Introduction

Epistemic injustice has become a hot topic in philosophical debates recently, reminding us that little attention has been paid to the consequences in our societies when epistemic injustice occurs. Given that epistemic injustice shapes and informs human action, its impact expands beyond the economy and politics of knowledge. Epistemic injustice plays a role in ethical decision making and thus the social harmony of our societies. To marginalize and silence voices in the name of lack of credibility, lack of conceptual resources and lack of intellectual ability is not synonymous with ethical practice and democratic institutions.

One of the areas in which marginalization of communities has been discussed during the last two decades is heritage and our relationship with the past. Surprisingly the debate about marginalized communities in heritage has not been linked straightforwardly with philosophical accounts of epistemic injustice. As a result, little work has been done on the relationship between heritage and accounts of epistemic injustice. And the conceptual framework, which accounts of epistemic injustice offer for the analysis of marginalization in society, has not been utilized in heritage discourse.

Heritage is constantly under negotiation, and its meaning is under evaluation. Given that different people develop different associations with heritage, the meaning of heritage changes over time, and what counts as heritage is under constant interpretation. During this process, those who are considered legitimate heirs of heritage claim priority over the interpretation of heritage and the decision making structures about what is preserved and what is sustained for the benefit of future generations. One of the issues that has been debated for some time is why and how some communities have a stronger stake in heritage than others. And more importantly, why communities with more social and epistemic power tend to marginalize and ignore other communities with less power in the interpretation of heritage and the decision making structures about its future. Although this debate touches upon the borders of epistemic injustice, it has ignored one of the most significant aspects of heritage and heritage institutions broadly construed. Heritage and its institutions are significant places for epistemic interaction and to a large extent they set a conceptual framework for our epistemic interactions. This is from where I start my argument.
In this essay, my aim is to defend the idea that there is a kind of epistemic injustice, namely participant perspective epistemic injustice, drawing upon Hookway’s work (2010), which is highly relevant to heritage if we accept that heritage and its institutions are unique areas of epistemic interaction, and if we adhere to the idea that part of what heritage institutions broadly construed do is to distribute epistemic goods. It follows from this that as distributors and interpreters and preservers of epistemic goods, heritage institutions should act in the light of the ethics of sharing.

Sharing is subject to power relations and can be more just or less just. Sharing is grounded on participants, their engagement and acknowledgement of what is shared, and negotiation between participants about what is shared and how they are engaged with what is for sharing. In this process participant perspective epistemic injustice plays an important role. If heritage institutions do not take seriously the participants’ perspective, their engagement and acknowledgement of what is for sharing and their negotiation abilities are severely undermined. As a result, they become marginalized. However, in the case of heritage, not to take someone’s interpretation and understanding seriously means that the significance of what is transited from past to future is distorted.

My essay is divided in three sections. In the first section I shed light onto the relationship between heritage and epistemic injustice. I argue that participant perspective epistemic injustice is more relevant to heritage than other accounts of epistemic injustice (see Fig. 35.1). In the second section, I defend the claim that if participant perspective epistemic injustice occurs in heritage institutions, then it distorts the distribution of epistemic goods. In the third section, I address the ethics of sharing (see Fig. 35.2), and I argue that participant perspective epistemic injustice also affects the sharing of knowledge that takes place at heritage institutions.

![Diagram of epistemic injustice and cultural heritage](image-url)
1. Heritage and accounts of epistemic injustice

Places, landscapes, monuments, ancient buildings and archaeological sites can be nominated to UNESCO's World Heritage List under the condition that they fulfil at least one of the six cultural criteria defined in the 1972 World Heritage Convention (including its revisions through periodically issued Operational Guidelines). All sites must manifest ‘Outstanding Universal Value’, that is to say, value that is shared by all people, purportedly beyond cultural differences, to justify their preservation for future generations.

One of the World Heritage Sites (WHS) is found in Durham City, located in north-east England. The great attraction of the city is its magnificent Cathedral, which is situated atop a peninsula of the River Wear, thereby giving it a remarkably dramatic location and spectacular view. The ancient Cathedral and Castle (historically the house of the Prince Bishops of Durham, subsequently donated to the University and now functioning as University College) were inscribed on the List thirty years ago. The Palace Green between them was later added to the inscribed property.

Although the WHS can be appreciated visually by all, to find out more information about the heritage site, one needs to visit Durham’s World Heritage Visitor’s Centre. The Centre primarily provides information about the Durham World Heritage Site and the significance of UNESCO’s programme for World Heritage Sites all around the world. There is also a short official video that provides visitors with useful information about Durham’s World Heritage Site.

During one of my recent visits to the Centre, I realized that I had never taken time to watch this informative video, although I walk through the site almost every morning on my route to work at Durham University. So one weekend, I watched it. What I observed is that although the video supplies important information about the site, its buildings and its many years of history, almost nothing is said about the variety of stakeholders who are related to the site, their engagement, acknowledgement, negotiation, sharing, and participation.
associations with the heritage site, their interpretations and their multifaceted understandings of Durham’s heritage site. For instance, there is no reference to the historic centre of Durham City and its residents whose lives have been closely linked with the life of the Cathedral. As a friend of mine who watched the video with me put it succinctly: ‘where is the city here?’ Traders and residents of Durham City have developed associations with the heritage site which, to a large extent, have shaped the perception of Durham’s World Heritage site. Their contribution is muted, if it is present at all.

The same concern can be raised for the association with different kinds of heritage, such as industrial heritage, which have co-existed in Durham for many years. The County of Durham was a prominent mining area for many years, before the abrupt closure of the mining industry during the 1980s. The mining communities have developed a strong regional and cultural identity, as well as developing associations with Durham Cathedral. It is not by accident that during the Durham Miners’ Gala every July, the new banners of the miners’ unions are blessed at a special ceremony at Durham Cathedral, the centre of the World Heritage Site. These communities have developed their associations with the World Heritage Site, and they have contributed new layers of meaning, which defines their interpretation of the site and therefore their relationship with it. If their voices are muted or silenced without any presence in the official information which has been selected with visitors, our understanding of the World Heritage Site is insufficient and, to some extent, distorted.

An injustice against some of the stakeholders of the heritage site is therefore manifested in the official scripting of the WHS. The stake of some groups in Durham’s World Heritage Site is weakened because their associations with, testimonies to, and interpretations of the heritage site are not communicated in the official epistemic interactions between the World Heritage Site and the public. As a result, their contribution to the future shaping of the heritage site is constrained and constantly undermined. To understand how stakeholders of heritage can be victims of epistemic injustice, we need to shed light onto the relationship between heritage and epistemic injustice.

Heritage, broadly construed, is what we inherit from the past. This includes material traces such as ruins, objects, structures of buildings of different purposes (i.e. religious and/or military), monuments and landscapes. We also inherit intangible things from the past, such as values, beliefs, traditions and social structures.

Heritage has many different sorts of value: cultural, epistemic, historic, financial, religious, just to mention some. It is not by accident that countries with rich heritage invest in their heritage infrastructure and increase visibility for their heritage. They anticipate great numbers of visitors and tourists, whose presence will contribute to the local economy and to the country’s economic development as a whole. Beyond its financial value, heritage is valuable because it is a great source of knowledge. Heritage can provide knowledge about forms of past lives, civilizations and circles of lives around the globe, which, although they have been lost, are highly relevant for us who live in the present. It is often assumed that all human beings have an interest in heritage and more generally in the past because it helps us to understand who we are today and how we got here. In addition, attempting to connect with the distant past has the potential to help us to connect with distant others in the present. Following from this, heritage has historic value, but it is different from history, which refers to the past. Heritage is what we inherit from the past, but its significance is relevant for us in the present, and it is sustained for the future. Heritage is multifaceted and a dynamic process: what is understood as heritage today might be altered tomorrow. It is open to interpretation, and the different associations people develop with it add new layers on its meaning. Hence, heritage does not convey ‘frozen’ knowledge and merely information about what took place in the past. Heritage sets in motion,
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via our interactions with what we have inherited from the past, a set of questions about our 
self-understanding, our engagement with others and our understanding of the world. Given 
that our interaction with what we have inherited from the past is central to the epistemic role 
of heritage, constraints that obstruct this interaction undermine the epistemic role of different 
stakeholders of heritage.

To a large extent, heritage institutions facilitate our interactions with heritage. Heritage insti-
tutions, broadly construed, include such things as heritage interpretation centres, heritage site 
information offices and visitor centres, museums of different kinds, national and international 
authorities whose main concern is the protection of heritage. These institutions act as custodians, 
stewards of heritage by exercising their duty of care for it. In their capacity as stewards of the 
past, heritage institutions play a significant role in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge 
by employing epistemic practices. Epistemic practices include collecting, presenting and educat-
ing. It is worth noting that these institutions are subject to all sorts of non-epistemic factors. For 
instance, entrance fee in some institutions make it difficult for those who live with minimum 
wage to visit them. Or, some of the institutions are dominated by middle-class white people. 
In some other cases the state uses these institutions to promote their political ideas as it happens 
with totalitarian governments.

We can distinguish between first order and second order epistemic practice. Take, for instance, 
a set of Roman terracotta lights. How do we acquire knowledge of them? We raise questions 
about their materials, their size, their shape, method(s) of manufacture, who made them and 
for what purpose(s). We also raise questions about how this particular piece reached us in the 
present, who found it, who excavated it (if it is a product of an archaeological excavation), 
where was it found and what this means for this object. All these questions, insofar as they ask 
about the materiality and material history of the piece, come under the umbrella of first order 
epistemic practice.

There is, however, a slightly different set of questions that we can ask while we try to build our 
knowledge for this set of Roman terracotta lights. What is the biography of this set and its parts? 
Has it been used differently over the years? What kind of associations and interpretations have 
been developed about it? Has the set acquired new layers of meaning that call for different modes 
of understanding? If the set is exhibited at a museum or an art gallery, we can ask why has this 
set been displayed in relation to other objects from the same era? Or, why has it been displayed 
at all? These questions, insofar as they ask about the history of meanings and values conferred on 
the piece, refer to the category of second order epistemic practice.

This brief sketch of the epistemic practices of heritage institutions reveals an aspect of their 
role in the economy of knowledge that has been ignored. Heritage institutions do not merely aim 
at the preservation of what has been inherited from the past and the furtherance of knowledge. 
Heritage institutions also play an active role in the distribution of knowledge and other epistemic 
goods. By epistemic goods here, I mean those goods that help us to achieve our epistemic aims. 
Understanding, for instance, is a good candidate for what we call epistemic goods. When we 
claim that we understand something in terms of knowledge, we communicate that we are in 
position to perceive the meaning of that thing, and we are able to use it to draw inferences in 
our reflections.

Recall now what I said about the catalyst role of heritage in the economy of knowledge. Her-
itage institutions employing first and second order epistemic practices facilitate our interaction 
with what we have inherited from the past, and distribute epistemic goods. Epistemic goods 
enhance this interaction by enabling us to play a role in the constant negotiation of the future 
shaping of heritage. One of the constraints that can hinder our interaction with what we have
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inherited from the past is the marginalization of stakeholders in the economy of knowledge. Marginalization takes place when different stakeholders are not acknowledged and engaged as equals in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge. For example, local communities can give initial information about a heritage site, but they do not play a role in later practices of interpretation of the site. As a result, marginalized stakeholders do not feature in the distribution of epistemic goods, given that the voices of marginalized stakeholders do not appear anywhere in the interaction between us and what we have inherited from the past. In what follows, I argue epistemic injustice hinders the distribution of epistemic goods, and this is one form that epistemic injustice can take in relation to cultural heritage.

A common thread of argument in the ethics and politics of heritage is that communities whose own histories are excluded or not represented by the official interpretation of heritage are marginalized, and their silencing leads to alienation from their own heritage. As a result, social injustices might occur that are rooted in the abuse of rights over place and misrepresentation of the identity of marginalized communities. The core of the argument is that communities in one way or another are not provided with space to tell their own story and supply their own interpretation of heritage, and this excludes them from the economy of knowledge. This description sketches how epistemic injustice features in debates about heritage. However, this sketch does not provide a sufficient insight into the relevance of different accounts of epistemic injustice in heritage. One should not forget that it is significant to take into consideration the different accounts of epistemic injustice (testimonial and hermeneutical) because this is how we can reveal the epistemic role of stakeholders in their relationship with heritage. Different epistemic roles designate different accounts of epistemic injustice, and this entails a different relationship with heritage as resource of knowledge.

'Testimonial injustice occurs when the testimony of an individual or collective is perceived as less credible owing to an identity prejudice’ (Fricker 2007: 28). For instance, one’s capacity to provide testimony is undermined on the basis of being a woman or being a foreigner in a country. Hermeneutical injustice (Fricker 2007) happens when an agent’s assertions are not given attention because of a lack of the requisite conceptual and other resources that “are required for formulating important problems or for addressing them systematically” (Hookway 2013: 178). The main difference between the two accounts of injustice is that for testimonial injustice the agent is treated as someone who cannot be a credible informant in exchanges of knowledge. Whereas for hermeneutical injustice the agent lacks the conceptual resources to contribute to the understanding of certain claims and thus is not capable of making them. Both accounts, however, highlight the role of agent as an informant. Her/his capacity to provide information in obtaining and transmitting knowledge is what is undermined when the agent suffers testimonial or hermeneutical injustice. While Fricker primarily focuses on the lack of self-knowledge as the harm of hermeneutical injustice, we can also highlight that this lack of self-knowledge is necessarily accompanied by an inability to transmit the knowledge one lacks, making it similar to testimonial injustice in this way: in both cases epistemic agents are hindered in their capacity to transmit knowledge.

There is, though, a different form of epistemic injustice that is not captured by Fricker’s account (Fricker 2007). Christopher Hookway (2010) puts forward what he understands as participant perspective epistemic injustice. Although Hookway’s account starts from the role of the agent in obtaining and transmitting knowledge, he points out that there are different epistemic roles that one can take in the economy of knowledge. Hookway distinguishes between being an
informant and being a participant. According to Hookway (2010), those who act as participants do not exchange information as informants do, they contribute to knowledge by asking questions and putting forward alternative possibilities for consideration. So, incidents of what I want to call participant perspective epistemic injustice occur when an agent tries to participate in an epistemic practice but her/his contribution is not taken seriously because he/she is prejudicially judged to lack the relevant abilities or credentials to ask interesting and/or relevant questions. Hookway succinctly points out that participant perspective epistemic injustice results in a phenomenon that can undermine knowledge transmission. Silencing agents under participant perspective epistemic injustice entails that their questions or contributions broadly speaking are not used as pillars for the furtherance of knowledge, and this can lead to lack of epistemic confidence on the parts of agents. It is Hookway’s account (2010) that I argue seems to be more relevant to heritage (see Figure 35.1).

I have argued elsewhere (Pantazatos 2016) that heritage institutions are in a unique position to account for the transit of objects between past and future in such a way as to secure the transfer of their significance, broadly construed. By ‘transit’, I mean that heritage institutions not only convey the physical objects in their collections, but they are also conveyors of the objects from one stage of the objects’ lives to the next. Given that this is the modus operandi for heritage institutions, the duty of care for heritage institutions includes a concern for how the transit from past to future is accomplished.

In heritage institutions, what is in transit from past to future is more than just the physical objects themselves. What can also be transmitted includes the significance of objects, their meanings, associations, allusions, which have been shaped by the different stages of their lives and by their relationships with communities. A wide variety of participants who are related to an object ought to contribute to what is preserved from the object’s significance, which stage of its life is given priority, and what reasons recommend the secure transfer of the object with this particular significance to the future.

What is inherited from the past and what is in transit from past to the future is under interpretation and negotiation. Heritage is in continuous flux. What is inherited and at the same time is in transit from past to future is shaped by the contributions of different stakeholders who have developed associations with it. These stakeholders can act both as informants and as participants following the distinction proposed by Hookway (2010). It seems that their role as informants contributing to the exchange of knowledge is more appropriate to the transit of objects from past to present. Stakeholders can offer testimony about what they know about an object, and enabling their conceptual resources they contribute to how this object might be understood in the present. Hence, heritage stakeholders can be victims of testimonial or hermeneutical injustice while they become epistemically involved in the transit of the object and its significance from past to the present. Non-expert stakeholders are usually victims of epistemic injustice because they are charged with lack of the conceptual resources to provide adequate interpretations of what is in transit from past to present.13 Given that heritage is a dynamic process, and it is open to interpretation, expertise is one of the ways in which one can become epistemically involved with heritage. Stakeholders who are not experts might have developed associations and thus different kinds of knowledge from experts, but their information is highly relevant to heritage and plays a role in how things from the past can be understood. On a similar note, Indigenous communities have been victims of testimonial injustice because their epistemic contributions to what has been inherited from the past and its significance have been prejudicially judged to lack credibility because of prejudices and stereotypes rooted in race and identity (Tsosie 2017).14
2. Participant perspective epistemic injustice and the distribution of epistemic goods

A central aspect of heritage institutions is the transit of the significance of what is inherited from the past to the future. The significance of what is inherited from the past and its transit to the future are not defined merely by the role of stakeholders as informants (sometimes there is limited information about what is inherited from the past), but also by the role of stakeholders as participants in the economy of knowledge. Participants can ‘float ideas’ and ask ‘pertinent questions’ about how the significance of what is inherited is captured. Stakeholders as participants shape heritage and its significance because participants can add new layers of meaning and inquire for alternative interpretations. Stakeholders as participants in the economy of knowledge are entangled with an important aspect of heritage and the role of heritage institutions in the future.

I have pointed out earlier that the transit of the significance of the object is from past to the future. So heritage and future go hand in hand. Stakeholders in their role as participants are in a position to float ideas about the future of heritage and more importantly to consider alternative possibilities for heritage and how it should be treated. Participation in obtaining and transmitting knowledge tends to be forward looking, and thus the participant perspective epistemic injustice indicated by Hookway (2010) is more relevant to heritage. When participant perspective epistemic injustice occurs, the participant is silenced, and their alternative consideration for the future of heritage is not taken on board. As a result, the participants are prevented not only from shaping the future of heritage but also from participating in the stewardship of it.

Recall the example of Durham’s World Heritage Site. The official narrative of the significance of the World Heritage Site focuses primarily on the main building structures such as the Cathedral, the Castle, the Palace Green and the drama of the peninsula. The site has acquired significance over hundreds of years with the participation of different stakeholders. However, there seems be nothing on the site as a witness of the interpretation of the different stakeholders. More importantly, there seems to be no evidence where the interpretation of different stakeholders of the intangible heritage aspects of the site has initiated a starting point for developing a narrative of the site that will probably add new features to the official narrative. Hence, the significance of the site, which is in transit from past to future, is shaped by the official narrative of the site, and any alternative possibilities that would add a new layer to the significance of the site are not considered. The patina of time adds new episodes to the life of the site, but it also fades the participants’ perspective, who have not been taken into consideration as equal interpreters of the site.

For the victims of participant perspective epistemic injustice, this refusal to be taken seriously is one consequence that is coupled with the exclusion from the distribution of epistemic goods. The nature of participation in the acquisition and transmission of knowledge can be associated with different epistemic goods. For instance, if there is no room for questions to be taken seriously, how it is possible to achieve understanding?

‘Intellectual activities, like other human activities, have aims’ (Roberts and Wood 2007: 32). Similarly, intellectual activities aim at some epistemic goods. Epistemic goods are both instrumental and constitutive to knowledge and to the furtherance of knowledge. Epistemic goods are instrumental because they are means which guarantee to some extent what we call knowledge. For instance, to be knowledgeable of the division of political powers in England, one should be familiar with some facts about Magna Carta and have some understanding of the reasons that led to its publication. One might know the facts about Magna Carta, but this is not necessarily sufficient to claim knowledge about the role of Magna Carta in the division of political powers in England. To claim knowledge about the role of Magna Carta in the political history of
England, one should be able to make an inference from those facts to claims about the division of political powers in England.

Given the catalytic role of heritage institutions in the economy of knowledge, these institutions are in a unique position to fulfill their role by distributing epistemic goods. Although we can recognize a variety of epistemic goods, the following three items are the most relevant to heritage institutions: acquaintance, understanding and curiosity.

Heritage institutions disseminate information about the past broadly construed. However, it is usually difficult to have warranted knowledge of what happened at those times because as Lowenthal (2015) points out ‘the past is a foreign country’, and we cannot really have access to it. In the majority of the cases, the closest we can get is to become familiar with some events, memories and texts. Hence, heritage institutions enable their multiple stakeholders to be acquainted with aspects of what has been inherited to us from the past. Heritage is not fixed, and it is not static. Heritage is assembled from a wide and varied mixture of past events, folk memories, mythologies, physical relics and landscapes and possible symbolisms associated with them. So, to be acquainted with heritage, we mean that one is not in ‘immediate contact with it’ because one is not necessarily in a position to have some or full knowledge of what has been inherited from the past and how this has developed. Acquaintance with the past entails that one tries to establish cognitive contact with the past. This is carried out by one’s memory and personal stories, attitudes related to the past, forms of recognition, modes of appreciation, and understanding that occurred on earlier contact. Acquaintance with heritage can be distorted if stakeholders suffer from participant perspective epistemic injustice.

Acquaintance depends on asking pertinent questions about what has been inherited from the past, floating ideas, and drawing connections between different aspects of heritage. If heritage stakeholders are not taken seriously while they float their ideas and raise questions, acquaintance becomes fragmented and sometimes impossible. If stakeholders are not encouraged to participate actively and their questions are not taken seriously as standpoints, which can initiate new responses for what has been inherited from the past, their confidence to become acquainted with the past is seriously undermined. A good example here to illustrate my point is Hadrian’s Wall in the north of England. By visiting and walking along the wall, one is able to see where the wall has been and the material from which it was made, but one cannot be assured how the wall was and how it functioned for the Roman soldiers who used to reside at that area. One cannot make confirmed judgements about the relationship between the wall and its local residents on both sides of the wall at those times. And of course, the wall and the landscape around it have acquired their own life in contemporary times, including many different associations developed over the last two centuries. All these cannot be provided by one set of recognizable, objective and universal criteria, which can be applied to supply us with knowledge about the wall during Roman times and beyond. Different stakeholders can only familiarize themselves with some aspects of Hadrian’s Wall by asking questions that aim to capture the picture of what the Wall used to be like at the time, and how it has been developed during the times that followed its foundations, use and later excavation. This kind of acquaintance puts us in a position to enquire and float ideas about many aspects concerning the Wall and of course our own relationship with the people of Roman times who lived in that area. For instance, if you are a tourist who does not live in the area, you might start asking information about how travelling was made possible to this end of the Roman Empire during times where transport was not so comfortable and quick as it has been after the second half of the twentieth century. These different forms of cognitive contact with the past are blocked if relevant questions and ideas remain silenced because the stakeholders’ participation is constrained. And it is constrained because participants might be judged to lack the capacities to ask interesting questions.
Beyond acquaintance, heritage institutions can also facilitate understanding of how we can begin to grasp details of the past even though I have pointed out that our insight into the past might be limited. Our understanding of what we have inherited from the past entails a grasp of the continuous significance of the past for the present and the future. What is inherited from the past is fabricated and so understanding of the past and its significance seems to be a difficult task. One should not forget that the knowledge associated with heritage is situated in particular social and intellectual circumstances, and it thus depends on a large context. Consequently, it is open to alteration and interpretation. Knowledge associated with heritage is under constant negotiation. We are not called to understand merely what past life used to be. We are called to understand what is in transit from the past and make sense of its significance. Recall the example of Hadrian’s Wall. Understanding of Hadrian’s Wall is expanded beyond the process of gathering information about how the wall was built and the life of Roman soldiers there. This information is sufficient to enable us to make inferences from a wall guarded by soldiers to one of its use and major interpretations that the wall was the physical frontier of the Roman Empire. An important part of the significance of Hadrian’s Wall is that it was the final frontier of the Roman Empire. This can provide the basis for further inferences about what frontiers mean for contemporary countries in a world of major migration, and what kind of landscape contexts frontiers shape for those who live on both sides of those frontiers. What ‘frontier’ means depends on context. Context is open to multiple interpretations and different associations; it is also a source for a variety of explanations and inferences one can draw from. Hence, understanding Hadrian’s Wall as a ‘frontier’ moves beyond facts about the wall per se; it demands to grasp the significance of what has been in transit and central to it is that it marked a frontier. Similarly with acquaintance, setting questions and floating ideas about what Hadrian’s Wall has been is core to the process of understanding. Understanding is diminished if there are no questions asked or if new ideas which provide alternatives for further deliberation and reflection are not pursued. In the case of Hadrian’s Wall, any participant brings questions from their own background and float ideas which can be drawn from their own forms of knowledge and experiences. We undermine the participants’ interpretations of the site if their questions and ideas are constrained. And we end up with a limited understanding of the significance of Hadrian’s Wall from past to future. More importantly, participants are discouraged from building a confident interaction with heritage, and this consequently leads to narrow understanding of what heritage is and how it should be treated in the future. If participant perspective epistemic injustice sets constraints to acquaintance and understanding, it can also be a hindrance for one more epistemic good such as curiosity.

Curiosity is entangled with heritage institutions. Let us not forget that the precursors of encyclopaedic museums were called ‘cabinets of curiosities’ (Bennett 1996). These were collections of unrelated things, including archaeological remains, ethnographic objects, plants and animals from all around the world. The exhibition of these unrelated items aimed to reveal the interconnectedness between things, and between people and things from different parts of the world. Hence, these ‘curiosities’ initiated a kind of wonder about the world providing the first step into an inquiry about them and their environment, broadly construed. Following from this, curiosity as distributed by heritage institutions can be understood as a reflective form of wondering, which may involve a process of questioning. Asking questions is a necessary condition for inquisitiveness, but it is not for curiosity (Miscevic 2007 and Watson 2015). Both curiosity and inquisitiveness are concerned with ‘getting inquiry off the ground’. However, for inquisitiveness one is required to ask questions, and one must also be good at asking questions because one’s questioning aims at improving their epistemic standing. Curiosity does not necessarily aim at the improvement of one’s epistemic standing. For example, one who is curious about ancient statues might ask questions about its material and how they were crafted, but this does not entail
that one aims to improve one’s epistemic standing about sculptures. One simply enjoys seeing ancient statues and would like to find out more about them. It is like a wish to understand more about ancient statues.16

Curiosity, broadly construed, is more akin to heritage institutions than inquisitiveness. Heritage institutions are more concerned with providing diverse stimuli for wonder than providing a framework that elicits good questions and requires from their stakeholders to be able to ask good questions. Heritage institutions are spaces where epistemic interactions take place, and they thus aim to make sure that there is an atmosphere where different stakeholders feel confident to wonder and to start asking questions. Given that heritage is both subject to negotiation and open to interpretation, then to exercise curiosity within heritage institutions is to give participant stakeholders the chance to unlock the multiple possibilities of heritage. By doing this, stakeholders can reveal aspects of heritage and its future because they can consider alternative possibilities for the significance of what will be inherited in the future.

Consider, for instance, the Throne of Weapons at the British Museum, a chair made out of parts of rifles (mainly AK-47s) and other weapons welded together.17 The chair is made as part of the ‘Swords into Ploughshares’ project from weapons collected after the civil war in Mozambique. Wondering about this object, we can ask questions about how it was assembled or why people chose this object to talk about war. Even if we are not interested in these questions, by wondering about them we can get answers that might lead us to a different set of topics, such as what happens in civil wars or how civil wars are relevant to the development of contemporary Africa. These ideas are part of the significance and the interpretation of the heritage of the Throne of Weapons.18 What is inherited in the future is more than the object itself: it is its significance. And the significance of heritage is unlocked by being in a position to exercise our curiosity about things from the past. This is how we can push the boundaries of our acquaintance and understanding of the past, given that we have fragmented information about what happened then. It is important for heritage institutions to allow and actively invite different stakeholders to wonder about alternative possibilities for the future of heritage. This is how audiences become interlocutors and evaluate whether their participation can shape the future of heritage.

A good example here is the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum at Springfield in Illinois.19 Towards the end of the museum exhibition, visitors are asked to participate voluntarily via an interactive screen to choose which of Lincoln’s ideas from his major speeches are relevant for USA today. The museum collects the data, and the results will be released when this project finishes. This interactive activity motivates people to exercise their curiosity about the importance of what has been inherited from the past and its significance for today and tomorrow. Inviting stakeholders to exercise their curiosity and taking on board their views is to engage actively with their participation. However, if there are stakeholders who are victims of participant perspective epistemic injustice, they are not provided with space to float questions, their suggestions for alternative possibilities of heritage are not taken on board and they are thus not encouraged to exercise their curiosity. In this case, not only do we undermine epistemic confidence, but also we encourage alienation from heritage. If one’s contribution is not taken on board for the future of heritage, one might lack motivation and ambition to get involved with heritage. As a result, stakeholders can withdraw altogether from any epistemic interaction with heritage, and their interpretations of heritage will remain silenced.20

So far, I have argued that participant perspective epistemic injustice undermines the distribution of epistemic goods such as acquaintance, understanding and epistemic curiosity, and it can thus distort the epistemic role of heritage. Let me clear the ground from an objection to my argument, before I move to my next point about the relationship between participant perspective epistemic injustice and the sharing of knowledge in the context of heritage.
Although there might be some cases where heritage institutions obstruct the distribution of epistemic goods and alienate people, insofar as heritage institutions are, generally speaking, open to the public, they do (at least in principle) include multiple perspectives by way of the many interactions that take place with those who visit them. A good example in support of this line of argument is to take into consideration the World Heritage Convention. According to the World Heritage Convention, there are some heritage sites across the world that have exceptional value, that is, outstanding universal value as it is defined by the list of the six criteria of the World Heritage Convention. Central to the understanding of the outstanding universal value is that sites that manifest outstanding universal value can be acknowledged as such by all irrespective of economic, social, cultural and geographical differences. World Heritage sites possess exceptional value, and they thus should be preserved for the benefit of humanity. So, they can be shared by all humanity. Although the idea of universal value hinges upon common and shared understandings of heritage, it leaves space for ‘interpretation and translation’ of the universal framework into different cultures (Lambadi 2013b). Each local participant at a World Heritage site is able to make her/his own understanding, meaning and interpretation of the site. The ascription of outstanding universal value does not constrain participants from making their own associations with World Heritage sites. By contrast, it welcomes participation and contribution to the making of the meaning of the site. In 1999, UNESCO recognised that without the understanding, support and daily care of local communities, who are the true stewards of World Heritage, ‘no amount of funds or army of experts’ (Lambadi 2013a) will be able to protect World Heritage sites.

Although participation is encouraged and celebrated by the World Heritage Convention and the framework of outstanding universal value, this does not entail that the participant perspective is taken into consideration from an epistemic point of view. I argued earlier that participant perspective epistemic injustice occurs in heritage when heritage institutions do not take on board the participants’ perspective for the significance of what is in transit from the past to the future. This happens because the participants are judged incompetent in asking relevant and pertinent questions about heritage, and they thus cannot add anything important in the debate. The World Heritage Convention does not seem to offer a solution to the participant perspective epistemic injustice for heritage. Sites that have acquired the status of World Heritage tend to be iconic structures and places that over the centuries have accumulated value, and they have become important for various reasons (historic, religious, aesthetic, environmental) for the whole of humanity. They are recognized as sites of outstanding universal value, and they thus should be preserved in their initial historical state so that their authenticity remains intact. World Heritage sites, however, narrate an ‘official history’, which is usually written and narrated by experts.

Official histories of heritage rarely allow space for the participant perspective. A reason for this might be the danger of incoherent representation of the site. If there is no official history and there are multiple narratives, it will not be clear what the significance of the site is. The demand of a coherent representation of the site does not strike me as a strong reason to overlook the participant perspective point of view. Given that the epistemic role of the participant is to consider new possibilities for how we interact with remains from the past, and to float new ideas about our relationship with the past, they are not distorting the representation of any site. By contrast, they add new layers to its perception. If this is not allowed, then World Heritage sites are not successful in distributing epistemic goods because they commit participant epistemic injustice. Official histories of heritage can provide some acquaintance and some understanding of what remains from the past. They can also inspire some curiosity. These epistemic goods, however, will be limited to those participants who share the official history. For those participants who, for a variety of reasons, are not related to the official history, the distribution of epistemic goods is not possible, and they thus feel alienated from heritage. More importantly, their epistemic role
does not feature in the significance of what is in transit from past to future. Hence, they become people without a voice for what is understood as common inheritance.

3. Participant perspective epistemic injustice and the ethics of sharing

In the previous section I argued that if heritage institutions commit participant perspective epistemic injustice, the distribution of epistemic goods is distorted and thus heritage participants can be marginalized and silenced. The distorted distribution of epistemic goods has a consequent impact for the sharing of knowledge which is central to the function of heritage institutions. In what follows, I argue that participant perspective epistemic injustice is related to the ethics of sharing because it undermines the sharing of knowledge.

A significant role of heritage institutions is to share knowledge with diverse publics of what is under their custody. Sharing depends on reciprocity between the participants in sharing and negotiation between them of what is to be shared. In cases of participant perspective epistemic injustice where the participants’ perspective is not taken seriously, participants cannot enter into a reciprocal relationship between one part of the relationship that judges the other part as inadequate to contribute to the relationship and thus into negotiation into what is to be shared. Here, those who suffer from participant perspective injustice are not acknowledged as those who have the capacity to participate, and they are thus not engaged in negotiating what is being shared. As a result, they are judged as non-competent to play a role in the negotiation of what is being shared and thus their views are marginalized or silenced. If this is the case, reciprocity that is a condition for sharing is undermined and therefore one could argue that any obligations which are rooted in the ethics of sharing are not fulfilled. Let me illustrate my sketch of the ethics of sharing with an example.

One of the interesting cases about participant perspective in relation to heritage is the reconstruction of monuments after war and/or civil conflict. Let us accept for the sake of the argument that the civil war in Syria comes to an end, and there is a decision for the reconstruction of the sites that were damaged during the conflict. One of the chosen monuments for reconstruction is one of the six UNESCO World Heritage sites, the Great Mosque of Aleppo with the great minaret, which was destroyed in April 2013. Any heritage institution that is in charge of sharing knowledge about this monument should acknowledge and engage with all relevant participants and take seriously how they think about the reconstruction of the monument. So, those who float ideas about the reconstruction of the minaret and the consequent commemoration of its destruction as part of the monument’s heritage should be acknowledged, and their participation should be encouraged. This is how they will actively play a role in the negotiation of what is shared in relation to the heritage of the minaret between the past and the future generations. What future generations will know about the minaret of Aleppo depends on those who participate in the negotiation of what is shared about the heritage of this destroyed site. Hence, if heritage institutions do not take on board the voices of those who claim that part of the heritage of the monument and its significance is also the destruction of the monument, not only do they commit participant perspective epistemic injustice on them, but they also deny their role in the sharing of knowledge for the future.

Similar examples can be brought from museums where the display of ethnographic objects do not provide any space for those who would claim legitimate right to participate in the sharing of knowledge of the ethnographic objects in question. For instance, the display of the Aboriginal Bark Shield at the Enlightenment room of the British Museum provides information about how it was moved from Australia to the United Kingdom, but there is no sufficient information given about the Aboriginal perspective in relation to the Bark Shield. What is shared in terms of
knowledge and what is inherited to future generations about the Bark Shield and its significance does not include the Aboriginal perspective.

So, heritage institutions are in the position to share epistemic goods and knowledge, this means that they are by default in the position of a custodian, a steward of what is to be shared. For those who might claim that heritage institutions are already custodians of the past, I remind them that being a custodian of the past and being in a position to share what has been under custody are two different kinds of stewardship. We might want to call this a two-tier stewardship. The first-tier of stewardship has to do with taking care of what has been inherited from the past. The second-tier has to do with being in a position to choose and collect and share what has been under your stewardship with significant others. In the second-tier stewardship, your duty is not simply to take care of what has been inherited, it is to choose what will be shared in terms of knowledge with others. Here, heritage institutions are in a position of power, and they decide what to share and how to share. If they do not create an atmosphere of epistemic confidence that will enable members of the public to act both as informants and participants in the sharing of knowledge, then heritage institutions abuse their position of power. The ethics of sharing is abused when the previous condition is not met. And the condition is not met when incidents of a particular kind of epistemic injustice, that is, participant perspective epistemic injustice occurs.

Related Chapters: 5, 7, 26, 34, 37

Notes

1 The only article that makes a direct reference to the term epistemic injustice in the context of heritage without going into details is by Sophia Lambadi (2013: 310–330).
2 What is worth noting is that cultural heritage and epistemology have shared interests. For instance, both are concerned with knowledge and repositories of knowledge, they are also concerned about testimony (presentation, selection), social and epistemic practices (debating, learning, questioning) and the social and epistemic role of institutions. Both cultural heritage and epistemology are also interested in the interpretation of our experiences, seeking for arenas to make this possible. For the connection between heritage and social practices, please see: Smith (2006).
3 Museums as representatives of heritage institutions accommodate a variety of epistemic interactions. Museums do not merely distribute epistemic goods, they select information via collecting things, they frame them and they display them to the public. In these there is a danger to commit epistemic injustice. For instance, they fail to attend the perspective of Indigenous communities, they might adapt to popular stereotypes about the display of historical events, or they might display a nation in the world in a triumphalist and nationalistic manner. Also see Duncan and Wallach (2004: 51–70).
7 For a discussion of value of heritage, see Hamilakis and Duke (2008).
8 A good example here is the abandoned industrial buildings in places like Detroit. At the start of the current financial crisis, these buildings were seen merely as abandoned ruins. Nowadays, they are considered significant industrial and urban heritage.
9 For the idea of biography of objects see: Kopytoff (1986: 69–94).
10 A good example here is homeless people and immigrants who are not given space for their own interpretation of heritage. For the heritage of homeless people, see: Zimmerman and Welch (2011: 67–85). For ethics of heritage and immigration, see Holtorf, Pantazatos and Scarre (2016).
11 For example, I understand that many Indigenous peoples want both testimonial and hermeneutical roles: they will not testify about their cultural heritage unless they are also allowed to ensure that it is interpreted in the right ways.
12 I am grateful to Gale Pohlhaus, Jr. for this point.
13 David E. Cooper (2006) explains sufficiently this occurrence of epistemic injustice, arguing that it is not without difficulties to accept non-experts’ accounts for the interpretation of the past.

14 One should note here that there have been strenuous efforts to acknowledge the testimonies of Indigenous communities and engage with them as credible informants about their past. The Burra Charter code of best practice, which has been adopted by archaeologists, anthropologists and heritage practitioners in Australia, signals the effort to fight epistemic injustice. For Burra Charter code of practice, see: http://australia.icomos.org/wp-content/uploads/The-Burra-Charter-2013-Adopted-31.10.2013.pdf (accessed 10 July 2016).

15 Although there seems to be an official narrative of the site, there seems to be no clear evidence of it.

16 My understanding of curiosity here is closer to Miscevic’s (2007) account of curiosity.


18 For an interpretation of the Throne of Weapons, see: McGregor (2010).

19 See www.illinois.gov/alpm/Pages/default.aspx (accessed 8 September 2016). I was able to participate in this activity during my visit at the Abraham Lincoln Museum on the 21st of September 2015.

20 For instance, for many people the rock of Acropolis where the Parthenon is located has always been primarily the legacy of the ancient Athenians to the future. However, part of the heritage of the rock of Acropolis and its interpretation as a heritage place is the buildings and structures (including Roman buildings, Christian churches and mosque minarets), which disappeared under the axis of neoclassicism.

21 I am grateful to Gaile Pohlhaus, Jr. for making this point clearer.


23 One should bear in mind that museums such as the British Museums have huge collections, and it takes time to change their modes of display.

References


Epistemic injustice and cultural heritage


