critical reflection, and emphasises plural, situated understandings of heritage. Alongside her research, she has extensive experience in archival exploration, heritage communication, and public storytelling across academic and community-based settings.

The role of schools in heritage language maintenance: A lesson from history

Jan Niklas Heinrich – University of Nottingham / Europa-Universität Flensburg
Education & Outreach – Paper

In 1621, several religious migrants from the Netherlands founded Friedrichstadt in Northern Germany, where they used Dutch as their language of administration for 100 years. Some parishes and several families continued using this heritage language though well into the 19th century (Heinrich-Augenstein 2024). In 1647, the Dutch Remonstrants set up their own primary school (Norden 2007: 29), where teaching Dutch became an ever more prominent task the more the town in general shifted to German. Schools, especially religious schools, have been known to support language maintenance for several decades now (e.g. Kloss 1966: 206), but in the case of Friedrichstadt, they could not prevent the shift to German in the long-term.

In this paper, I will explain how the role of the Remonstrant school in maintaining the heritage language for this community in Friedrichstadt changed over the centuries, how this is connected to the language shifts in other domains of society, and I will discuss reasons for why these efforts might have been unsuccessful in the end.

Literature:

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More about Jan...

Jan studied German linguistics and literature alongside Catholic theology at the University of Freiburg, before completing an M.A. in 'Culture-Language-Media' at the University of Flensburg. He defended his PhD thesis on the multilingual history of Friedrichstadt in 2024 and it is due to be published in November 2025. He is currently a Teaching Associate for German at the University of Nottingham. His research interests lie in historical sociolinguistics, multilingualism, and the relationship between language and religion.

Breathing Heritage:

Curating Chinese Dance through Qi, Xiang, and Yun in Contemporary Exhibition Practice

Jiaying Gao – Goldsmiths University of London

Museum & Exhibition – Paper w/ Performance

This presentation explores how Chinese philosophical aesthetics—Qi (气, life force), Xiang (象, image/metaphor), and Yun (韵, resonance)—can serve as curatorial principles for presenting Chinese dance as intangible cultural heritage. Rather than treating heritage as a static archive of forms, this research proposes an embodied and relational model of exhibition-making that activates heritage through breath, rhythm, and interaction.

Focusing on three original curatorial case studies—Breath 呼吸, Integrate, and Tales of the Veil—I analyse how traditional Chinese concepts rooted in Daoist and cosmological thought can shape the way dance heritage is framed and felt within museum and exhibition contexts. In this model, Qi structures the energetic flow between audience and performance space; Xiang guides meaning-making through poetic imagery and metaphor; and Yun creates affective resonance that lingers between bodies, gestures, and atmospheres.

By designing for movement, relational presence, and sensory nuance, these exhibitions shift the curatorial focus from object-based display to field-based experience, offering an alternative approach to how intangible heritage might be encountered. This work engages with ongoing debates in heritage studies, performance curation, and decolonial museology, proposing that curating Chinese dance through these philosophical principles not only preserves tradition, but activates its living dimension—as choreography, as breath, as shared rhythm.

Ultimately, the paper argues for a culturally grounded yet globally relevant curatorial methodology that honours the non-linear, performative, and metaphysical qualities of Chinese heritage. It invites curators and museum practitioners to consider how intangible forms like dance may be translated not just visually, but experientially, through the curatorial logics of Qi, Xiang, and Yun.

More about Jiaying...

Jiaying Gao is a PhD student at the Institute for Creative and Cultural Entrepreneurship programme at Goldsmiths, University of London, UK. She is also a Chinese dancer, choreographer, artist and curator. Her research investigates the intersection of body perceptions and the archive, particularly within the frame of dance museums. She has extensive research experience in the field of Chinese dance, as well as cultural and ethnic policies and their impact on social and economic development at local, national and international levels. Jiaying is currently undertaking a practice-based project that aims to extend and reflect the performativity of identities and affect in dance archives and has curated several dance archive exhibitions. At Goldsmiths, she co-convenes the Performance Research Forum, the Department of Theatre & Performance's long-running public research event series. Since 2021, she has taught one module of performing archive programmes as a Visiting Tutor at UAL. Recently, Jiaying has presented papers at the Modes of Capture Symposium at Limerick University, Ireland (2023), and for 'Environmental Emergencies Across Media' at Linnaeus University, Sweden (2023). She has participated in 'Dance as Possibility, Dance as Casualty: Movement and the Stakes of Dance Making' in Montpellier, France (2022), and the TaPRA Annual Conference at Essex University (2022). She has been a research curator at the Flamenco Dance Museum for one year. In 2022, she led a workshop at the School of Visual Arts, Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen, and was invited to the Flamenco Dance Museum in Seville as a curator. In September 2023, she will take up the role of Graduate Assistant for the Dance Studies Association (DSA), London. And exhibit her dance exhibition (Tales of Veils) at Humboldt Forum, Berlin, Germany.

Access Denied:

Obstacles to Archaeological Research Using Human Remains in the UK

Katharine Ward – University of Birmingham
Place & History – Paper

In the United Kingdom, the justification for the excavation and curation of human remains is often framed as being for the 'public good,' with the understanding that this includes public education and the dissemination of new knowledge derived from research. However, once these remains are deposited in archives, early career researchers can face significant and often prohibitive obstacles to access, which ultimately undermines this core justification.

The ad hoc development of the UK heritage industry has led to lack of standardisation and consistent policy across archival institutions which creates a confusing landscape for researchers. This is further compounded by a general lack of staffing and dedicated resources within many archives, which can limit their capacity to facilitate new research. Economic pressures within the heritage sector have also led, in some places, to the introduction of paywalls. Furthermore, ongoing debates concerning the preservation of human remains versus the increasingly common use of destructive sampling methods raise valid concerns about the long-term protection of these irreplaceable resources.

While some of these obstacles represent necessary safeguards to protect and preserve a sensitive resource, their combined effect can be a significant barrier to new research. This situation risks creating a paradox where human remains are preserved for 'public good' but are rendered inaccessible to early career researchers, thus undermining a large resource that might fulfill this purpose. This paper explores the interplay of these factors using the experiences of the author and their colleagues for discussion.

More about Kat...

Kat Ward (she/her) is a Midlands4Cities/AHRC-funded doctoral researcher at the University of Birmingham. Her research investigates Early Neolithic mortuary and funerary practices in order to better understand the identities, culture and values of the population she studies. In addition to her academic research, Kat has a background in heritage consultancy in the UK commercial archaeology sector working with developers and local councils to protect and enhance UK cultural heritage.

Approaches to safeguarding language as Intangible Cultural Heritage: Learning from Cities of Languages and Literature

Katy Birch – University of Nottingham

Place & History – Paper

While a traditional view of heritage has focused on tangible sites and objects (Smith 2015: 135), heritage is increasingly understood to also involve living, ‘intangible’ elements, as set out in the 2003 UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. In March 2024, the UK finally ratified this Convention, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) is currently developing an approach to implementing the Convention nationally based on a “community-based, bottom up” understanding of Intangible Cultural Heritage (DCMS 2025).

This paper introduces research from an ongoing collaborative doctoral project with Nottingham UNESCO City of Literature, which seeks to better understand and support the diverse language heritages of young people (aged 14-25) in Nottingham through the lens of Intangible Cultural Heritage. Nottingham was designated a UNESCO City of Literature in 2015, and a variety of language-focused projects are currently taking place in the city, including the NottinghamLingo initiative, the ‘Living Heritages and Language’ pledge, and the Complementary Education Network (Nottingham City Exchange) which brings together over 20 complementary language schools in the city (Association for Language Learning 2025).

Drawing on the notion of language as a ‘vehicle’ of Intangible Cultural Heritage (UNESCO 2003: 2.2a), I provide examples of projects from the international UNESCO Cities of Literature network and other Cities of Languages (as identified by the Association for Language Learning 2025) to illustrate different approaches to safeguarding language heritages at the local level. By developing a co-creation workshop model drawing on principles of Youth Participatory Action Research, I plan to directly engage young people in Nottingham in safeguarding and celebrating their language heritages. I introduce some of the practical and ethical considerations of this approach and how this model aligns with Intangible Cultural Heritage as a framework.

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More about Katy...

Katy is an M4C-funded PhD researcher at the University of Nottingham. Her project is a Collaborative Doctoral Award with Nottingham City of Literature, the independent charity which manages and animates Nottingham's UNESCO City of Literature designation. Katy's background is in Modern Languages (French and Russian) and sociolinguistics; her current research aims to develop an approach to safeguarding and celebrating young people's diverse language heritages in Nottingham and beyond.

Monstrous Legacies: Reimagining Gothic Heritage through Creative Practice

Kellie Everton – University of Derby
Cultural Traditions – Paper

This presentation explores how contemporary art practice can critically engage with Gothic heritage narratives, using the figure of the vampire as a lens to examine the romanticisation of monstrosity in cultural memory. Through a practice-based PhD, the research investigates how creative methodologies can both disseminate and deconstruct heritage narratives, particularly those that have been aestheticised and commodified over time.

The study interrogates the transformation of the vampire archetype from a symbol of fear to one of allure, tracing its evolution in popular culture and its impact on societal perceptions of danger, desire, and morality. This includes discussion of the performative legacies stemming from early stage adaptations, such as Hamilton Deane's *Dracula*, first performed in Derby in 1924.

Alongside this doctoral research, I have collaborated with the AHRC-funded *Dracula Returns to Derby* project, contributing creative outputs and public engagement initiatives. These collaborative efforts have enriched the research through real-world application, while also fostering civic pride and heritage interest at the local level.

Key themes include the ethical considerations of heritage dissemination, the role of creative practice in conservation, and the potential for art to serve as a medium for both preserving and questioning cultural narratives. The presentation will discuss specific artworks and interventions that exemplify these themes, highlighting how they foster dialogue between past and present, and between institutions and communities.

This interdisciplinary approach contributes to wider conversations on cultural heritage management, advocating for practices that are inclusive, reflective, and responsive to the complexities of history and identity.

More about Kellie...

Kellie Everton is a PhD candidate at the University of Derby, researching the intersections of contemporary art, heritage studies, and Gothic culture. Her practice-led project investigates how creative methodologies can reinterpret underrepresented heritage narratives, with a focus on Hamilton Deane's 1924 adaptation of *Dracula* in Derby. Kellie also serves as co-director of the Derby *Dracula* CIC and was an artistic collaborator on the AHRC-funded *Dracula Returns to Derby* project.

Living among the dead:

case of living heritage and community resilience within the City of the Dead

Lamya Elsabban – PGR at ADBE school, Nottingham Trent University

Identity – Poster

Cemeteries are perceived as sacred and memorial places, the historic necropolis of Cairo “City of the Dead” is a totally different narrative. It is one of the inscribed UNESCO heritage sites since 1979, that serves as a formal burial site and a gathering place for relatives visiting their buried loved ones. Over time the CoD became a permanent informal residence for Cairo’s urban poor and migrants due to the lack of affordable housing and its proximity to city centre which offered access to job opportunities (Logan, 2020 and Saleh, 2022). Beyond its tangible heritage, the neighbourhood holds a deep cultural significance. Despite the rich-layers of formal and informal heritage rooted within the neighbourhood, there are concerns about its heritage loss and degradation of UNESCO-designated site. It is facing external pressures and growing threats from state-led development projects and urban expansions that overlooks its socio-cultural and historic significance.

The case explores community resistance and the continuity of their intangible heritage, highlighting how residents navigate external pressures not just through physical survival among urban development pressures, housing shortages, and government policies that threaten their way of life. But also, through their living heritage rooted in their rituals, traditions, social ties, and daily practices developed over time and created a strong sense of belonging and ownership of the place. Yet, these locals are facing threats of displacements, home demolition and uncertain future without their inheritance. Government interventions framed as modernization and ease of access within Cairo and to the New Capital of Egypt, have already started to erase some of the historic mausoleums, centuries-old tombs, and livelihoods. These projects -bridges, axis, main roads- do not prioritize the human heritage and consider it as the less important heritage.

The living memory of the place is increasingly challenged highlighting the ways inhabitants maintain their identity, social values within places identified as unofficial and excluded from the formal planning process. While the area is internationally recognized for its monumental funerary architecture, it is also home to thousands of residents who maintain an active and deeply rooted relationship with the site. How local residents contribute to the making and re-creation of their living heritage in an informal way indicates their resilience. The paper highlights how the resilience is measured within heritage contexts.

More about Lamya...

Lamya Elsabban is a Doctoral Researcher in ADBE School NTU, holds a master's degree in Urban Development from Technical University of Berlin. With a passion of academic research, she published papers and book chapters in urban and architecture heritage.

From Stone to Signal: A Multimodal AI System for Archaeological Interpretation in the Olmec Civilisation

Larissa Terranova – CSACA Centro Studi Americanistici - Circolo Amerindiano – Perugia
Identity – Paper

This project introduces a multimodal Retrieval-Augmented Generation (RAG) system designed to enhance interpretive research in digital archaeology. It is focused on the early Mesoamerican Olmec civilisation (1600–400 BCE) and allows users to pose natural language questions and retrieve semantically aligned responses grounded in both text and images from archaeological sources. The prototype was developed using The Olmec Town, an original thesis that interprets Olmec ceremonial centres as politically organised urban settlements. The system combines OpenAI embeddings for text, CLIP vision-language models for images, and GPT-4 for generating coherent, contextualised answers. Sample queries such as “How were Olmec centres organised politically?” return synthesised insights from academic discourse, site plans, and iconographic material. By bridging visual and textual evidence through AI, the Advanced RAG prototype provides a new interface for scholarly engagement with complex archaeological hypotheses. It has been positively evaluated in academic settings for its modular design, technical sophistication, and interpretive utility, and forms part of a broader initiative — Ruta de la Obsidiana — aimed at cross-cultural and comparative Mesoamerican research. Moreover, the project engages with ethical questions around AI’s use in indigenous cultural contexts and proposes respectful data handling practices for digital heritage applications. Future development will explore applications in museums, archives, and classroom settings, offering a replicable model for cultural heritage research that balances technological innovation with interpretive depth and cultural responsibility.

More about Larissa...

Larissa Terranova is a researcher affiliated with the Centro Studi Americanistici “Circolo Amerindiano” (CSACA) in Perugia, where she contributes to the international project Ruta de la Obsidiana (Sub-project 1). Her background combines cultural anthropology, language education, and applied AI. In 2025, she completed the Applied Generative AI program at Johns Hopkins University, developing a multimodal RAG prototype for archaeological interpretation. Her work focuses on building ethical, AI-driven tools for cultural heritage research and public engagement, with an emphasis on interpretive depth and indigenous cultural respect.

Fostering cultural belonging in protected landscapes: who benefits?

Mandy Roberts – Northumberland National Park Authority

Charlie Osborne – Newcastle University

Place & Decolonisation – Paper

Who are national parks for? Since designation, national parks have contended with resolving conflicting interests over land-use and recreation. A number of stakeholders have had a range of influence over policy and practice in the countryside from landowners to communities and visitors. How therefore do groups experiencing barriers to entry negotiate, and benefit from, accessing national parks? The Healthy Park, Healthy People (HPPH) project aims to promote Northumberland National Park as a key resource of health and well-being for our National Park communities and our regional audience. Our vision is that through connecting people with the special qualities of Northumberland National Park, they will value and protect the natural services and heritage that the National Park provides, understand how these services can sustainably enhance their lives, and develop a sense of belonging. HPPH enables Northumberland National Park Authority to test targeted interventions for positive health and well-being outcomes where national indicators show high levels of health inequalities. By addressing the physical and conceptual barriers to accessing Northumberland National Park through engaging and creative activities, the project aims to increase participant confidence, wellbeing, and understanding of nature. Participant feedback from this project has demonstrated an increased connection and sense of cultural belonging between underserved community groups and their National Park.

More about Mandy...

Mandy's first degree was Design History, which led her in the direction of heritage interpretation. However, after working as a Farm Ranger Interpreter at Tatton Park 1930's Home Farm, the story of the cultural significance of farming and landscape management led her to an interest in urban community farming and the role of Assistant Manager at Bill Quay Farm, Gateshead. Her subsequent roles at Northumberland National Park have concentrated on engaging audiences with the wider landscape-especially those audiences who are unaware of or underconfident in a National Park. She completed a masters in Environment, Culture and Communication in 2022 and currently manages two Northumberland National Park Projects, Healthy Park Healthy People and Welcome to Nature. She also manages the Northumberland National Park Volunteer Service.

More about Charlie...

Charlie is a postgraduate researcher at Newcastle University studying the drivers of nitrogen emissions associated with human-modified peatlands in Northumberland and Malaysian Borneo. Charlie is collaborating with Northumberland National Park Authority on their Healthy Parks Healthy People project, which aims to enhance the health and wellbeing of communities in the Northeast and promote appreciation of nature and sense of belonging in the park.

NOSTOS – Migrating Bodies, Migrating Dances

Marianna Sfyridi – University of the Arts London
Cultural Traditions – Paper

This piece critically examines my artistic research from three distinct perspectives, exploring the depth of developmental approaches over this period. A didactic - pedagogic one, a choreographic - performance one and a martial art - environmental one. The above will be presented in the documentary film NOSTOS-Migrating Bodies, Migrating Dances created over this period through collaborations in the dance permaculture world.

It presents a multidisciplinary exploration of movement practices and cultural narratives, culminating in the creation and dissemination of the Circadian Bodies methodology.

The project further explores the theme of NOSTOS, an ancient Greek concept symbolizing the epic hero's return home, which I reinterpret in the context of contemporary issues like migration and displacement. This theme, which I investigate through choreographic research and fieldwork, serves as a metaphor for the refugee journeys across the Mediterranean. By drawing on my experiences at the Impulstanz Festival in Vienna and during my residency at Itaparica Island, Bahia, I bridge cultural gaps between Greek traditional dance and Capoeira, revealing their shared expressions of communal healing, resistance, and identity preservation. The ethnographic research involved field interviews with dance practitioners in Crete and Salvador, providing insights into how these dance forms act as cultural archives, preserving narratives of struggle and resilience.

A central focus is the affective connection to the socio-political themes underlying the research and the urgency of addressing contemporary social issues, such as migration and cultural preservation. The work is driven by a sense of responsibility to honour the cultural traditions I engage with, as well as a personal commitment to exploring my own identity and place within these narratives. It reflects a professional ambition but also resonates with my personal journey as an artist navigating complex cultural landscapes.

More about Marianna...

Marianna is a multidisciplinary artist combining my expertise in dance, Capoeira, somatics, and immersive technology. Her work integrates movement practices with digital tools such as XR and VR, exploring the intersections of embodiment, migration, and public space. She has been actively working in dance, choreography, and community engagement for over five years, both as a performer and as a facilitator of movement workshops. Her practice, NOSTOS: Migrating Bodies, Migrating Dances, investigates movement as a vehicle for storytelling and social change. It brings together communities to reflect on migration, displacement, and cultural identity. Through this project, she has collaborated with diverse groups, including refugee communities, individuals with disabilities, and multidisciplinary artists, using Capoeira and somatic practices as a means of empowerment. She holds a Master of Dance Performance from The Place in London, where she developed her artistic research in movement, choreography, and digital integration. Her past work includes residencies and workshops in Greece, Austria, Italy, and Brazil, engaging with vulnerable communities through dance and embodiment. Her experience also extends to inclusive choreography, having worked with mixed-ability performers and designed movement sessions that prioritize accessibility. As a Capoeirista, she uses this Afro-Brazilian martial art to foster resilience and collective agency, particularly among marginalized groups. Her work is deeply rooted in site-specific performance and improvisation, engaging local communities in storytelling through movement. She is passionate about bridging traditional practices with contemporary approaches to create meaningful artistic experiences that challenge dominant narratives.

Exploring the contextual factors of Iranian cultural policies

Maryam Pourzakarya – Nottingham Trent University

Place & Decolonisation – Poster

Cultural policies are highly context-dependent and shaped by local communities and cultural values. Although existing studies focus on cultural policy in Western contexts, there is a need for more research on regions, countries, cities and communities within the Global South, such as Africa and the Middle East. This research explores the co-production of cultural policy in Iran at different scales, highlighting processes of inclusivity and community involvement at the stages of planning and implementation. It draws on qualitative data from multiple qualitative sources, informed by the positionality and experience of the researcher, who has lived, studied and worked in Iran for over 30 years. The experience involved four projects: (1) exploring culture-led regeneration in Rasht city, Iran; (2) reviewing a 10-step bottom-up community-led regeneration scheme; (3) surveys with 128 users of cultural places and creative activities in Rasht city, Iran and (4) 20 semi-structured interviews with key informants in public institutions. The top-down policies and practices of the Iranian government undermine participatory processes, democratic values and cultural citizenship. Yet, there is also evidence that the cultural identities and practices of local communities remain visible and vibrant. The research demonstrates how policies in the post-revolutionary period limit Iran's adoption of cultural models while suppressing forms of community participation and democratic values. The article nuances our understanding of the gap between the universal model of cultural policy and what happens in practice. The understudied case of Iran, the article also highlights how cultural policy, in non-Western contexts, is shaped by a range of factors, including cultural values and political imperatives.

More about Maryam...

Maryam is a PhD candidate at Nottingham Trent University researching how culture-led regeneration and placemaking influence quality of life, focusing on community experiences of cultural spaces and creative activities in urban areas. Her broader research interests include the cultural and creative industries (CCIs), cultural policy debates, and spatial analysis.

From Crisis to Opportunity:

Private Sector Engagement and Financial Sustainability in the Restoration of Notre-Dame de Paris

Meng Chu Chen – Erasmus University Rotterdam Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship

Conservation & Sustainability – Paper

This study examines the financial sustainability of cultural heritage projects through the case of Notre-Dame de Paris restoration following the 2019 fire. Unlike France's traditional model of direct state intervention in cultural funding, the restoration project was primarily financed through private donations. This shift in funding structure raises questions about the long-term viability of introduce, or even rely on private support in heritage fundraising. Through documentary analysis on secondary data and semi-structured interviews, this research explores both the short-term benefits and the long-term challenges of this approach.

More about Chu...

Chu is a master's student in Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship at Erasmus University Rotterdam, currently researching the financial sustainability of cultural heritage restoration, with a focus on the funding and governance of the Notre-Dame de Paris restoration following the 2019 fire. She holds a BFA in Arts & Design with interdisciplinary studies in humanities and social sciences from National Tsing Hua University in Taiwan. Her academic interests include cultural heritage management and the economics of cultural goods. Beyond academia, she has contributed to international cultural initiatives, including supporting sponsorship and strategic outreach for the MONO JAPAN Fair and conducting research for a university-led consultancy project with the Embassy of Latvia in the Netherlands.

DART : Augmented Reality Performative Walking Tours, a proposal.

Michelle Buckley – C-DaRE, Coventry University & the ISTD
Conservation & Sustainability – Film

Tourism experienced a profound and unsurprising decline during the COVID-19 pandemic, as numerous cultural sites—from national institutions to local museums—faced severe financial strain. This crisis was compounded by the simultaneous impact on the theatre, arts, and entertainment industries, marking a period of unprecedented disruption when global mobility and public life came to an abrupt halt. Now, in the aftermath of ‘the great pause’, tourism has steadily been returning to pre-pandemic levels*.

However, the pandemic has reshaped the relationship between visitors and sites of cultural interest. It accelerated an already emerging imperative within the tourism sector to adopt digital and AI-driven technologies to enhance engagement. Even as physical travel resumes, technological innovation continues to open new horizons for cultural heritage interpretation, offering opportunities for broader and more interactive access to historical narratives.

The accompanying video was originally created as part of my master's at the University of Roehampton. Drawing upon my professional experience as both a dancer and tour guide, this project sought to explore how history and performance could remain accessible during a time when public gatherings were restricted, and many cultural spaces remained closed. The initiative, titled *DART (Danced Augmented Reality Tours)*, was conceived as a way to animate historical material through dance, delivered via a mobile platform to ensure accessibility beyond physical limitations.

While *DART* emerged in response to the loss of employment across both my professional fields—tourism and theatre—its purpose extends beyond the creation of a single choreographic work inspired by the 18th-century work, *Harris's List of Covent Garden Ladies*. *DART* proposes a broader model for reimagining and experiencing historical figures and places, whether they are housed in major institutions or embedded in urban landscapes, through the use of mobile technologies. By integrating theatre, tourism, and education, this approach seeks to foster deeper engagement with heritage whilst supporting its preservation through innovative and performative methods.

*<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn06022/>

*<https://www.visitbritain.org/news-and-media/industry-news-and-press-releases/visitbritain-publishes-inbound-tourism-forecast-0>

More about Michelle...

An American dancer in London, Michelle has performed internationally as a freelance artist across a wide range of dance and theatre genres. As a senior member of Gleich Dances, she not only performs but also frequently collaborates on the creation and development of the company's ballets. Her contributions include assisting choreographer and director Julia K. Gleich's research on vector movement theories, which have been presented at academic conferences and featured in publications, such as *The Dynamic Body in Space*. She also performed and collaborated in works such as ‘Pi Solo’ from *Brodmann Areas*, which will be once again presented at the *Betweenum: Brooklyn–Prague Forum for Philosophy of Art* conference later this Autumn.

In addition to her dance work, Michelle has extensive experience as a professional freelance tour guide in London and across the Southeast and Southwest of England. She is currently beginning her second year of a M4C Collaborative Doctoral Award with the Centre of Dance Research at Coventry University, in partnership with the Imperial Society of Teachers of Dancing (ISTD). By engaging with and reactivating the ISTD archive, her work focuses on the history of dance pedagogy—particularly ballet—examining its historical development and the imperial connotations embedded within the artform in Britain.

www.michellebuckley.dance

The Historical Walls of the Moroccan City of Taroudant and the Problematic of Conservation and Rehabilitation

Mustapha Nassir – University, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah, Fes, Morocco

Conservation & Sustainability – Paper

The restoration of monuments and historical buildings is intricate. It requires a high level of technical and scientific expertise, enormous experience and long practice on the field, deep knowledge of the historical reality, architectural specificity, aesthetic and artistic values of archaeological buildings. The causes of the degradation of monuments vary depending on the conditions that exist and their influence.

The Random restorations which were not the subject of an in-depth consideration had the effect of blurring the architectural identity and the artistic value of the historical wall of the ancient city of Taroudant, and also used materials that had a negative and distorting impact. The restorers with insufficient experience committed serious architectural failures. It is now difficult to restore the state of the walls before the restoration. Laboratory analyses were carried out on the materials used in the restoration of the walls of the city of Taroudant, and it was found that the soil was sandy (around 60%), in addition to the fact that the percentage of lime was very low, not exceeding 4.23%. The analysis revealed that the restoration coating comprises a high proportion of sand, approximately 81.4%, and contains no more than 26% lime. we concluded that the use of sandy soil in addition to low levels of lime is not valid. This is due to the soil's permeability and its absorption of rainwater, which has weakened the cohesion of the building materials used in the restoration. All of this led to serious cracks in the wall and the loss of paint in the areas that had been restored. and if the soil is clayey with a high lime content, the wall and coating are more cohesive and stronger. This paper will try to deal with the problematic of the erroneous restoration that caused the destruction of the architectural features of the heritage wall.

More about Mustapha...

Professor of history and heritage at the Faculty Multidisciplinary, Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco, Participation in international conferences concerning architectural heritage in America, Spain and the Emirates. Active membership of numerous scientific committees for national and international journals.

Hadrian's Wall Wetlands Landscape Recovery (HWWLR): sustaining the legibility of the historic environment in recovering nature projects

*Nick Pepper – Northumberland National Park Authority and Northumbria University
Place & Decolonisation – Paper*

Landscape Recovery is a higher tier Environmental Land Management Scheme owned by Defra. HWWLR is one of 34 'Round 2' projects in England focusing on the key themes of net zero, protected sites, and wildlife-rich habitats. It is the only landscape recovery project in either Round 1 or 2, 56 projects in all, to be in receipt of Historic England funding. The project is in a two-year development phase which will deliver a 20-year implementation plan. HWWLR will restore hydrological processes to the wetlands system in the Hadrian's Wall corridor which incorporate the Roman Wall Loughs: glacial lakes with SSSI designations. The project area comprises about 70% of Haltwhistle Burn's catchment, and through the mechanism of slowing water through the landscape, water quality and biodiversity can be improved and flood risk downstream mitigated. This is, however, a cultural landscape and many of the special qualities that attracted National Park status in the first place were created by humans living and working there. Hadrian's Wall corridor, although defined by the Roman archaeology, has been a busy place from prehistory to the present day. This paper will give a flavour of the work being undertaken to sustain the legibility of a cultural landscape undergoing nature recovery, through public engagement, community archaeology, training, and research.

More about Nick...

Nick is the engagement officer at Northumberland National Park Authority for the Hadrian's Wall Wetlands Landscape Recovery Project. He is also a PhD candidate at Northumbria University and has recently submitted a thesis with the title Preserving Thirlwall Castle: Policy, Practice, and the History of Northumberland National Park, 1956-2002. Nick is committed to community participation in cultural heritage projects and is a director of Allen Valleys Folk Festival in Northumberland's North Pennines.

Celebrating Languages and Dialects (CLAD): Building partnerships in Nottingham

Natalie Braber – Nottingham Trent University

Nicola McLelland – University of Nottingham

Identity – Paper

Language and dialect are a crucial part of people's identity but rarely considered an important aspect of culture and heritage. Following the UK's recent signing of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, however, we advocate recognising language as an important aspect of heritage. Over recent years, we have been working within this framework to forge partnerships to advocate for the preservation and protection of language, and to enrich diverse communities by engaging them with this vital cultural asset. In working with stakeholders and partners, our goal is to develop a model of intangible heritage conservation and engagement that encourages people to engage with and learn about the value of language in all its forms, locally, regionally and nationally.

This paper will focus on the collaboration between the two universities in Nottingham with local community groups and cultural organisations to explore ways of working together and engaging local people with the idea of language as part of their heritage(s). We will explain and showcase the different ways we have been celebrating and documenting linguistic heritage in Nottinghamshire. Crucially, we have been working to raise the prestige of community multilingualism, by ensuring our programme of activities pays equal attention to engagement with the non-English languages that are part of the heritage (and still spoken by) many people in the region. We believe that our combined focus on both is innovative and inclusive to ensure that people have the chance to learn about and celebrate, not only their own, but also others' language repertoires as part of their living heritages.

More about Natalie & Nicola...

Natalie Braber is Professor of Linguistics at Nottingham Trent University and Nicola McLelland is Professor of German and History of Linguistics at the University of Nottingham.

Cultural Heritage, Nigerian English and Parenting among migrants in the United Kingdom

Oluwafisayo Atanda – British Association of Applied Linguists (BAAL)
Education & Outreach – Paper

Nigerian English has become a standard form among many categories of Nigerians all over the world. Despite being a country with over five hundred languages, the English Language has become the official language for administration and education, an easily picked uniform language, since independence from being a British colony. The prestige it has obtained and indoctrinated Nigerians with is that of a means to global success. However, with the culture embedded in the local languages, many Nigerians tend to use standard English officially and Nigerian English in other contexts, where they can express their cultural heritage to retain respect, motivation, and identity. Nigerian English consists of words and expressions created from standard English, through various linguistic processes which include nativisation, direct translation, and transliteration, meaning transfer, hybridisation, and coinages, among others. In the recent surge of Nigerians migrating to the United Kingdom, the effect of Nigerian English usage by many migrants has become a challenge for many parents in retaining their English language of control over their children. They wonder why children's institutions lack the cultural awareness and competence of their cultural heritage. The use of Nigerian English with elements of morals, respect, and best characters in children has become a mental health challenge to many parents, especially with children's social services and school safeguarding teams when children relay their home experiences. The question of cultural awareness and competence is discussed in this paper. The frameworks of Language Contact and Sociocultural theories are applied to consider probable solutions to this ongoing challenge for both parents and the institutions, on how they can implement policies without immigrant parents feeling a loss of control in training their children.

More about Oluwafisayo...

Oluwafisayo Atanda has a Ph.D. degree in English Language from the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, where her research focus was on the Classroom Discourse of Down syndrome learners in Lagos, Nigeria. Her areas of research interests include Psycholinguistics, Comparative Linguistics, especially between English and her Mother Tongue, Yoruba, Discourse Analysis involving children with Special Education Needs and Difficulties (SEND), and English as a Second Language. She taught the Use of English briefly at Yaba College of Technology, Lagos, Nigeria, and was a Government Administrator for over a decade in Nigeria before moving to England in 2022. She is an independent researcher and a member of the British Association of Applied Linguistics (BAAL), actively participating in the Research involving Children Special Interest Group (RiCH SIG). She currently works in the Children Residential Services of the Northumberland County Council and has previously worked with the Northumberland Virtual School and North Locality Family Hubs.

Language practices of Manobo people in Mindanao, south-central Philippines

Rene Bonifacio – University of Nottingham
Cultural Traditions – Paper w/Performance

Manobo Kulamanan language variety is spoken by approximately a thousand Manobo people in Lumintao, Quezon, Bukidnon, south-central Philippines. It may be endangered if no language protection measures are implemented. My project explores how language policies and legislation affect Manobo people's use of, and attitudes and ideologies towards, languages. In this paper, I present some preliminary analysis of their reported linguistic repertoires. Particularly, I examine changing patterns of multilingualism amongst four languages: Manobo (the indigenous language), Cebuano (the regional language), Filipino (the national language), and English (an international language). 260 Manobo participants completed the (printed or online) questionnaires and 29 engaged in in-person semi-structured interviews, with the help of six trained Manobo assistants. The data show increased multilingualism amongst younger and highly educated community members. I suggest reasons for these differences such as varied levels of language contact with Dumahat (or non-Manobo) people and the prevalent language policies and legislation in the Philippines. I argue that multilingual repertoire and practices are useful to preserve an indigenous language amid language shift patterns of some members, thereby mitigating language endangerment.

More about Rene...

Rene is a third-year PhD researcher in Linguistics (Modern Languages) at the University of Nottingham under the Midlands4Cities of AHRC-UKRI. I advocate for indigenous language maintenance and conservation, hence my previous studies focused on language ecology, language contact and language change, language transmission, identity, and translanguaging amongst Manobo, Matigsalug, Bukidnon, and Talaandig people in Bukidnon, south-central Philippines.

Bringing Alive European Dance Culture: a Sample Programme of 16th century Dances

Sharon Butler – The Early Dance Circle, a UK educational dance charity
Cultural Traditions – Paper w/Performance

Pastime Historical Dance (all members of the Early Dance Circle) will present a sample programme from their recent performance at Ightham Mote (NT) in Kent. Our aim is to demonstrate the beauty, versatility, variety and inclusivity of early dance as a way to draw audiences into the world they are experiencing in a heritage site or exhibition. Dance was integral to the cultural expression of society until fairly recently and so is woven tightly into people's lives. We always include audience participation in our shows for the public.

All our dances and their music come from specific historical sources that outline steps and patterns, as well as aspects of style. Renaissance dance was European wide. Each nation vied to set the fashion. The repertoire contains duets, set dances and dancing for large groups. Our costuming is, in this instance, 16th century, but can be adapted. Sometimes only a suggestion of period is enough, perhaps a ruff or a fan.

This type of programme can be tailored to the venue, a particular period or an event. Pastime performs Renaissance dance regularly, but also English Country Dance from the 17th century, some Baroque country dance, and Regency Dance. We recently presented a programme to celebrate Jane Austen's birth. Many groups work with local museums and galleries to bring alive the stories behind their collections.

The reach of these dances has been worldwide, carried abroad by European emigrants, empire builders, Napoleon's navy etc. They then interacted with local dance forms in a creatively fascinating way. Their class reach too is wide. Original historical sources often depict only the richer sort, but we also have accounts of dancing in the countryside and town squares and cultural transmission moves both ways between rich and poor.

More about The Early Dance Circle...

Pastime Historical Dance has been active in South London for over 30 years, and The Early Dance Circle has just celebrated its 40th birthday. The EDC is an umbrella organisation for groups throughout the UK, promoting the enjoyment, performance and study of historical dance. It sponsors an Annual Festival and Lecture as well as a Biennial Conference for scholars of historical dance. Lists of classes and our publications are listed on our website www.earlydancecircle.co.uk.

Exploring Leadership in Heritage Language Schools: Values, Identity, and Developmental Needs

Sharon McIlroy – The University of Reading
Education & Outreach – Paper

Heritage language schools, also known as complementary and supplementary schools, provide cultural and linguistic education outside the mainstream and play a vital role in the UK's increasingly diverse communities. Despite their significant contributions, these schools and their leaders are often overlooked in educational discourse. In a globalised society, multilingualism and cultural awareness are increasingly important, yet national strategies for EAL provision remain limited, reflecting broader issues of linguistic and cultural marginalisation.

This presentation reveals the findings of a study that addresses the lesser-researched area of leadership within heritage language schools in the British Isles. Semi-structured narrative interviews were conducted with twelve heritage school leaders (seven Chinese, three Greek and Italian, and one Czech). Their narratives revealed how personal values and experiences shaped their professional identities and leadership practices.

The research explored three key questions:

1. How do twelve heritage leaders perceive their values and professional identities, and how have these shaped their leadership practice?
2. How do they perceive their school's context and culture, and how has this influenced their leadership practice?
3. What are each leader's perceptions and experiences of leadership learning, and what are their developmental needs?

To complement the interviews, participants completed the Schwartz Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ), which provided a nuanced understanding of their motivations and value systems. The integration of PVQ data with interview findings highlighted how leaders' values and school contexts shaped their leadership approaches.

Key findings suggest that heritage leaders navigate complex challenges through collaboration and shared practice. Key developmental needs identified include access to continuing professional development (CPD), guidance on educational policy, financial and legal frameworks, human resources, and community engagement. The study underscores the importance of regular forums and culturally responsive communities of practice (CoPs) to foster collaboration between heritage and mainstream education sectors.

This presentation will discuss how these twelve heritage leaders perceive their leadership journeys and the implications for future support and development.

More about Sharon...

Sharon is a Lecturer at the International Study and Lang institute (Reading Uni) - Presentation of Ed D thesis at the Institute of Education Reading University.

Sustainable Heritages. Uses of Tangible and Intangible Heritage Resources for Community Sustainable Development in India

Simona Cosentino – Nottingham Trent University
Conservation & Sustainability – Paper w/Power Point

Cultural heritage is increasingly recognised as a crucial pathway to sustainable development, contributing to broader humanitarian goals such as poverty reduction and social inequalities. Especially in developing economies under high development pressure and complex sociocultural contexts, it can represent a significant social, cultural and economic capital to mobilise through conservation, tourism, and creative industries.

The research investigates to what extent local communities use their tangible and intangible heritage as a means of sustainable development within the complexity and diversity of Indian heritage communities, and how different narratives of heritage and development are mediated. Focusing on the two case studies of the UNESCO World Heritage Historic City of Ahmedabad and the Durga Puja Festival Intangible Cultural Heritage of Kolkata, the research adopted a qualitative methodology using interviews, focus groups, observations, visual documentation and socio-spatial mapping.

The findings reveal key issues in using heritage for development, including difficulties in mediating the concepts of heritage, development, and community between universal and local levels, with the former promoting a homogenised understanding overlooking the specificities of attitudes, needs, and aspirations of sites and communities. It fails to yield benefits to primary stakeholders, undermining heritage significance in the everyday life of communities, and challenges values of human rights, equity, and sustainability, core to sustainable development.

More about Simona...

Simona is a Doctoral Researcher, Part Time Research Assistant and Lecturer at the School of Architecture, Design and the Built Environment (ADBE), at Nottingham Trent University (NTU). Her interests cut across the field of cultural heritage, including World Heritage, Intangible Cultural heritage, but also the wider cultural and creative industries, focusing on the role of heritage as a means of sustainable development and its capacity to transform lives. She holds an MA in World Heritage Studies from University of Birmingham, UK (2021), and an MA (2015) and BA (2011) in Product Design for Innovation from Politecnico di Milano, Italy.

Seen and Unseen: Hillcart Road, Chor Bato, and Spatial Hierarchies in Darjeeling

Sonali Gurung – CEPT University Ahmedabad Gujarat
Place & Decolonisation – Paper

The Hill Cart Road, a major colonial infrastructure connecting the plains to the Mall Road of Darjeeling, played a defining role in shaping the hill station's spatial and social morphology. Intended to facilitate elite mobility and control, the road also created prominent visual corridors and niches for colonial-built forms, positioned to project order, grandeur, and permanence. This curated visibility contributed to a dominant spatial narrative of the hill, aligned with colonial ideals and aesthetics.

However, the construction of the road was shaped by the terrain it aimed to command, forced to navigate steep gradients, ecological constraints, and existing indigenous pathways. This negotiation reveals the limitations of colonial spatial authority and the compromises embedded in the making of imperial infrastructure. Crucially, the physical labour of roadbuilding was carried out by thousands of workers from Nepal, Sikkim, and Bhutan, whose contributions remain marginal in official accounts, just as their settlements and spatial practices are excluded from colonial representations.

In contrast to the formalised and visually prominent Hill Cart Road, chor bato, an informal path traversed by local and labouring communities, constituted a parallel and essential spatial network. These routes were not only vital for everyday mobility but were also integrated with their built forms and grounded in the region's lived spatial practices. Yet, despite their embeddedness in the local morphology, they remain largely unrepresented in colonial maps and visual records. The lives and contributions of those who moved through and sustained these routes remain blurred in official histories, just as their settlements and everyday geographies dissolved into the margins of colonial maps and photographs.

This paper uses sectional analysis and historical sources to examine how the Hill Cart Road functioned not only as infrastructure but also as a spatial regime that framed what was seen, preserved, and legitimised. By situating the road alongside the overlooked networks of chor bato and associated local built environments, the study advocates for a decolonised heritage framework that reconsiders what was framed in, what was excluded, and how these spatial decisions continue to shape Darjeeling's urban memory.

More about Sonali...

Sonali is a PhD candidate under the mentorship of Dr. Meghal Arya and a visiting faculty member at CEPT University, Ahmedabad. Her research lies at the intersection of heritage studies, postcolonial theory, and colonial urbanism. Her current doctoral work investigates the absent and subaltern spatial narratives of hill stations, with a particular focus on Darjeeling. Sonali holds a Master's degree in Conservation from the School of Planning and Architecture (SPA), Bhopal, where she was awarded the Proficiency Gold Medal and Thesis Topper Award. She brings over eight years of combined experience in academia and professional practice. Previously, she worked with Ms. Gurmeet Rai on heritage conservation initiatives under the HRIDAY Scheme and Smart City Project in Ujjain.

Stuffed, silenced, displayed: Decolonising Nottingham's Natural History through 'George the Gorilla'

Zara Fahim – University of Nottingham
Museum & Exhibition – Paper

This paper introduces an ongoing AHRC-funded Midlands4Cities research placement with the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Museums, investigating the early history and provenance of 'George the Gorilla' – a well-known taxidermy specimen on display at Nottingham's Natural History Museum (Wollaton Hall). George was likely exhibited at the Paris 'Exposition Universelle' (1878) before being acquired by Nottingham, yet his journey from Africa to Nottingham (via France) remains largely unknown. This paper confronts this research gap by addressing the following research questions:

1. What do we know about the history of 'George the Gorilla' in the years before he was purchased by Nottingham, including his capture and arrival in France?
2. What is the role of Nottingham in the acquisition of George?
3. What do the remains of 'George the Gorilla' tell us about taxidermy and public history up to 1878?

Building on scientific research from the 'Nottingham Materials and Environment Science and Heritage Laboratories' (N-MESH), who are tracing George's ancestry through his DNA, this paper draws on complementary primary archival research of letters, press archives, and museum, zoo and official records across Nottingham, London and Paris to further investigate George's transnational journey. By situating George in wider 19th Century anglophone and francophone contexts when telling his story, I will first position 'George the Gorilla' not just as an artefact of natural history, but as a gateway to understanding how empire, taxidermy science and legacies intersect. I further explore how objects in local and regional museums (e.g., Wollaton Hall) – often perceived as peripheral to national or London museums – are integral to decolonising cultural heritage. I end this paper by considering the impact of this project, particularly on the local Nottingham community, with an aim to foster discussion on the importance and challenges in engaging (younger) audiences with decolonial museum narratives and issues which still remain pertinent today.

NB: This paper contains distressing images.

More about Zara...

Zara Fahim (she/her) is an AHRC-funded Midlands4Cities PhD researcher in Linguistics (Modern Languages) at the University of Nottingham. She specialises in sociolinguistics, with a particular focus on language contact and emerging vernaculars in urban contexts. Alongside her PhD, she is currently undertaking an M4C research placement with the University of Nottingham and Nottingham Museums and Galleries, researching the 19th Century history of 'George the Gorilla' – a taxidermy specimen housed at Nottingham's Natural History Museum (Wollaton Hall) – tracing his journey from Africa to Nottingham (via France). She tweets on X/Bluesky at: @zarafahim15.

Engaging Communities: Museum-Community Relationships in Contemporary China

Ziyuan Cai – University of Birmingham

Museum & Exhibition – Paper

This research explores how museums in China build participatory relationships with local communities through engagement strategies and cultural heritage display. While existing literature has examined museum-community relationships in Western contexts, fewer studies have addressed the distinct socio-cultural dynamics shaping such practices in China. This study employs an ethnographic approach, drawing on fieldwork and semi-structured interviews conducted at three museums in Nanjing and Beijing. The selected museums represent a range of governance models and outreach strategies. Early interview findings suggest varied institutional motivations and community reactions, revealing underlying tensions between top-down heritage narratives and grassroots participation. Through thematic analysis, this study seeks to uncover how museums balance state cultural policies while fostering meaningful local involvement. The research contributes to broader debates on community engagement in heritage management and offers practical insights for museum professionals.

More about Ziyuan...

Ziyuan Cai is a full-time Year 2 PhD candidate at the International Centre for Heritage, School of History and Cultures. Her research explores the relationship between cultural heritage and communities, focusing on how heritage practices influence community identity and how local communities engage with museums through bottom-up initiatives. Drawing on ethnographic fieldwork, her study contributes to broader discussions on community participation, identity construction, and museum-community relationships in contemporary heritage contexts.