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Suzie Thomas\*

# Doing public participatory archaeology with “difficult” conflict heritage: experiences from Finnish Lapland and the Scottish Highlands

Public participatory archaeology can take many forms, and there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to engaging with communities and non-professional enthusiasts. Similarly, not all archaeological heritage is the same, and some comes with the label of ‘difficult’, ‘contested’ or ‘dark’ heritage. Particularly, in this article I explore how archaeological heritage that is connected with periods of conflict, namely the Second World War, fares in the sphere of public archaeology. My case studies from Scotland and Finland also illustrate very different community heritage models, and I reflect on the role of the public archaeologist in these scenarios.

**Keywords:** participatory research; public archaeology; dark heritage; Finland; Scotland

*L'archeologia pubblica partecipata può assumere molte forme e non esiste un approccio adatto a tutte le situazioni per entrare in contatto con le comunità e con volontari entusiasti. Allo stesso modo, non tutto il patrimonio archeologico è uguale e alcuni contesti possono essere definiti come “difficili”, “contestati” o “oscuri”. In particolare, questo articolo tratta di come il patrimonio archeologico connesso a un periodo di conflitto, la seconda guerra mondiale, ricada nel campo di attività della archeologia pubblica. I casi studio dalla Scozia e Finlandia illustrano inoltre modelli di comunità molto diversi e l'autrice riflette sul ruolo dell'archeologia pubblica in questi scenari.*

**Parole chiave:** ricerca partecipata, archeologia pubblica, patrimonio oscuro, Finlandia, Scozia

## 1. Introduction

Participatory research is an established suite of approaches towards working on research questions involving – often very actively – human subjects. Participatory research appears in different disciplines, such as public health (Israel *et al.* 2001), through to various humanist and social science disciplines (Bergold, Thomas 2012). Scholars active in archaeology and heritage have also noticed and documented the benefits of incorporating participatory approaches into their research and practice (e.g.

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Jones 2017). In many cases, participatory approaches are associated with what is broadly often referred to as community archaeology or public archaeology (although these two are not necessarily the same thing). Collaborations with indigenous communities have gained particular attention in the literature (Silliman 2008, p. 1). However, 'doing' community archaeology, public archaeology and other forms of participatory activity and research are rarely simple approaches, and to imagine that it is simple is also a simplistic assumption. Parallel to debates within the broader field of cultural heritage studies, it is becoming very clear that not all heritage is attached to positive feelings and outcomes, and a lot of the material and intangible cultural heritage that surrounds us also carries difficult, contested and sometimes negative connotations (e.g. Crooke 2001; Meskell 2002). Furthermore, communities are never uniform, homogenous groups, and few share entirely common opinions and priorities among community members.

In this article I discuss two recent public/community archaeology projects with which I have been involved. Both take place in rural regions of northern Europe, and both deal with archaeological material from the Second World War (WWII - 1939-1945). In the first example, #InariDig and #InariDig2 were a series of public excavations in and around the village of Inari in Finnish Lapland. They formed just one element of a larger interdisciplinary research project named Lapland's Dark Heritage. The thematic focus of this research was on the experience of Finnish Lapland and its inhabitants during WWII, and particularly the so-called Lapland War of 1944-45. In the second example that I present in this paper, committee members from a community-owned heritage asset in the southern part of the Scottish Highlands invited archaeologists from the University of Glasgow to undertake a community excavation on a site that was formerly used as a prisoner of war (PoW) camp during and just after WWII. In both cases, participatory research formed just a part of the process and methodology, sometimes to only a limited extent, although other approaches were also employed such as 'traditional' archaeological field methods and ethnographic elements. At the same time, both projects involved university students and thus provided learning opportunities for people engaged in formal higher education.

First of all, I open the article with a discussion of the central concept of community archaeology itself in the context of participatory approaches. I then briefly introduce the notion of 'dark heritage' as an important concept for both of my case studies. After discussing the approaches and findings of both my Finnish and Scottish case studies and the extent to which participation and participatory research was successful, I conclude with some final reflections concerning to the extent to which both



Fig. 1. Some common types of public archaeology as illustrated by Gabriel Moshenska. Reproduced with permission of Gabriel Moshenska. The diagram originally appeared in Moshenska 2017.

projects were able to integrate successfully participatory approaches, and I highlight some key ethical considerations that apply especially to sites connected with twentieth-century conflict.

## 2. Community Archaeology: context matters

Community archaeology as a term is widely used in contemporary archaeological practices, and while some have tried to offer or at least discuss a definition for it (e.g. Tully 2007; Thomas 2017), it remains clear that the term can mean quite different practices and approaches to different people. It is closely connected with the older term 'public archaeology', and some public archaeology scholars – notably Moshenska – have tried to unpick the different kinds of public archaeology that may exist. In a useful schematic (fig. 1), Moshenska includes community archaeology within the public archaeology category of “archaeologists working with the public” (Moshenska 2017, p. 6). While definitions can vary, community archaeology means engaging – through the medium of archaeological research – with non-professional (in the sense of archaeology) groups and individuals, with the goal of finding out more about archaeological heritage through participatory practices. There are also goals in public engagement connected to goals of developing social ties among community members through

celebration of their local heritage, regardless of whether residents have genealogical and cultural ties to the heritage or not (Baram 2015).

Often portrayed as a positive development for decolonizing archaeological practices (Schmidt, Pikirayi 2016), community archaeology nonetheless also attracts critique, with its broad church and sometimes loose definitions lending itself to problematization and debate. González-Ruibal, González and Criado-Boado (2018) have recently criticized what they perceive as the main goals of community archaeology – claiming that its use in the apparent service of 'liberal' and 'multi-vocal' models of social sciences is damaging to the core strengths of archaeology, undermining archaeological training and expertise. This position, while aimed at counteracting some of the more damaging effects of populism – especially in world politics – challenges some of the tenets of community archaeology, that mutivocality is a crucial element that acknowledges that there are multiple perspectives and even multiple histories connected to places (McDavid 2002). A balance is perhaps needed then, between allowing and acknowledging alternative perspectives, and maintaining the specialist role of archaeologists that are trained in their scientific field. However, as many community archaeologists have shown (e.g. Gibb 2019) it is nonetheless possible to coordinate and empower community groups into producing accurate and meaningful archaeological research. Archaeological practice and theory also needs to acknowledge its own roots in colonialism and Western ways of thinking, with some cultures and even political regimes apparently rejecting archaeology as a colonial practice and hence not relevant to them (Kila 2015, p. 79).

Another model that archaeologists and others interested in participation have referred to is Arnstein's (1969) 'ladder of citizen participation'. Community archaeology practitioners and researchers, particularly in the UK, have drawn inspiration from this theoretical model as a way of visualizing how effective their efforts at community engagement with archaeological heritage have been (e.g. Belford 2011; Nevell 2013; Neal 2015). At the same time however, other scholars from outside of archaeology have criticized this and other 'ladder' models for their tendency to 'blur basic differences' (Bergold, Thomas 2012, p. 198) between participatory and non-participatory practices, such as whether people are involved through simply responding to surveys and interviews, or have a truly participatory role through having the power to set the research agenda from the outset.

Perhaps related to these discussions of boundaries between different types of participation and non-participation, in many discussions of community archaeology, we see the terms 'top-down' and 'bottom-up'. These are often placed as opposing forms, with the top-down representing proj-



ects where professional archaeologists have taken the lead and set the agenda (who may not necessarily be based locally most of the time). Bottom-up, conversely, typically indicates projects with a more 'grass-roots' focus, with the local community themselves making the key decisions and even doing most of the work themselves. Professional community archaeologist Kevin Grant has characterized understandings of top-down and bottom-up approach as follows:

In simplistic terms, 'top-down' approaches to community archaeology practice occur where the programme of research, structure of the project, and methodologies are imposed from outside onto an existing community, where 'bottom-up' approaches are characterized more by a project originating in grassroots community activity

(Grant 2014, p. 139).

Needless to say the nature of projects in practice is often much more nuanced than these labels imply, with many projects sitting somewhere between, perhaps closer to one end than the other depending on the circumstances. Rightly so, this dichotomy has been questioned (Isherwood 2011, p. 15). For many, a useful way to visualize this scheme is to imagine a 'collaborative continuum', described by Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh and T.J. Ferguson as follows:

...collaboration in practice exists on a continuum, from merely communicating research to descendent communities to a genuine synergy where the contributions of community members and scholars create a positive result that could not be achieved without joining efforts. Collaboration, then, is not one uniform idea or practice but a range of strategies that seek to link the archaeological enterprise with different publics by working together. While each project along the "collaborative continuum" is consequently unique, all move the discipline of archaeology toward a more accurate, inclusive, and ethically sound practice.

(Colwell-Chanthaphonh, Ferguson 2008, pp. 1-2)

With all this in mind, it is important to remember for community archaeology, and public archaeology more broadly, that there can be many different ways to deliver it in practice — none are necessarily more 'correct' than others, although for researchers understanding the potential challenges and even failures is just as important — if not more so — than merely focusing on successful examples.

### 3. Working with 'dark' heritage

The concept of so-called 'dark' heritage has in recent years gained traction as a term for cultural heritage connected to suffering or atrocity, related to the phenomenon of dark tourism, and to discussions of 'contested', 'ambivalent' or 'difficult' heritage. Scholars have started applying dark heritage terminology to scenarios in which the heritage in question may have quite different meanings for different communities depending on their perspective. Laura McAtackney, who has researched the 'dark' heritage of the political conflicts in Northern Ireland, notes that this may pose a challenge for authorities, hence influencing the power dynamics related to how such heritage is presented and discussed: 'The knowledge that dark heritage sites can have a variety of meanings for the various publics that wish to consume them can result in contested and politically loaded sites being overly controlled and interpreted through state interventions' (McAtackney 2014, p. 229).

In the related sub-discipline of dark tourism, Philip Stone among other tourism scholars has been influential in developing ways to think about the phenomenon. Stone's 'dark tourism spectrum' (Stone 2006 – fig. 2) proposed that touristic sites connected to death and suffering (i.e. dark tourism sites) could vary in the extent to which they were 'dark', depending on factors such as the extent to which the site has been commodified, the distance in time from the event for which the site is known and the present time, and other aspects affecting their authenticity. In the context of the research with which I have been involved in Lapland, the research team have noticed that, similar to dark tourism darkening or lightening in Stone's spectrum, the apparent darkness of the heritage – the extent to which it retains the capacity to shock and cause emotional pain or other negative reactions – can also change, and even be tempered by other aspects of its status as a form of heritage:

...the more dark, macabre and even painful elements of heritage can be singled out for engagement with by different groups and individuals... ...However this 'darkness' may sometimes also be incidental to the primary 'value' of the heritage, which may come from other aspects such as the geographical or temporal proximity between those who engage with heritage and the historical events to which it relates.

(Koskinen-Koivisto, Thomas 2017, p. 121)

Oula Seitsonen proposed a slightly more complex scale than Stone's dark tourism spectrum in order to try to make sense of the ways in

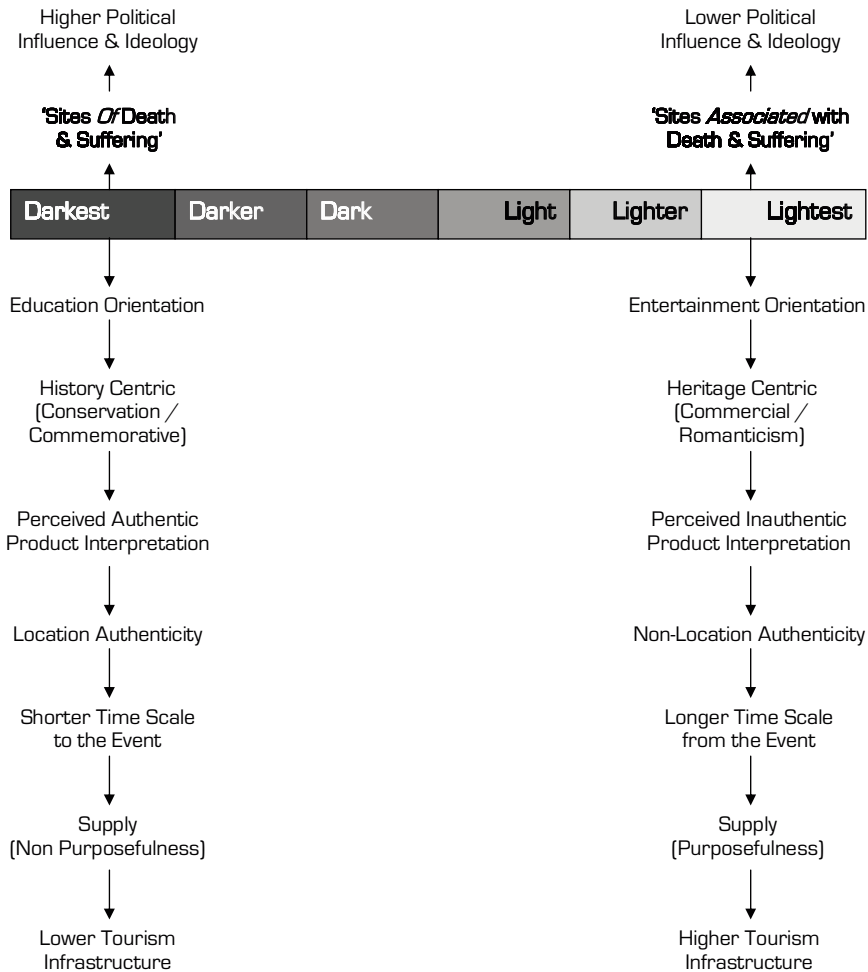


Fig. 2. Philip Stone's dark tourism spectrum. Reproduced with permission from Philip Stone, the diagram originally appeared in Stone 2006.

which local actors related to and perceived the 'darkness' of difficult heritage. Influencing factors on how the heritage is understood include the status of the individual as an insider or outsider, and the extent to which their worldview is influenced for example by Western or relational cosmologies (Seitsonen 2018, p. 154). This has a direct influence on the ways in which participation may take place, for example if sites are considered to be haunted either figuratively or literally.

What does all this mean, however, for participatory approaches in archaeological research and practice that aim to engage audiences with

heritage that could – by some at least – be perceived as ‘dark’? Does it create barriers to participation, or are people interested by the opportunity to investigate challenging heritage in more hands-on ways? Following a brief introduction to the two examples of dark heritage in my case studies, I outline some of the challenges but also successes that were encountered in both projects.

#### 4. Finnish Lapland in WWII: a brief historical overview

Finland in WWII experienced three major periods of military conflict. The Winter War of 1939-1940 was the country’s first of two conflicts with the Soviet Union, who launched an invasion of Finland in late November 1939. The so-called Continuation War of 1941-44 was also against the Soviet Union, and led to large economic and territorial losses for Finland, although Finland was nonetheless able to retain independence. With the threat of Soviet invasion in the background, Finland became a co-belligerent of Nazi Germany in 1941, cooperating with Hitler’s Operation Barbarossa. This meant that Finland saw the arrival of hundreds of thousands of German troops to its soils, with many of them posted to the north of the country under the command of *Generaloberst* (En: Colonel General) Eduard Dietl (see also Seitsonen 2018 for an overview).

The northern front in Finland soon became stationary however, as the German troops quickly found themselves poorly prepared for the Arctic Tundra conditions. This did mean that during the ‘German period’ in Finnish Lapland there were other activities such as development of roads and other infrastructure. Close friendships – including romantic relationships – developed between the Germans and local Finns and Sámi (Koskinen-Koivisto 2016). In addition to the German soldiers, the conflict also brought Prisoners of War (PoWs), and labourers from *Organisation Todt*



Fig. 3. A motorcyclist drives down Valtakatu (En: “Power Street”), Rovaniemi, in October 1944 following significant damage to the city as part of the Lapland War. Image from SA-kuva; the Finnish Defense Forces Wartime Photograph Archive (open source).



Fig. 4. A rusted can, likely part of a container for mosquito repellent, bearing the 'branding' of the German *Wehrmacht*, found in the forest around the outskirts of Inari. Image by the author.

to Finnish Lapland. Following a major Soviet assault in 1944 at the end of the Continuation War, Finland had no choice but to agree to a treaty with the Soviet Union, losing more territory and also pledging to expel the German military from its borders.

This latter pledge led to what is known as the Lapland War, escalating in September 1944 and ending in April 1945. Although the fighting between the Finns and Germans was at first almost a pretend war (Seitsonen, Herva 2011, p. 177), the violence soon increased, and even though there were relatively few casualties there was significant material damage across the whole region. This was primarily due to the German adoption of 'scorched earth' tactics (Lehtola 2015, pp. 134-135). Across Lapland, buildings, road bridges, railroad bridges, ferries, railroads, roads, culverts, and electricity pylons were devastated. The province's capital, Rovaniemi, was all but completely burned to the ground (fig. 3). Further, thousands of cattle and reindeer were slaughtered, and the Germans planted more than 100 000 landmines and other explosives within the landscape. Although an extensive mine clearing programme took place, the risk of encountering unexploded ordnance remains an ever-present worry in the Finnish Lapland wilderness.

In current times, there are numerous physical reminders of the German military presence (fig. 4), which have engendered varied reactions. For example in 2005 a voluntary group named *Pidä Lappi Siistinä* (En: 'Keep Lapland Tidy') embarked on a project to clear forest areas of the rusted and sometimes hazardous remains from the war. However, public opinion soon turned against this initiative, as recognition grew that the



Fig. 5. Remains of an aeroplane engine from the Second World War, now experiencing a new purpose as a touristic feature mounted at a camp site in Inari. Image by Oula Seitsonen.

material remnants from WWII might have 'value beyond their financial value as scrap metal' (Thomas *et al.* 2016, p. 339). Aside from this brief organizational interaction with the physical remains, we also found through our research that individual people also engaged with WWII material – for example developing personal collections of militaria, or repurposing larger objects as touristic features at camp sites (fig. 5) or other privately-run attractions. We also found that the popular semi-digital exploration pastime of geo-caching had taken advantage of several WWII sites in Finnish Lapland as exciting places for geo-cachers to explore.

## 5. Cultybraggan: a brief historical overview

Unlike Finland, the United Kingdom was on the opposing side to Germany and the other Axis countries from the outset. The site of Cultybraggan in Perthshire, Scotland, was known during WWII as Camp 21, and was built in 1941 close to the village of Comrie by the 249 (Alien) Company Pioneer Corps (Campbell 2017, p. 3); a corps of refugees – especially German and Austrian Jews – who had volunteered to support the war effort. After first operating as a training camp and then housing Italian PoWs until Italy's surrender in 1943, the site was used towards the end of the war and in the years afterwards, up until 1948, as a holding camp for German soldiers. Cultybraggan had special status as a camp that held so-called 'black' prisoners – meaning that it was one of



the camps reserved for the most hardcore Nazis. The Allied nations had a classification for PoWs from Germany that categorized them based on the extent to which they had bought into the Nazi ideology. This ranged from 'white' prisoners who were seen to be pro-democracy, through to 'grey' who had some Nazi sympathies but were likely to respond positively to re-education, through to the 'black' prisoners (the terminology was also used to categorize German PoWs according to the extent and type of reaction they showed when viewing filmed footage from concentration camps – Carruthers 2001, p. 749). The presence of these 'black' PoWs in particular, as well as a murder within the camp (Thomas, Banks 2019) has led to some notoriety being associated with Cultybraggan.

After the war, Cultybraggan became a training camp for the Ministry of Defense, in particular hosting school-age cadets as well as the Territorial Army (TA) – the volunteer reserve force of the British Army. As a result, the site also holds nostalgic value for many generations of British men who came to Cultybraggan for cadet or TA training. The site also contains a Cold War age nuclear bunker intended to house Scottish government officials in the event of nuclear war (fig. 6), and the whole complex was finally closed as a Ministry-owned training camp in 2004.

In 2007, following local debate and a referendum over the previous two years, the village of Comrie elected to purchase the site as a community venture. In Scotland, this is a fairly common process that many communities have enacted for local purchase through the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, and the later 2016 revision of that law. As others have discussed at length (e.g. Chevenix-Trench, Philip 2001), in the



Fig. 6. The nuclear bunker at Cultybraggan camp. Image by the author.



Fig. 7. Nissen huts that have survived from the Second World War period, at Cultybraggan camp. Image by the author.

Scottish context there has historically been a huge imbalance between private landownership and tenant communities. The opportunity to arrange community buy-outs is also connected closely to Scotland's 1997 devolution to have its own parliament, and has been heavily politicized as a result. This is because the question of land-ownership was one of the areas in which the newly-devolved Scottish government had authority and could affect change (see Thomas, Banks 2019, pp. 55-56 for a longer discussion of this). Purchases have included crofting land, and even former elite properties such as ruined castles. Among these purchases, Cultybraggan is unique so far in having a heritage connected so explicitly to WWII and to PoW incarceration in particular.

Cultybraggan's community buyout, however, is far from solely motivated by heritage interests and values, and it became clear during ethnographic interviews and observations in the village that some local residents have no interest in the WWII past of the site, with some even advocating for the remaining Nissen huts (fig. 7) and other survivors from that time to be demolished to make way for the site's development as something else. Some others seemed to feel that, especially due to the presence of 'hardcore' Nazis in the camp, it would be preferable to let go of this particular past and allow it to be forgotten. This contrasts with others who have very strong emotional connections to the site, perhaps through their former military careers or even due to familial connections to former PoW inmates (Thomas, Banks 2019). The foundation that formed to manage the community purchase, Comrie Development Trust



(CDT) itself began with greater interest in environmental issues than issues of cultural heritage; an early and continued goal of the Trust has been to promote sustainable living and green energy practices (CDT undated).

## **6. Practising public archaeology**

In both Inari and Comrie, we organized excavations that were open to the wider public. This was alongside interviews both on-site and elsewhere, as well as other forms of research, archaeological and otherwise. The excavations at Inari – known on social media through their hashtag #InariDig – took place for two seasons in a row, in August 2016 and 2017. In the 2016 #InariDig, the excavations focused on a German military site adjacent to the village of Inari (cf. Banks *et al.* 2018). The Sámi museum Siida, also located in Inari, acted as a partner, provided local community and heritage knowledge and allowed use of their auditorium for public presentations about the project, and provided important coffee on-site on some days and a Siida-branded gazebo to assemble in the forest as a findable meeting point. This proved useful as it could be easy to become disorientated in the dense woodland in which the site was located, and so the gazebo was both a place to gather key artefacts as well as a help in reorientation for volunteers and archaeologists alike.

In Comrie, the one excavation took place over one week. Although directed by the University of Glasgow's Centre for Battlefield Archaeology with support from GUARD, a Glasgow-based archaeological consultancy firm, it represented a collaboration with Comrie Heritage Group; a sub-committee of CDT with responsibility for the cultural heritage aspects of the site (Thomas, Banks 2019). While the University of Glasgow arranged the excavation, including gaining permission and funding from Historic Environment Scotland to carry out the investigation, it was the responsibility of Comrie Heritage Group to handle the local publicity and volunteer recruitment. My own involvement with the fieldwork and subsequent interviews within the community that I carried out was thanks to fellowship funding from the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Caledonian Research Foundation, which allowed me to spend several months in Scotland in 2017. Due to the already ongoing work in Lapland looking at community reactions to the material remains from WWII, my research goals were based around gauging the reactions of residents and visitors to the remnants of the WWII PoW camp in Comrie and the surrounding region. The excavation team members at Cultybraggan were a range of professional archaeologists and Masters-level students from the Univer-

sity of Glasgow – many of whom were international students. The public element was that volunteers were welcome to come to participate in the fieldwork – especially troweling in the trenches but also other activities – at any time during the week. In this sense the public excavation operated a ‘drop-in’ approach similar to that seen at other public excavations (e.g. Simpson 2011; Kiddey 2018).

In practice, few volunteers joined in the actual digging. This may have been partly due to inclement weather on some of the days of the digging week. However, we nonetheless experienced high numbers of visitors both to a public lecture about the excavation and to a general open day on the Saturday (at the end of the digging week). Therefore one can also speculate that although physical participation was limited, there was nonetheless interest in the fieldwork itself, and in what the archaeologists were doing at the site. As other archaeologists have also found, other elements of a project or place other than its archaeology may attract the interest of local people (e.g. Belford 2011, p. 62), and although people might not wish to dig in the soil themselves (which in itself may not be appealing to everyone, especially if they have mobility or health issues), it does not automatically mean a lack of interest. At the same time however, I also noticed on an anecdotal level some skepticism within the village – primarily via individuals who professed to have no interest in archaeology at all. This was also an instructive experience, and a reminder that community members will not automatically be fascinated with archaeology just because it is taking place (see also Pyburn 2011 for critique of archaeologists’ assumptions about the public and their tendency to see themselves as separate from this public, and Thomas, Banks 2019 for a sample of some of the reactions of interviewees to the excavation).

In all, at Comrie it became clear that there were mixed feelings towards Cultybraggan. Some of this ambiguity was connected to the site’s heritage (some were fascinated with the site’s WWII history, while others felt it was something that should be downplayed or forgotten, and certainly not commemorated in any way). Another impression gained from interviews, especially with residents of Comrie (the – ‘owners’ of Cultybraggan) was that due to local politics – and not necessarily the heritage of the site itself – some had come to view the site as a burden, owing to the pressure on the community to manage it themselves. It was striking that members of CDT’s committee seem to change relatively frequently with many stepping down after a little over a year (possibly due to burn-out), and that many people I spoke to had at some point or other been on the committee. At the same time, this committee and CDT itself was also seen as ‘other’ by quite a few villagers, and perceived to be im-

posing its will in a top-down manner (despite it being made up entirely of local residents!). The issues around successful community ownership and management of any land are complex, but the challenges in the case of Cultybraggan were particularly striking to me as an outsider, and raise questions about the extent to which communities should be expected (or are able to) manage heritage sites without specialist support or advice.

## **7. Reflections on participatory research in the context of Second World War heritage**

I cannot claim in any way that the experiences in Comrie or Inari have been ideal 'participatory research' experiences, and as the literature suggests, this can be extremely difficult even for experienced participatory action researchers. In their study of participatory methods in heritage tourism planning in Kastoria, Greece, Dragouni *et al.* (2018) confirmed their own hypothesis that increased levels of community participation in the planning process led to greater conflicts as multiple viewpoints, priorities and conflicting values came to the fore. This is something we also observed in Cultybraggan and Comrie, with it becoming clear quite quickly that although CDT was of the community and worked *for* the community, other residents were suspicious of the organization's goals and viewed it as a top-down body imposing its will on Cultybraggan (Thomas, Banks 2019). Although there were elements of participatory research in both projects, I believe the researchers were still actively directing both the research goals and activities. However, we also worked in challenging circumstances; in Finland the concepts of 'public archaeology' and 'community archaeology' are still new and very much developing, while in the case of Comrie I often felt I could only observe an already-running community heritage experiment, and it was not my place to intervene too heavily.

In terms of what I feel can be learned for working with WWII heritage in particular, in the context of participatory research, it is clear that there are questions regarding whether the heritage is locally perceived as 'dark' or 'difficult'. Both of the case studies I discuss here have elements of uncomfortable heritage, although at the same time clearly this heritage also holds other values for those that interact with it in different ways. These sometimes initially hidden values can reveal themselves during participatory research.

One very clear area for discussion within this kind of participatory research and activity is the ethics-related question of what position the researcher takes in relation to the community members. Quite often (al-

though not always – see Duffy 2014) the researcher is not from the community to which the heritage relates. More often than not, instead, the researcher is an outsider. And, “[I]f archaeologists are outsiders, they may not understand the political complexities of a place and the forces at work behind community struggles” (Dedrick 2018, p. 86). There is always risk of this kind of naivety, but not least where local heritage has already caused tensions and dispute – as was the case with Cultybraggan.

A question common to both case studies is whether the ‘dark’ nature of the heritage being explored affects how we as researchers work with the local communities. Certainly, within living memory, and especially for artefacts connected to times of conflict, other researchers have noted very clear reactions from survivors to the way in which archaeologists document and treat material culture. American archaeologist Bonnie Clark, who has carried out fieldwork at the Amache Japanese-American internment camp in Colorado, USA, found particular discomfort to how objects were designated as artefacts. She describes an episode during an open day with tables displaying different aspects of the fieldwork:

At each table was a pen and pad with the heading “Please share your thoughts.” Afterwards, the students who were docents at the table of children’s toys made sure that I took a look at what was written on their tablet. The only comment was this: “Pleasant memories –seeing items I played with as a child. Kind of disturbing to see them identified as ‘interesting archaeological artifacts.’” To say I was taken aback by this comment is an understatement indeed. It was clearly a grinding of the gears of collaboration. It was also, however, a moment of insight, where the contemporary world’s engagement with archaeological practice flashed brightly, if uncomfortably.

(Clark 2018, pp. 545-546)

Working in another part of the world, Gabriel Moshenska has reflected on his experiences working at the site of Stalag Luft III near Zagan in Silesia. During this project the archaeologists worked alongside three former prisoners of war – following initial responses of ‘surprise, excitement and interest’, soon changed to unease: “They appeared to find the bagging and labelling of finds discomforting and repeatedly challenged us about it” (Moshenska 2006, p. 63).

Both of these examples highlight that the way that ‘we’, as archaeologists and scientists, view material culture may be very different to how

others view and value it – harking back to the significance of multivocality discussed earlier in this article. Both examples suggest also that the lived experience of the participants has an impact on how the objects perhaps should be treated. In both Inari and Cultybraggan we did not experience these kinds of challenges from participants in the same way as Clark and Moshenska report their experiences – perhaps because none of the participants who worked directly with the archaeological material were survivors from the WWII period. However, in another Lapland village, a place named Vuotso in the municipality of Sodankylä, we did experience a confrontation from local schoolteachers after a public presentation about the Lapland's Dark Heritage project. The teachers, who were themselves Sámi, challenged our authority to research the WWII material culture in 'their' territory, and indicated a strong sense of ownership over the material traces left by the German soldiers and others in their environment. This encounter helped us to reassess our own practices, especially realizing that our original archiving plans for the project were inadequate as they would not have resulted in any material being deposited in Sápmi. Thus, we updated accordingly, and have deposited material with the Sámi museum Siida in Inari.

## **8. Discussion and challenges**

Inspired by these two case studies and also the overarching themes and discussions of this special issue, it is worth pointing to a number of potential challenges and ethical considerations around participatory research in archaeology, and especially in the context of difficult or dark heritage. A common question in participatory research in all fields, is what the position is of the researcher in relation to the community members with whom they work (Minkler 2004). In both of my case studies, the researchers involved were not local community members, and the projects took place over finite periods. Although we have maintained contact with volunteers and residents, for example through social media groups and via email and sometimes face to face communication, we are hardly 'embedded' in these communities. Both projects have also come to the end of their current funding, and in the current pattern of academic practice, we must generate more funding – most likely from successful research grant applications – in order to continue to work in these communities. In both cases, there are plenty more research avenues to explore, but this does not guarantee funding success, and there will likely be a hiatus between the last periods of activity and the

next. This risks the sustainability not only of the projects themselves, but also the possibility that any positive outcomes will only be short term in effect (Simpson 2010, p. 86).

More generally with in participatory research practices, Bergold and Thomas (2012, p. 201) have noted that in an ideal situation all participants – not just the academic researchers – would receive financial compensation for their time given to the project. In practice this is rare, and funds rarely exist for this since so few grant-givers consider providing funds for paying participants as a valid part of a research project budget (and probably almost as few archaeologists actually consider budgeting for this kind of recompense). Indeed, in the cases of both the projects I describe here, our funding was not sufficient to cover the costs that 'true' participatory research in this sense would have entailed.

Another question perhaps more pertinent to sites connected to dissonant or 'dark' heritage than to more neutral pasts (although see Silverman 2011 for discussion on how heritage is always contested), is how this difficult nature affects how we engage with the communities surrounding it. In both cases, the period of time to which the archaeological material related was within living memory, and connected to a globally significant period of conflict that has arguably affected almost everyone on the planet – and certainly in Europe, in some way or other.

A specific ethical consideration when dealing with cultural heritage connected to WWII, and especially to German military, is the possibility that the sites can become a place of pilgrimage for far right extremists (e.g. Burström, Gelderblom 2011, p. 273). While we saw no indication that any of the people we interacted viewed the heritage through the lens of far right ideology, we were nonetheless mindful of this possibility. Hence, for example in our social media interactions we refrained from posting imagery of swastikas and other Nazi paraphernalia as appeared on pottery and other artefacts excavated during the public digs in Lapland. One exception was in 2017 the posting on Facebook of a photograph of a swastika carved into a tree near to a former airfield site in Lapland. This photograph was posted without comment, and interestingly did not attract any comments from our followers, either positive or negative.

Another very important ethical consideration for any research involving community participation is what to do in times of disagreement. Minkler (2004, p. 691) notes that committing to 'high-level community participation throughout the research process raises difficult ethical and practical challenges, beginning with the question of who truly represents

"the community", understanding that 'representative' voices may not always be all that representative.

As a final reflection, we were asked at our workshop in Italy in April 2018 to consider whether participatory research in archaeology could be 'the future' of archaeology in general. From my perspective, it is a crucial component which is becoming more and more apparent in a greater range of archaeological projects – both those from academic research and from heritage professionals involved in cultural resource management and other applied practices. However, it is not yet a 'given' that the community will be considered in archaeological research projects, much less that they will have opportunity for a truly participatory engagement. In the case studies I presented here, we managed some elements of participation but in the future we could certainly also do more as these projects develop and as we as researchers also develop our approaches.

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