‘Living in a Postcard’: creatively exploring cultural heritage with young people living in Scottish island communities

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This article explores young peoples’ perceptions and connections to their local cultural heritage in the Scottish Western and Northern Isles. Typically considered as heritage-rich contexts, this research project sought to gain an experiential understanding of young peoples’ relationship to local cultural heritage assets; in what ways these hold value for them; and if and how they associate these and other aspects of island heritage with their own sense of identity and belonging. Set against the backdrop of increasing youth migration and depopulation in Scotland’s island communities, insights emerged surrounding cultural advocacy, outward-facing representation and, in particular, the impact of tourism – as experienced by young people living in the diverse island contexts of Stornoway, Shetland and Orkney. Drawing on evidence from three island case studies, I present a studio-based approach for creatively engaging young people in heritage focused research. This article has methodological value for practitioners and researchers seeking to amplify youth-led perspectives on cultural heritage, as well as contextual insights in the areas of relational heritage and place-based identity.

Keywords: young people; creative engagement; relational heritage; place-based identity; island communities

Introduction

This article explores young peoples’ perceptions and connections to their local cultural heritage, contextually located in the Scottish Western and Northern Isles of Shetland, Stornoway and Orkney. Typically considered as heritage-rich contexts, this research project sought to gain an experiential understanding of young peoples’ relationship to local cultural heritage assets; in what ways these hold value for them; and if and how they associate these and other aspects of island heritage with their own sense of identity and belonging. Harnessing my Participatory Design research practice, I implemented a series of studio-based interventions with three different groups of young people, centred on co-creating analogue and digital zoetrope animations. This approach to creative engagement was used as a conduit to stimulate critical reflection, dialogue and debate around the topic of cultural heritage. Employing critical making

activities, I evidence how this creative approach cultivated reflection and consciousness-raising with young people surrounding their local island heritage. This article has methodological value for practitioners and researchers seeking to amplify youth-led perspectives on cultural heritage, as well as presents contextual findings and identified opportunities for future research.

In the following sections, I will set out the current commitments to participation and youth inclusion pertaining to Scottish cultural heritage policy; unpack debates in heritage discourse surrounding youth voice; and describe the methodological approach developed and employed in the project. I will then present each island studio case study, and through discussion, identify the key insights underpinning the nuanced perceptions of heritage pertaining to each island context.

A Scottish Perspective on Cultural Heritage and Youth Inclusion

Scotland is globally renowned for its regionally diverse cultural heritage; key assets for tourism and the creative industries that make a significant contribution to the Scottish economy (Scotland's Economic Strategy 2015; Scot Gov 2016a). As advocated in the Scottish Government's draft Culture Strategy (2019), opportunities to participate in cultural heritage activities can be transformational to the health and social wellbeing of individuals and communities. Addressing the barriers to cultural inclusion and engagement were highlighted as key challenges, with the need to widened access to cultural resources and experiences, and provide platforms for participation through supporting "underrepresented people and communities to access cultural power structures to ensure diverse lived experience is better reflected" (2019, 11). This echoes the Scottish Government's Connected Communities Strategy (2018), which is centred upon tackling social isolation and loneliness, and building social connections. Here it is argued that engaging with cultural and historical assets enhances community cohesion and unity, as well as individuals' sense of belonging (2018, 66–67).

Sustaining economic activity and community cohesion are key concerns for the Scottish Government (Scot Gov 2018a). Within this, there is a significant focus on the creative industries in the development of community-based cultural heritage activities (HIE 2018). The Scottish

Highlands and Islands are renowned for their rich and distinctive cultural heritage and make a significant contribution to Scotland's creative economy (Scot Gov 2016b; McHattie et al. 2019). In particular, Lewis, Orkney and Shetland are key examples of island economies that, whilst geographically remote, have established distinct and internationally recognised cultural heritage assets in, for example, craft and food and drink, which have become key drivers for tourism and make a significant contribution to their respective regional economies (McHattie et al. 2018).

Amplifying Youth Voice

Whilst policy places an emphasis on equal access to engage and participate in cultural heritage activity, young people are one of several groups that can remain excluded (De Azevedo 2012; Madgin et al. 2016). Youth outward migration, predominantly within the 15–19 age group, has become increasingly prevalent in island communities and is disproportionate to the rest of Scotland nationally (HIE 2018). Particularly in more rural communities, youth depopulation, alongside an increasingly aging population, places a strain on regional economic sustainability through reducing the local workforce. Research has shown that the challenges surrounding youth retention are linked to an aspiration to seek educational and employment opportunities not locally available to them, as well as a lack of youth-centred cultural provision (Jamieson and Groves 2008; HIE 2018). In a study exploring the influences on young peoples' decision-making to leave Orkney and Shetland, Alexander (2016) contends that motivations to leave are formed on the basis of a complex range of cultural and social factors beyond solely economic aspirations. Furthermore, common in Scottish Highland and Island towns are polarised population profiles, where a high concentration of young people under the age of eighteen and still in secondary education and a high concentration of the 55+ age group, many of who are retired, co-exist. This profile is particularly stark in smaller, rural towns where local cultural assets can appear to be, from a young person's point of view, adult-centric in nature, which young people can feel detached and excluded from (Murphy and McAra 2018); such as heritage-based industries (for example whiskey trails), tourism linked to historical and natural heritage, and craft-based festivals.

Tensions can also exist in the commercialisation of cultural heritage as part of the tourist experience, with how local communities members view themselves and wish to be outwardly represented. This was evident in a study exploring living culture and tourism in Scotland conducted by Bowers et al. (2013) during their engagement with rural art centres. Remarking on the need to align the expectations of visitors seeking *authentic* cultural portrayals with that of local residents in their programming was viewed as essential in sustaining both visitor and resident engagement (Bowers et al. 2013, 41). Pertinent here in the Scottish island context is the prevalence of cruise ship tourism, where debates exist on the extent to which cruise ship tourism directly benefits island economies, and the impact high concentrations of visitors can have on small island communities where, in some cases, host community populations are regularly dwarfed by the influx of transient cruise ship passengers (London and Lohmann 2014).

With regards to tourism, cultural heritage can be seen to be intrinsically linked to the economy (Kurtz 2010), leading to debates over the authority and management of cultural heritage representation and the power dynamics inherent in assigning value and meaning to cultural heritage practices, places and artefacts, and how these are reproduced and appropriated for economic purposes (Dicks 2004; Harrison 2013). Dominant heritage discourse can, arguably, become imposed onto local communities (Smith 2010, 4). For young people, this detachment can seem wider still, as having a sense of ownership and stake in shaping this for themselves is less likely when those in positions of power determine what cultural heritage narratives are privileged over others (Darian-Smith and Pascoe 2012, Smith 2012; Magden et al. 2018). This is also reflected in tourism research as argued by Buzinde and Manuel-Navarrete (2013), Anglin (2014), Canosa and Graham (2016) and Canosa et al. (2017) who suggest that few studies have explored the implications of tourism development in communities from the perspective of children and young people.

Furthermore, western concepts of heritage have become increasingly foregrounded as an authority; marginalising alternative, more colloquial and nuanced forms of heritage (Smith 2006). In response to this, often exclusionary, discourse, and in a move towards subverting

ruling conventions of heritage, a more democratic movement has emerged where communities and individuals are reconceptualising cultural heritage in the form of social action (Waterton and Smith 2010; Harrison 2010, 2013; Sandell and Nightingale 2013). In a project exploring authenticity and emotional connection to space, Madgin et al. (2018) sought to democratise heritage debates by repositioning young peoples' voices as authorities of their own experiences. Through the medium of filmmaking, this project catalysed local-level social action in conserving a skate park facing redevelopment. Reflecting on the notion of authenticity and the social nature of heritage, Madgin et al. explain that:

> *[…] authenticity is not solely determined by professional heritage experts but is also ascribed from below by everyday users whose cumulative experiences of historic spaces give them a form of expertise that does not fit easily into the privileged categories […]* (2018, 596)

This type of bottom-up, community-based action resonates with the work of Johnson and Marwood (2017), who have developed an engagement framework they have defined, methodologically, as *Action Heritage*. Framed around social justice and addressing inequalities, Johnson and Marwood recruited the participation of previously "non-traditional heritage groups" (2017, 817); collaborating with young people as co-researchers in a series of community-based heritage projects. As described by Johnson and Marwood, "action heritage privileges process (action) over outcomes and addresses social inequalities through a dispersed and redistributive model of research practice" (2017, 827).

In another example, Canosa et al. (2018) evidence the impact of a creative form of engagement in the context of understanding young peoples' sense of identity and experience of growing up and living in tourist-destination areas. Recruiting young people as co-researchers, they constructed and shared their own narratives surrounding the tensions of transient tourism in their communities through filmmaking. Sharing their concerns of the environmental issues resulting from tourism in their local area through public screenings as a form of consciousness-

raising, the young people reportedly felt empowered that their perspectives were being foregrounded and legitimised by their wider community.

In these examples of creative engagement in cultural heritage and tourism debates, the voices of young people were amplified on topics that have historically been regarded as adult-centric in nature. However youth-centred narratives pertaining to culture heritage – such as identity construction and representation, cultural assets, place-making, community and belonging – remain under-researched. The transformative ethos of upskilling and empowering young people to engage and take action and ownership over a research process that can lead to more meaningful and authentic understandings of cultural heritage, as constructed by young people, which can critically challenge dominant or imposed discourse, frames the underpinning principals of participatory practice in this project, which are described in the following section.

Exploring Cultural Heritage through Creative Engagement

The central aim of this research project was to explore the perception and engagement of young people living in heritage-rich island communities so to gain a deeper understanding of the degree to which cultural heritage plays a role in their sense of identity and belonging. Methodologically, I employed an Action Research approach (McNiff 2006), which supported the explorative nature of the project. Action Research provides a cyclical framework for engaging, mobilising and empowering participants to take an active role in research alongside the researcher – re-positioning participants in research as active decision-makers in a process guided by them, for them, and with them (Lewin 1946, Reason and Bradbury 2001).

As will be described below, central in this project was the role of creative engagement, which aligns to the youth-focused recommendations made by heritage researchers Madgin et al. (2016), who argue the need to:

> *[…] ground heritage exploration in an understanding of the lives and activities that matter to young people, and the places they actively use and value […] Innovation is needed with different methods and education techniques capable of identifying how*

> *young people play in and express themselves by associating with places. Institutional frameworks should be more open to, even facilitate alternative and creative modes of engagement in heritage debates*. (2016, 12)

Creative engagement is a key dimension of my work as a practice-based researcher, which is informed by principles and approaches from the field of Participatory Design (Binder et al. 2011; Simonsen and Robertson 2013; Frauenberger et al. 2014). Centred on the ethos of democracy, equality and empowerment, Participatory Design acknowledges users and potential users of design and other project stakeholders as experts of their own indigenous knowledge and "experience domain" (Sleeswijk Visser 2009, 5). Unlike traditional forms of design, which typically situate creative authority with the designer, participatory design enables the designer(s) and collaborators to enter into a creative dialogue to reach richer understandings together (Sanders and Stappers 2008; Bratteteig et al. 2013). Participatory Design places value in collaborative learning, whereby the process of participation can be as transformative as the final designed outcomes. Participation having an emancipatory and empowering impact – particularly the case when the practice is harnessed as a forum for critically engaging with sociopolitical issues and challenges. Fostering spaces for creative interactions and *sharing-through-making* activities to open up a dialogue aligns with DiSalvo (2014), who draws on Ratto's concept of *critical making* (2011) to describe how "the political qualities of an issue are materialized by participatory means" (2014, 96) as "participatory design provides an opportunity to witness the expression of politics through design as it unfolds" (2014, 97).

Sharing-through-Making

This project was geographically located in three Scottish islands: Orkney (a group of small islands north of mainland Scotland), Stornoway (a group of islands located in the Outer Hebrides), and Shetland (a group of islands located at Scotland's northernmost point). These diverse island contexts, known for their unique historical and cultural assets, were selected as

evidence has shown their increasing popularity as tourist destinations in Scotland (VisitScotland 2018; Scot Gov 2018b).

In each location, I collaborated with island-based arts organisations. Initiating the fieldwork through these organisations was, ethically, crucial. As gatekeepers, they facilitated the recruitment of young people, aged between 13 and 18, to the project through their services; they provided safe spaces to host the studios, which the young people were very familiar with and comfortable in; and supported me in the process of gaining consent from the participants' guardians for those under 18.

The design of the studios were premised on fostering a creative environment for the participants to explore, interpret and unpack what heritage and cultural identity means to them. Building upon a participatory animation technique I developed in my doctoral research (McAra 2017), which explored the intersection of reviving old technologies through harnessing new digital applications, in this project, the participants created low-fi and digital experimental zoetropes, creating a series of digital animated shorts. A zoetrope is one of the earliest forms of animation. The illusion of successive motion is created by a sequence of images that are positioned as looped frames in the zoetrope drum. When spun and viewed through the frame windows, the images appear as a cohesive animation.

In the project, the young people created images that embodied their perspectives and experiences using a range of mediums including drawing, paper collage, found objects, and 3D model-making. Creating these zoetropes images that came to life when spun, supported a *sharing-through-making* dialogue throughout each of the studio sessions, which I audio recorded, later transcribed and thematically analysed.

The Studios

The fieldwork took place between April and June 2019, with each island studio lasting between two and three days. The structure of the studio sessions were centred on learning the zoetrope animation technique – used as a means to anchor group discussions on connections to local cultural heritage. The design of the studios was intentionally aligned to studio-based learning in

design (Budge et al. 2013; Shreeve 2015), which encourages and supports collaboration, experimentation and prototyping. The key tenets of studio-based pedagogy prioritise the social and collaborative dimension of learning in a shared space (Lynas et al. 2013; Bull 2015), promoting a creative environment and participant-led dynamic that is more informal and immersive compared to that of a heavily facilitated workshop or activity-based focus group. Premised on the goal of mutual learning inherent in Participatory Design, as the participants learned the zoetrope technique, I was able to learn more about their perceptions and engagement with their local cultural heritage.

Prior to the studio sessions, the participants were asked to reflect on what heritage means to them and to bring with them an artefact that embodies this. After an ice-breaker activity using postcards to get to know each other, each participant introduced their heritage artefact to the group, describing its provenance and valuable to them. The participants' artefacts were then used to frame a group discussion about connections to their local cultural heritage. As the concept of heritage can have wide and varied meanings for individuals and take many forms, I was keen for the young people to define this for themselves. In seeking a participant-led discussion, I designed a visual prompt (see Figure 1) that provided a range of examples as well as indicated how heritage can be both visible and tangible, and invisible and intangible.

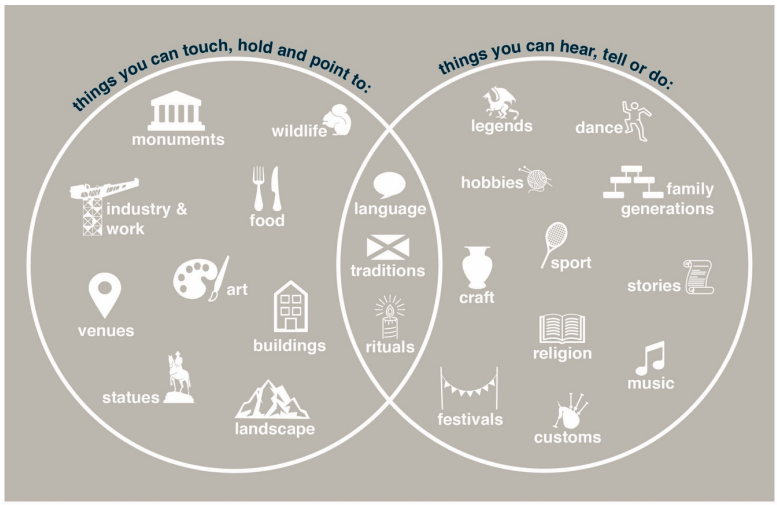

Figure 1. Cultural Heritage Prompt – Workshop Tool. Diagram by Marianne McAra.

Following this, I introduced the groups to the zoetrope animation technique, which, for many of them, they had never seen before. I did this by showing examples before demonstrating how to construct one and create an animation strip. The first of the studio sessions encouraged the participants to experiment with a range of techniques, including drawing, collage, and 3D modelling approaches. The second studio sessions were more focused on the development of design motifs as expressions of cultural heritage for their films, taking inspiration from their artefacts and from the insights shared during the group discussions. During the final sessions, the zoetropes were filmed and edited digitally to create a collaborative film. Here the participants learned editing skills and chose music to narrative their films. The studios culminated in pop-up exhibitions, where the young people invited their family and friends. All names in the following case studies have been changed to pseudonyms.

Case Study 01: The Orkney Studio

Three young people local to Stromness attended the Orkney studio – two aged 14 (Jill and Donna) and one aged 18 (Jo) – and a fourth 18-year-old participant (Maeve) who was visiting Orkney as part of her gap-year. The participants brought with them family heirlooms, which including a mother's neckless, a grandmother's ring, a grandmother's recipe, and a photograph of historical graffiti from World War II (see Figure 2). The key insights that emerged from this studio can be seen to pertain the idea of relational heritage. As will be described below, this included themes shared by the participants surrounding tourism (in particular cruise ship tourism); idealised island identity; youth migration and transitions; and family and community dynasties.

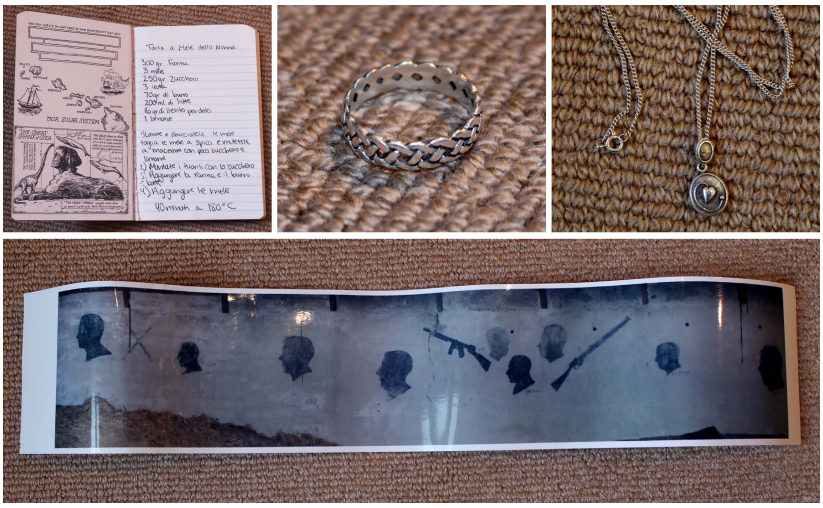

Figure 2. Participants' Personal Heritage Artefacts – Orkney. Photograph by Marianne McAra.

During the studio sessions, when asked to reflect on connections to their local cultural heritage, the participants frequently repositioned this lens away from themselves and described outsiders' perceptions of, and engagement with, the island. Much of this pivoted on economically motivated constructions of local identity, which, from the participants' point of view, had been imposed onto their community. Whilst the group were able to briskly describe many examples of tangible heritage assets on the island (including Skara Brae, the Ring of Brodgar and St Magness Cathedral), the focus of the discussions turned to unpacking the duality of locals and tourists and the tensions between these two populations:

> Jo: "… Orkney is so obviously a tourist place… [you get] asked a lot about heritage… and folk come from the south to ask you about your heritage and your like [long sigh]… It's like living in a postcard…"

Building on the theme of idealised conceptions of island heritage, the participants shared their observations on the dominance of cruise ship tourism. Underpinning this appeared to disdain for the performative nature of *being Orcadian* and how this can feel obtuse and romanticised; scepticism over the meaningful economic contribution this type of tourism is actually providing

the island; and the social impact transient groups are having in the community and how this can feel, at times, voyeuristic:

Maeve: “I was overwhelmed when I went to Kirkwall with the cruise ships...”

Jo: “Oh yeah, when all the boats are in… I work in a hotel and I just feel like I’m a performance for these people and I’m like this local Orcadian in the hotel and they love it. They’re like aw look at this wee Orcadian girl with blonde hair…”

Maeve: “And then there’s the buses.”

Jo: “The buses go past our house… We wave at them [laughing]… it’s just weird. It’s just surreal…”

Jill: “It [the population size] doubles in Summer.”

Jo: “Well it depends… we can have three boats in the harbour sometimes at a time. 5000 are the biggest ones that come in…. but there’s usually about 1000 people a boat… sometimes you get more elite ones. They’re smaller and they’ve got folk that like go on nature treks… It’s so false, like they live on it [the boat], like a hotel and then they come off and go around on like a bus tour, the whole way round the island, and then they go back on the boat at night… it’s so weird.”

Maeve: “… they don’t even eat at the restaurants [on the island] because they’re fed [on the boat].”

Jo: “Because you get 5-star restaurants on these boats. It’s like living on a little city...”

Following discussions around external perceptions of heritage in relation to belonging and identity, the group highlighted the prevalence of youth island migration, with one participant in particular describing her motivations to leave, as well as her anxieties in making this transition:

> Jo: "… because I'm on an island, you're completely isolated from mainland Scotland… It's quite old fashioned here I find sometimes, the mindsets… from a young person's point of view, I find I've grown, I need out of it for a bit… [I went to] quite a small school and I just felt, not unprepared for other things, but I remember going to Glasgow for like the first time and I was like *oh my god*. Like on my own for the first time, on a train […] My year, which is big for our school… I think only a quarter of us are going away […] They kind of got a bit like not ready to leave home and a bit scared… last time I went to visit Edinburgh, Dundee and Glasgow in one weekend, I had never been on a train until that weekend… I had never been in a taxi… I was like *get in a car with a man I don't know*? I was just like so scared [laughing]."

Evident in this participant's remarks was her preparedness to transition from a rural to an urban context and need to adjust to new experiences. Whilst youth migration appeared to be a common aspiration after school for young people in their community, the participants explained that they would prioritise moving to cities on the mainland that provide affordable and accessible transport links to and from Orkney. Here also the participants described how they would expect to find small pockets of fellow migrated islanders:

> Jill: "Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow are the ones… and Aberdeen. There's lots of Orcadians in Aberdeen. It's quite close to home, you can just get the boat."

What appeared to be the most valued connection to their local heritage was the tightknit nature of their family and community dynasties and networks, which appear to anchor the participants desire to remain close to the island, whilst geographically away. This sense of dynasty and

family lineage was echoed in each of the participants' choice of artefact to bring to the studio sessions, which included a mother's neckless and a grandmother's ring. Reflecting on the content of their zoetrope animations, the participants drew creative inspiration from this relational island heritage that was symbolically embodied in their artefacts. Furthermore, when describing the profile of their community, where it is commonplace to share a family name, the group described their personal connections to individuals in the community who have played specific roles in their lives. When thinking about their own sense of place-based identity, the participants explained the genealogy of Orkney's relationship to Norway and were clear to differentiated this from Shetland and how this relates to Scotland:

> Jo: "… Orkney is actually more Norwegian and Scandinavian than anything else… there's the Norway constitution day."
>
> Jill: "… that's to celebrate our friendship."

Within their final collaborative zoetrope animation (see Figure 3), the group created a range of iconography that encapsulated their perceptions and connection to heritage. This included a flashing camera signifying the presence of tourism on the island; 3D rolling landscapes and skyscapes; and details from their family-based artefacts – notably a family ring that appears to be dancing, connotative of its movement down the family generations.

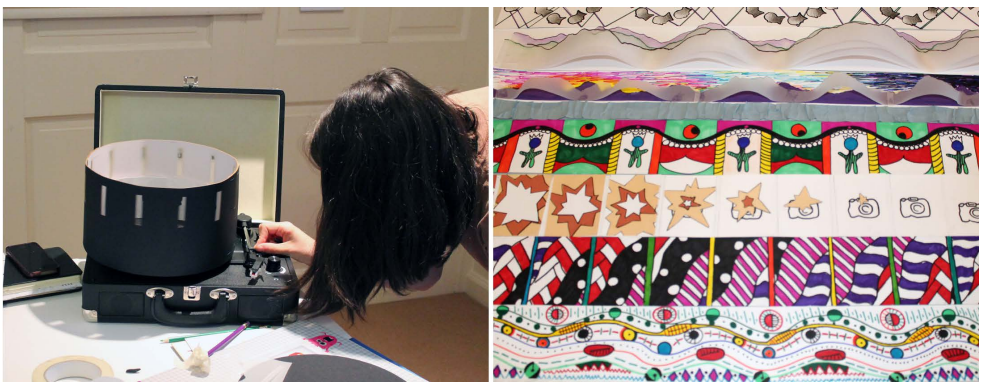

Figure 3. Orkney Studio Sessions and Animations. Photograph by Marianne McAra.

Case Study 02: The Stornoway Studio

Ten young people (David, Bethany, Amy, Ellie, Gordon, Heather, Charlie, Chris, Katie and Sam), aged between 13 and 14 attended the Stornoway studio sessions. Due to constraints with time, the participants did not bring artefacts with them to the studio. Key insights emerged can be seen to centre on place-based heritage, which included themes surrounding the notion of provenance, native language, attachment to the natural environment, and youth migration.

When asked to reflect on their own connections to their local cultural heritage, common throughout the discussions were themes pertaining to place-based identity. Throughout the studio sessions, the group were able to describe a wide variety of tangible heritage assets on Stornoway (examples of which included the Callanish Stones, black houses, the Norse Mill, the iron-age Broch, Lewis Chessman, and Harris Tweed), as well as describe historic events such The Lolaire boat disaster during WW1, historical clan rivalries, and the contribution herring girls made to the Stornoway fishing industry during the 18th and 19th century. Reflecting on more contemporary forms of heritage and their relation to identity-building, and, whilst acknowledging the culturally diverse population profile in their community, provenance appeared to be a defining characteristic for the participants:

> Gordon: "I think there's a strong connection with where you're from… there's a strong divide between islanders and people coming here."
>
> Researcher: "… is there a name to say you're from Stornoway?"
>
> Amy: "Stonies"
>
> Heather: "Stornowegians!"

Bethany: “And if you’re from Point then you’re rural and if you’re from Lax you’re more rural… and you’re an assassin if you’re from England.”

David: “An assassinoch…. it’s like an incomer… That’s what they call the English.”

Furthermore, a recurring theme was the origins of Stornoway’s identity and how this had been deeply shaped by the legacy of the Vikings. The participants described how they had been learning about their historical connections to their Viking ancestors at school:

Bethany: “… so in Stornoway Vikings are quite a big deal… they’re villages named after Vikings… there’re quite a big influence here.”

Whilst exploring the origins of Stornoway heritage, the group noted that what was still significant to contemporary island identity was the prominence of Gaelic. Here the participants described its presence in different aspects of their education as well as having older family members who have remained native Gaelic speakers:

Bethany: “Yeah Gaelic’s a big part….”

Charlie: “… there’s people that take like all Gaelic classes and then there’s also like Gaelic-learners for English classes.”

Gordon: “I’m a Gaelic learner!”

Researcher: “So Gaelic is quite important then?”

Charlie: “Yeah it’s really important… and Gaelic music. In primary [school], most of the music we learn was Gaelic music.”

Gordon: “There are some folk on the island which are a bit older who don’t know how to speak English… they just speak Gaelic.”

Contemplating what they are planning to do after secondary school, the group discussed their motivations to leave the island, however a few of the participants also described their desire to later return. Common here were remarks on how safe they felt and that this was a key pull factor for them to stay as well as having conflicting views about their connection to mainland Scotland:

Bethany: “… you go away and study and then come back.”

David: “A lot of people feel safe here… and a lot of people when they move away, they kind of like miss the remoteness… I’ve noticed that all the songs about Stornoway are about coming home…”

Bethany: “As soon as you get here it’s like home…”

Researcher: “… So what’s your connection to the mainland?”

Amy: “Nothing.”

Charlie: “I don’t have any connection.”

Researcher: “How often do you visit the mainland?”

David: “A lot.”

Gordon: “Oh maybe twice a year… I just go to inverness maybe like twice a year but not much.”

Bethany: “Seven times and counting.”

David: “Every month we go to Inverness.”

Ellie: “I’ve been twice in my life.”

The participants frequently referenced their attachment to the physicality of the island’s natural environment, that they are surrounded by the sea, and it’s spatial remoteness; environmental assets which they seemed to cherish and take pride in. The participants also shared their engagement with tangible heritage sites, in cases repurposing them as part of their family rituals:

David: “I think outdoor sports are quite a big part of the island… surfing, kayaking and all that… you know because we’re surrounded by the sea… even when it’s Winter, it’s still amazing. Harris is just like amazing all year round. It’s insane!”

Amy: “I live near this beach. It’s got a cliff and then has a road down and it’s full of rocks and stuff and there’s an old wall and that’s really beautiful and ambient… not many people know it’s there.”

Charlie: “The nature… I like the nature because it’s not really polluted or anything.”

David: “… well my family jumps of the Bonowa bridge when the tide is high… and pier jumping… it’s so fun!”

Bethany: “The Broch… it’s like broken, you can go over the walls and up the levels… it’s really cool.”

Gordon: “It’s like a fort!”

Reflecting on the content of their final collaborative zoetrope animation (see Figure 4), the group included a range of imagery to connote elements of their traditional heritage, which included an animation of a herring girl preparing fish, as well as eclectic representations of their lived experiences – notable the dramatic weather. The participants each selected a piece of music and specific lyrics to use for their sections of the film, which was a diverse mix of contemporary and traditional genres.

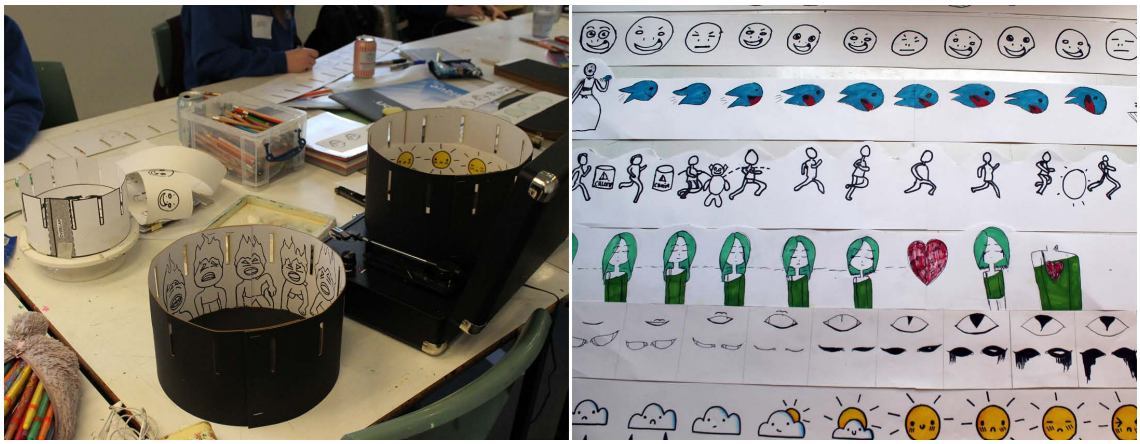

Figure 4. Stornoway Studio Sessions and Animations. Photograph by Marianne McAra.

4.3 Case Study 03: The Shetland Studio

Four young people, Catriona, Alison, Jacob and George, aged between 13 and 14 attended the Shetland studio. The participants brought with them sea urchin shells, a Fair Isle wool jumper, baby blanket knitted by a grandmother (see Figure 5). Over the course of the studio sessions, key insights emerged that centred on symbolic and embodied heritage, and included themes the nature of living tightknit communities, unique island idiosyncrasies and the notion of generational hand-me-downs.

Figure 5. Participants' Personal Heritage Artefacts – Shetland. Photograph by Marianne McAra.

When asked to reflect on connections to their local cultural heritage, the tightknit nature of their community was a common theme. Within this, the participants described the diverse and idiosyncratic nature of each of the smaller Shetland islands, explaining that on the population on each island, whilst in close geographical proximality to one another, have their own discrete Shetland dialect and phrases:

> Catriona: "It's a small place so you ken lots of people… and it's a really bonny as well."

> Alison: "The community… because we all help each other and you always feel safe…. I'm on the mainland but it's like right next to Whalsay, so I ken everybody from as a lot of my pals are there."

> Catriona: "We're are all from Whalsay."

Researcher: “Right okay, and that’s a slightly smaller island… how many people live on that island?”

Catriona: “Er… about a 1000.”

Alison: “We speak awful different in lots of places… Or different sayings for things.”

Catriona: “We just kinda speak in Shetland dialect… there’s a lot of different dialects depending on where you go. So like on Unst and Yell, they’d have like different words for things to people on Whalsay…”

Another theme that emerged centred on generational hand-me-downs; sentimental artefacts that symbolically embodying family history in craft and industry. During these discussions, the participants suggested that such craft practices like knitting are in decline:

Alison: “I took my Fair Isle gansey [jumper] that my granny knitted me […] Fair Isle knitting is such a big part of Shetland and I think most people… well a lot of people have… get their families to knit them the jumper.”

Researcher: “… does knitting get passed down the generations?”

Alison: “Well it depends… my granny’s generation, nearly everybody ken how to knit but I think now it’s kinda fading oot a bit more… I think in primary we used to learn. We’d have knitting on Fridays but I think it’s phased out nearly.”

Catriona: “Erm… this is my baby blanket that my great granny made for me… It’s called a hap.”

Researcher: “And what are these [to J]?”

Jacob: “… scally man’s heeds [sea urchin shells]… And you would always like catch them when you were oot fishing and they would have to wear gloves to hold them because they were like all spiky… It’s like whenever you’re doing down at the beach, those things are always washed up on the shore.”

The content of the group’s collaborative zoetrope animation (see Figure 6) included images of the local bird and sea life and the landscape and surrounding water. The participants also took design inspiration from the artefacts they brought to the studios, creating motifs inspired by the sea urchin shells and traditional knitwear – which when translated into the animation, included detailed and abstract depictions of the Fair Isle patterns and colours ways.

Figure 6. Shetland Studio Sessions and Aminations. Photograph by Marianne McAra.

Discussion

Drawing on insights from across the three case study studios, I will now discuss the key themes that emerged pertaining to youth island heritage, which in particular, surrounded the tensions and challenges of transient tourism in their communities.

Across all three studios, the participants were able to provide rich descriptions of their island's cultural heritage, however "heritage" as a concept first required unpacking as the term felt ambiguous for several of the participants. Without wanting to impose a definitive definition, I purposefully facilitated participant-led discussions on the concept using the visual prompt to support and encourage an explorative dialogue. The majority of participants were able to share a wealth of local historical knowledge as well as an understanding of their connections to intangible assets such as indigenous languages and craft practices. In many instances, the young people provided insightful observations, particularly challenging imposed external impressions of island culture as well as reflecting on the origins of their own sense of identity. Underpinning each of the three groups' discussions, however, appeared to be a different nuance of heritage. In the Orkney studio, emerging themes centred around relational forms of heritage; whilst the majority of insights raised in the Stornoway studio pertained to tangible, place-based forms of heritage; and in the Shetland studio, the conversations shared a focus on symbolic and embodied forms of heritage.

The design of the studios enabled sense-making and sharing, whereby the process of creating the zoetrope animations acted as a conduit for the participants to reflect on and describe their perspectives on cultural heritage through. Reflecting on the studio dialogues, it was apparent that the participants in the Orkney group were far more critical than those in the Stornoway and Shetland groups. Potentially this was due to having older participants present (two 18 years olds) who were able to rationalise in a more reflexive way when, for example, feelings of cynicism arose. This was particularly the case when discussing their perceptions of idealised island identity and, what they experience as, an encroachment of transient tourism in their community. Furthermore, in this group the topic of youth migration was foregrounded in far more detail than with the other groups as it can be assumed, considering their age, this is a more pertinent and imminent decision for them. For the younger participants in Stornoway and Shetland, the discussions pertaining to heritage they connect with were more descriptive in nature, however both groups identified a diverse range of heritage forms, expressing themes such as provenience and place-based identity that is emblematic in their local cultural assets.

The most valued aspect of culture heritage, across the studios, appeared to be belonging to a tightknit sense of community that exits in each island context. In the case of the Orkney group, this was evident in the family dynasties that anchor them to Orkney – both at home and away. With the Stornoway group, this was evident in how safe they felt in their community, and with the Shetland group, in the artefacts they brought to the studios that embodied the family knowledge and practices handed down through the generations.

Reflecting on the efficacy of the approach as means of constructing cultural heritage narratives through visual story-telling, it provided the participants with an extended period of time to experiment with the zoetrope technique, hone their skills through using a diverse range of materials, learn new skills in filming and editing, and to collaborate with each other as a team. This approach was less structured than a more traditionally facilitated workshop – an attribute that allowed for the engagement to be more participant-led and spontaneous. The studios provided the participants with a creative space to reflect upon, explore, and, in cases, critically challenge external perceptions of island heritage; aligning with the tenets of Johnson and Marwood's Action Heritage engagement framework (2017) and the aspirations of Madgin et al. (2012), who argue for more creative ways to support young people to engage in heritage debates.

Based on the participants' feedback collected after the studios, their involvement in the project proved to be a meaningful experience:

> "It was a good different way… rather than just sitting and writing about it, we got to make it visual… it was really fun." (Alison, Shetland Studio participant)

> "I had a wonderful time participating in the zoetrope workshop!... Creating a zoetrope started off as a challenge. I didn't trust that I would be able to create something that was visually appealing when placed on the turntable and reflected a quality of my heritage. After messing around with various coloured sharpies and patterns I was pleasantly

surprised to see that when placed on the turntable my images appeared to move!" (Bethany, Stornoway Studio participant)

"… this workshop challenged me to have trust in my artistic abilities and to pause and think about what heritage means to me and what specific aspects of my heritage I could bring to life in my zoetrope…" (Maeve, Orkney Studio participant)

Conclusion

The aim of this research project was to explore the perception of young people living in heritage-rich island communities so to gain a deeper understanding of their connection to heritage; in what ways these hold value for them; and if and how they associate these and other aspects of island heritage with their own sense of identity and belonging. For this, I developed and tested a studio-based approach to creative engagement, employing the zoetrope animation technique as a form of critical making as a catalyst for reflective discussions. A key insight was the range of nuances pertaining to the participants' distinct cultural heritage – a focus on relational heritage in Orkney, place-based tangible heritage in Stornoway, and symbolic and embodied heritage in Shetland.

Both contextual and methodological opportunities for future research have emerged from the project. The factors that inform youth island migration, in light of its increasing prevalence in island communities (HIE 2018), could be further unpacked with a focus on exploring the effects of polarised population profiles and developing opportunities for intergenerational integration. In the case of cruise ship tourism, the participants' experiences chime with that found by London and Lohmann (2014). There is an opportunity to more fully explore the lived experience of transient tourism in rural localities – in particular, its socioeconomic impact, the interface between locals and visitors, and young peoples' experiences of this.

Methodologically, there is the potential to develop the studio approach further as a creative engagement framework for future Action Heritage projects. It could be tested with young people in other rural and urban localities to explore and express contextually-located

cultural narratives, so to further foreground previously hidden voices in critical heritage debates (De Azevedo 2012; Madgin et al. 2016). Ways to empower young people to engage with their local heritage as a form of action resonates with Harvey's definition of heritage as "a process, or a verb, related to human action and agency, and as an instrument of cultural power" (2001, 327). This research seeks to contribute to, and highlights the need for more, youth-centred studies that actively centralise the perspectives and experiences of young people so to further democratise current heritage discourse and debates.

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