Whose Power?

Series 2 – Episode 4

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

Participatory research, collaborative spaces, young voices, podcasting, museum exhibitions, preservative party, historical interpretation, accessibility, research methods, community engagement, cultural debates, non-conventional topics, food poverty, podcast production, research confidence.

SPEAKERS

Mixed, Abigail Harrison Moore, Tae, Callum, Hugo

Abigail Harrison Moore 00:05

Welcome to series two of the Whose Power podcast from members of the Preservative Party, together with me, Abigail Harrison Moore. Based at Leeds City Museum, the Preservative Party is a group of young curators who break down traditional barriers and influence the way exhibitions and events are curated and presented, and I'm a professor at Leeds University who's been learning with the Preservative Party about how we research together, exploring participatory action research methods. When we recorded and listened to our first series of Whose Power? we realised that podcasting brought something special to our collaborative research. It was both a method and allowed us to tell others about what we've been doing together. So, in the second series of Whose Power? we dig deeper into the way participatory research changes the lives of young people and explore how podcasting helps us to do this. We're talking about how we create and maintain safe spaces for real collaboration, and how we amplify the voices of those least listened to

Mixed 01:00

By actually giving young people opportunities to have their voices heard. One way we could do it is having Pres Party for different things, whether it be sports, art history. You allow them to talk about what they want to talk about.

Abigail Harrison Moore 01:17

In episode four, we're discussing the power of collaboration. Tae and I are joined by members of the Preservative Party who've worked with them on Whose Power? We're first going to speak to Hugo and then to Callum, and I'll be reflecting on their conversation and what I think it means for researchers like me who are interested in the power of participatory research.

Tae 01:35

Thanks Abigail. So earlier, we caught up with Hugo in the studio, and I started by asking them what collaboration meant to them. Well, what it means is working together and making sure everyone's involved, because at the end of the day, it's a group work, and you don't want people to feel left out. With collaboration, just helping, making sure everyone's involved in it, at the end of the day, its teamwork, and when you have everyone involved, it's more rewarding that way, rather than one person carrying the weight of the team. So that's my definition of collaboration, working together as one and everyone's involved. Yeah, that's great. So, you're a newer member of the Preservative Party, right? Yeah, so if you're okay saying, why did you join the Preservative Party?

Hugo 02:20

Well, I've always really liked museums and always liked participating in historical stuff. And I found out that something that was really involved in museums, in the museum sector, which is something that's always been close to my heart, and to get involved in it, I thought it was a no brainer to get first hand in sight of the museums to see how it all works, because I've always seen how on films, on how it all works and how it's done, but to get a proper glimpse of how it is firsthand experience is a remarkable opportunity for me. And I thought, well, I'll give it a shot myself, and it helps me develop new skills.

Tae 02:56

How have you been finding it in press party?

Hugo 02:59

Well, it's really been interesting and eye opening, just to show how more complex and interesting it is with displaying museums, like how it's interpreted, and it's really all about working with other people, because you just don't have one person who just displays the cabinet, you will have a team of experts that get involved in it all to try and get their opinions on it and see, does it look well, and if you were a customer, or, in this case, a museum goer, and they viewed it, they thought it might be a really interesting thing and get their other opinion. Yeah, so it's very eye opening for me, and very amazing thing to find all these amazing opportunities through Pres Party.

Tae 03:41

I agree, though, it is really nice to be in the Preservative Party and get to see the inner workings of how the museum is, as well as getting to see, I guess, like we go to the Discovery Centre a lot, it's nice to see sort of the store and where everything's sort of placed before they go into their specific museums or in their specific exhibits. You've done, like, a little bit of work on, like, with us for Whose Power? So, what's been, I guess, your favourite part of doing the Whose Power? project?

Hugo 04:10

Well, it's actually the podcast part, because I get to hear my, get to give my opinions on how it's all done and give advice on how we could develop and improve, on Whose Power? and besides that, I really enjoyed looking at it being displayed at the Discovery Centre, on knowing how we can interpret artifacts and make it more interactive, rather than being behind glass cabinets. It's a lot, so it's always been a good eye opener there. So yeah.

Abigail Harrison Moore 04:38

Why particularly did you like the podcast Hugo?

Hugo 04:41

Because I've always been fascinated by podcasts, and always liked that experience with it, and to see how it's actually done and see and get it firsthand, because I occasionally listen to some podcasts myself. So, like, The Rest is History, The Rest is Football, and I just wanted to have a bit more of a behind the scenes, just to see how more complex it is, and see what it's like behind it. So, it's really a real big eye opener for me. Yeah.

Abigail Harrison Moore 05:07

So Hugo, when you first met me, obviously, I said, Hello, I'm a professor from the University of Leeds, and we're doing a research project together. What did you think about that? What did you think about researching together?

Hugo 05:20

Well, it was a real exciting opportunity for me, because I've never actually done anything historical based in this industry before, because I'm usually used to working in retail, and it's just amazing just to have a good first-hand

experience in it, because I watch love documentaries, and to participate in something that I've always been passionate about has been a little bit of an exciting opportunity for me to work with professionals, and hopefully can do it on a longer term basis. Yeah.

Abigail Harrison Moore 05:48

What do you think you can teach people like me about how we research together in museums?

Hugo 05:56

What I think I could teach about collaboration is and working in the museum is just to see what the younger generation think about it. Like, do they have enough ethnically diverse people, or is it like written in a way so it's not too wiffly waffly or whatever, because some people, particularly younger people, have a shorter attention span, and you really have to engage with them as well. So, it's not just from a diversity point of view, but also how to make it more appealing, like terminology or like, do we have more pictures than text? Because some people like lots of information, and others, like myself, are more visual learners, and they really want to do it. And some people want to look at different topics as well, whether it's mainly history things or more pleasure, and things like sports and athletics. So it's important to get their opinions as well and what they want to research as well. So that's what I think we could all do as well.

Abigail Harrison Moore 06:50

I think you're absolutely right on the wiffley waffly. And I think one of the most important things I've learned from the Preservative Party is how to take my natural way of speaking and writing and make it accessible. Tae, I mean, we've worked together on really trying to take the things I say and make them more accessible. How do you think we've collaborated in that process.

Tae 07:14

I think we've done well on trying to make things more accessible. I guess it's the first thing is, it's great that you're up to actually like changing things around, and like the text we write and the work we do to try and make it more accessible. It's good that you actually care. And I think getting sort of people who, I guess, have lived experience in regards to, like access, and people who will, you know, actually use it. I think it's great that you ask people like me, other people in Pres Party to have sort of an input, so you can, like, see straight away how we'd react to texts like that. I think it makes it a whole lot easier to work together. And I think it shows that you're a great collaborator, that you're willing to do all of this and put all these things in place to make things more accessible.

Abigail Harrison Moore 08:06

Hugo, what do you think makes a great collaborator?

Hugo 08:09

Well, someone who looks out for everyone, doesn't leave people ignored and listens to opinions, because everyone can bring different opinions to the table, and when they apply to it, they don't just go with that particular one they might have. Hmm, I like elements of that, like elements of that, and how can we get the perfect match together? Because that's what I think makes a great collaborator, listening to everyone and getting their opinions sorted and making sure everyone's heard and respected, even though it might not make the final cut, at least it's heard in the end.

Tae 08:42

Yeah, I agree. I feel like being able to hear everyone's opinions and stuff makes someone be a good collaborator. It shows that you're willing to actually collaborate, and you don't want to sort of domineer the situation, and don't want to, you know, just have your say, and you're willing to hear everybody else. I think it's great that us as the Preservative Party have created that sort of environment where we can freely collaborate with people, we're

taking everyone's opinions in and we're finding ways to make sure everyone gets heard in sort of the same way. Why do you think that we need groups like the Preservative Party in museums?

Hugo 09:23

Well, that's actually a really good question there. Why we need groups is because to have younger people to have their say on things, on how museums are displayed, and get their points, voices heard. Because whenever we see all these big historical debates in the news about culture wars and all that stuff, it's usually professors or historians, and it's always important to give voice to the average person, because they may agree with some of the historians, but they might, but it's always important to hear what the majority think as well, as well as the experts as well, because they're going to be taught these histories, and see how it's taught as well. And also with Preservative Party when they're creating museum exhibitions, they might want to go with, like, non-conventional topics, like more pleasant things, like football or like sports in general, or just characters, like were doing something about Alan Bennett and food stuff, stuff that you wouldn't get in like conventional museums, because it's always about wars or uncomfortable topics. So, I think it's important to have your other people's opinions, especially the younger generation who want to look at more pleasant experience within museums, rather than uncomfortable topics. So that's why I think Preservative Party is good to get people's opinions as well.

Tae 10:34

Yeah, I think that's good. I think Pres Party does those sorts of things really well. Especially like how you mentioned, we do exhibits and cases on things, on people like Alan Bennet, and then like topics like food poverty. And then we have a bunch of other things that we all feel comfortable enough to speak on, because we feel safe enough in this collaborative environment. We feel like, oh yeah, our opinion, our thoughts are going to be heard on these topics, yeah,

Abigail Harrison Moore 11:02

And that's why we took the theme, I mean, it's you very much, Tae, who really helped us find the theme of Whose Power? That we shifted from what I came into the room within a brilliant way and found this much wider, more accessible, more diverse way of thinking about power and energy, and really opened up the definition of power and energy. For you Hugo, did working on the project change your thinking about power?

Hugo 11:31

Well, it's actually quite interesting with Whose Power? Because it brought up lots of interesting facts which I didn't know about, like, I didn't know that when there's a football like during the World Cup, they had to put kettle on at certain times, so they didn't overload the power grid, or, like big sports tournaments in general, whether it be cup competitions in general. And that was actually quite fascinating. And you talking about, you were researching something about women, right? Abigail, so it's kind of good just to look at something that's usually male dominated and feel like and shine a light on something that's often been excluded or not often talked about. So, I think it's kind of good to look at history from a different perspective, if you know, I mean, because we see lots of topics being written over and over again, and it's literally the same information, but with Whose Power? it's a brand new topic altogether, with lots of different lenses on it. So that's what I found really fascinating about it. Yeah.

Tae 12:26

I feel like a lot of people and places can benefit from using that sort of, I guess, like perspective or like plan when doing work with people in like participation, I think it's good that you foster these sort of environments and give these sort of opportunities to show people, to teach people, really is what we're doing, is to teach people all these different hidden parts of history that otherwise, you know, you wouldn't have really been able to learn about. You wouldn't have been able to see. I think this was a very insightful conversation. I think it was very fun having this conversation with you, Hugo.

Hugo 13:05

Wow. Thank you.

Tae 13:06

I'd like to say thank you for at least, you know, finding time to come and have this conversation with us. That was Hugo giving us their thoughts on collaboration, taking part in Pres Party and their take on the power of podcasts. And now we're also joined by another Pres Party member, Callum.

Callum 13:23

Hello. Sorry

Tae 13:25

To see what they think. So, Callum, I'm going to start by asking you the same thing that I asked Hugo, what does collaboration mean to you?

Callum 13:33

I suppose the first thing that comes to me immediately is just what it literally means. It's just like everyone working together, but I suppose there's like, I suppose something that something else as well as that, it's really important to do as well. There are some things you definitely can't do on your own, or some things that are just really daunting on your own, and it's nice to have someone else to help you out and take some of the pressure off of that. I can feel less lonely, I guess.

Tae 13:54

Exactly, yeah. It's really good to have people help you on, you know, different work that you're doing, like you said, sometimes it can just be too scary to do something by yourself, and it's nice to have other people here to sort of guide you. So, yeah, I understand that. Why do you think that collaboration matters so much for Pres Party? Why do you think we, you know, strive to collaborate as much as we can?

Callum 14:20

I suppose, on like, the first hand, is because it's like, because it's fun, like, it's fun to work together, it's fun to be with each other. It's part of like socialising and being with each other. I've said that already, but it's part of like working together, and it's nice to be with each other. And I think similar to, as I said before, like, there are some things like, we can't do by ourselves, and we're also only together for so much time each week. So, it's important to split things up and make sure we're all working together to ensure everything gets done.

Tae 14:47

Yeah, we tend to work on quite a few big projects at Pres Party. So, it's quite nice to be able to sort of trust other people to, you know, take on other jobs that we might not.

Callum 14:59

Just be like be assure by the feeling that someone else is working on something that will help come together.

Tae 15:03

Exactly. I really, I really appreciate that about press party, about how we all work together.

Callum 15:08

Actually, I think that there's like a literal correlation between the two. My dissertation and my Masters by Research were both done on the same newspaper, like it's an alternative Leeds newspaper called the Leeds Other Paper. I

literally wouldn't have found it, I found it at a visit to the Leeds Central Library, done with the rest of the Preservative Party. So, I suppose, in a physical sense, I literally wouldn't have been able to do it if I hadn't have found that source. I remember I was really struggling for ideas until I found it. And I was like, oh my god, this is really cool. So, I think, yeah, definitely from that perspective as well. But also, like, obviously it's like a gaining skills perspective as well. Since it's working with objects, researching objects, and then putting that into text, to put into other things, there's also like the opportunity to work with objects in the collections as well. I wouldn't have got that otherwise.

Abigail Harrison Moore 15:08

When I first came to Pres Party, you already very much a member Callum, and you were already very much a researcher, and I wondered how Preservative Party and joining the Preservative Party when you did, helped you feel enough like a researcher to then go on and become a student and do your postgraduate and become a professional researcher in many ways. And we went to one of the first things we ever did together was we went to Special Collections at the university. And I was really struck on that day, because all of us were looking at different archives, and we were being helped, and we'd got out the energy archives and the recipe books. But you were very particularly interested in certain archives in the library, because you were coming at it through your own research and your own interest. Tell us a little bit about.

Callum 16:39

Some people requested for certain things to be brought out, right? Because I remember Bobby was focusing a lot on all like the monastery stuff. It was really, like, it was really nice to see them be so enthusiastic about it. I mean, I think there was an article from the other paper inside the collections. I don't think they were able to get it out, though, yeah, I don't think they were. I think it was suggested, but it didn't have but it was still nice to know that that was there.

Abigail Harrison Moore 16:59

And also, it comes back to this idea of collaboration, isn't it? Because, as you said, when we were looking at different sorts of objects, and I think libraries can be, if you don't, if you're not used to libraries and archives, they can be quite scary.

Callum 17:12

They can be very daunting, yeah, like just going into one for the first time and seeing like, all of the like shelfs with stuff on them, especially if they've got like, the Rolling ones, you got to go back and forth. You think there's already lots of shells, but then you roll the thingy. Ah, there's more. Job scare. Yeah, definitely having like other, suppose having like other people there to, like, look at objects themselves and be excited about things as well can help you ease into it more, and help you like, I suppose it lets you see, like, what's in the collection, like a smaller, like, bite sized a bit as well.

Abigail Harrison Moore 17:42

And often, when we think about research, especially university research, we think about texts. But of course, one of the brilliant things that we do with the Preservative Party is we're working constantly with museum objects. Do you think we research objects differently? Do you think that they're more easier to research? Or do you think we use the same skills, but it's about inviting people to think about all different things in terms of research.

Callum 18:06

Comparing to the research I've done. I'd say it's definitely different. A lot of the research for us at uni was, for Masters of Research and dissertation it was looking at the articles, taking pictures of those and like, taking them down, and then not as much of a dissertation, because I couldn't, I struggle with secondary reading for it. So, it's just a case of ah, I found all of us at last minute, and then frantically putting it all together in text afterwards. It

definitely is when we work with objects, with the Preservative Party does feel very different, like it like working with TMS feels different to working with something else as well. Like with TMS, it's like looking at the objects themselves, looking at the descriptions of it themselves. TMS is the museum system that think it Leeds Museums and Galleries as a whole uses. I think lots of different places have their own like collection software, and I've had experience with the Bradford Industrial Museums, and they use something called Modes. Each of them is archaic and silly in their own goofy ways, but it's partially endearing, but that might just be me.

Abigail Harrison Moore 18:59

No, do you know I think that's really important. I love the fact that both are Callum's, so both you and our other Callum, who's a member of the group, love the process of researching through catalogue databases, and that's such a it's a difficult thing to do, so bring it alive, and then you all talk to each other about what it is you found and that feeds into your exhibition work. Could you tell us a bit about how you've used that within designing exhibitions together? So maybe overlooked all the community cases that you're working on at the moment?

Callum 19:35

My section of overlooked was the William and Ellen Craft a bit. Most of that was a map and things pulled from the biography. Biography is the right term for it. I just want to they wrote a book on their journey through, to escape from slavery, and a lot of it was from that. There wasn't really any objects on that one. There was objects used in the one we've just worked on, which is on the case. I was working on the food bit. I remember being really difficult to narrow down objects over time, because there's so much just on food specifically. And especially narrowing it down to like a food poverty approach as well. I remember it being quite difficult there.

Tae 20:04

Yeah, from taking part in the installation for those cases, it was really, I guess, surprising, to be honest, to see how many objects there were that we had that related to food. There were so many different pamphlets and so many different cookery books that we saw, but the cases look really good. And I think you and the rest of your team that worked on food poverty did really well to find all of those objects and sort of like design, how you wanted everything to look, and the write up for everything is also really good. So well done. Thank you.

Callum 20:37

I haven't actually seen the thingies yet. I wasn't able to go on Monday when it was all being installed, so it would be a surprise when I do go.

Tae 20:44

Yeah, it looks beautiful. So, I think you'll really like it. And obviously you collaborated with people for that project. How did it feel when Abigail came in as a professor and come into the like Preservative Party space, where we don't usually work with professors. So, did it feel different to have her around?

Callum 21:04

I think it definitely felt different, but not, not in like, a bad way. I think at first, I was like, oh, there's a new person. Hello, new person. But then occasionally I just got used to it. And now, this isn't meant in a bad way. But now she feels like a second different but just as cool, Jordan. Someone else who is also there, not I said, as if they're just there in like the background, I don't mean it like that, they're really important.

Abigail Harrison Moore 21:26

Now I take that as a massive statement of lots of belonging, because I have learned so much from Jordan and from all of you. So to be felt like I'm another Jordan is wonderful. It's marvellous. Thank you very much.

Tae 21:38

Yeah, so you've, well all of us have done a lot of work together for Whose Power? We did the first podcast, the first exhibition, we did Gas Mark Two down in Discovery Centre. Now we're working on this podcast for season two. What's been the best bit of doing Whose power?

Callum 21:38

Anytime. I definitely can't pick just one, if I'm leaning towards two. It was either doing the podcast before, or it was installing it fully and watching it all come together afterwards. That was the previous, like gallery installation I was able to go through, and it was a lot of fun. And in terms of the podcast, I wasn't speaking, I wasn't like a big speaker on it. I remember recording a bit for a sound bite before, but even that was really cool and fun as well.

Tae 22:19

Yeah, I was wondering, because Hugo mentioned that he really quite liked doing the podcasting bit, how did it feel to do like the sound bite? Or like to be invited to do the sound bite.

Callum 22:29

I felt they were grateful to be given the opportunity. It was a lot of fun. And it's nice to be in a room and just and just talk as well. Although it's nice to split off in like different groups in Pres Party, but you feel like you go with the same people as well. It's nice to different people.

Tae 22:41

Yeah, it is nice.

Abigail Harrison Moore 22:42

You're probably wondering at the moment, but why did you say yes to coming back to doing the second series? Because, having done that little bit of the first series of the podcast, we really wanted to come and have a proper conversation with you in this space and to learn from you. Why did you say yes? What were you hoping from today?

Callum 22:59

I suppose it was from a different, I guess, a different, I guess a different experience from before I suppose. I remember initially, when the first series happened, it was like, I'm not sure how well I do with the speaking, but I could get involved with some of the stuff in the back, like the designing and the editing and everything else. And I remember we got training based on that. So, I was like, oh my god, we could use this together. But then I think for the best, a lot of the editing went towards the people we were working with, for the best, because it turned out really, really good. But I think I've realised at that point it's like, if I want to get more involved, I need to, like, overcome my fear and physically come on to talk.

Abigail Harrison Moore 23:07

How did you overcome your fear? Because you're doing amazingly, absolutely doing amazing.

Callum 23:37

I'm not sure if, I'm not sure if saying overcoming fear implies that there was, like, a big journey. It's more so like, just a, I think it was offered before. I think it was while we're at Pres Party. It was offered before. And I was like, yeah, why not? It'll be fun. And then now I'm here.

Abigail Harrison Moore 23:51

Do you think it makes a difference? Quite often with podcasting, you'll have the expert in the room asking the questions, but we're having to chat with people. We do this on a Thursday night at Pres Party. But we're, I mean, obviously we have a different structure to today, and we've thought about our questions, and we've talked to you

about our questions. But essentially, this is a space where we're talking, as we would do on a Thursday. How do you think that helps us or helps you within the space of the podcast? So suddenly we put a microphone in front of you and a pair of earphones on you, but we're still just Tae, you and I chatting.

Callum 24:27

It definitely helps to ease into it a bit. And even then, that's despite me, like fumbling a bit at the beginning, even then, it still took a bit of a moment. It'd feel a lot scarier if it was just like an interview type thing. I feel like I'd feel like in a job interview about I'm hearing the sound on my own voice. Scary! I'm sorry for comparing this to a job interview as well. This is way better. It's definitely, this format definitely helps out a lot. Thank you. Also, so I mean, obviously, because unlike other members of the Preservative Party, you've gone on and you've done your Masters by Research, and a lot of that is writing. But one of the things that other members of the group have said is that writing is probably the hardest way that they communicate, which is why we talked and, Tae, you very much support this too. Our voices were really important. And that's why the podcast became our method of talking about how we research together.

Tae 25:19

Exactly. I feel like, when we originally had this conversation about how we should display the research that we've been doing. I felt like it would be easier for the people of Press Party to speak on it, because that's what we do every Thursday. We're all just talking about the stuff that we're interested in and the things that we're working on, as compared to, you know, writing some journal or some report or something that the majority of us in Pres Party wouldn't be able to participate in. So, I think it is a good show of the collaboration that we value, that we decided to do this podcast, and it's great that it's also helping people build their confidence and feel better in like, using their own voice.

Callum 26:01

When I was doing my dissertation, and especially when I was doing my postgraduate stuff, it was especially reinforced then. One thing I was told was how lonely postgraduate research can be, and research in general can be as well. The university I went to did a lot, do a lot of things on campus to try and alleviate a lot of that loneliness. They encourage a lot of the postgraduate people to like come together and share their stuff, but I don't live on campus anymore. I did when I was an undergraduate, but I had to come back home. I wasn't able to get a house in York, and that's it. It was nice to stay at home anyways. So, I wasn't able to access any of that. I mean, it wasn't a case of, I was struggling a lot with it, but it definitely it was nice to go from doing that research, which I am a person who enjoys my own company, but it is still alone. And it is nice to go from that to, yeah, that to being at Pres Party where I can talk and collaborate with other people. It's nice to have these two distinct bits. Thank you, Callum for joining us today. It was really great to have this conversation with you. Thank you, Abigail, for helping us, you know, sort of facilitate this and putting your own two cents in. I think it's time to hand back over the time again so she can give us her reflections.

Abigail Harrison Moore 27:03

Thanks so very much to Tae, Callum and Hugo for sharing their thoughts and insights on the power of collaboration. So, what have I heard in this particular episode? One of the first things I heard, which really does make reference to the idea of the audio and being in the podcast studio is how each of them amplify each other's voices. We can turn mics up; we can turn mics down. But what happens when you get young people around the table and when we listen to them properly, is we will hear that each of them speaks differently. Some are loud, some are quieter, we each have different mannerisms, we each take different times to think, but we each support each other. That's what collaboration brings. It brings different voices to table, but also it gives them the confidence to speak. And I guess in some ways, strangely, we've also heard about how the podcast studio gives them the confidence to speak, once we've all relaxed into this process, and that's why it's a very interesting space to do participatory research. It makes us focus on the voice, and sometimes it helps us focus on questions, ideas,

issues that we might normally ignore in everyday, lived experience. Likewise, we heard from Callum about how he combats loneliness by coming into the Preservative Party, by talking with each other's. And I think that's a really important point for us as researchers, often, particularly in the arts and humanities, research is done on one's own, and it's really important to research together, to listen to different people's voices. And what we're doing through this space, and what participatory research does, more broadly is it creates the space to listen to each other, to amplify each other's voices, and that's where we make the difference, by bringing people around the table, hearing each other and then speaking together. So, in episode five, we'll be speaking to some of our newest members of the Preservative Party, and turning our attention to the power of change and how podcasts can be a space where both participatory research can happen, but where also we can make change. Thank you for joining us on this episode of The Whose Power? podcast. Music is by Tae. Funding comes from The Research England Policy Support Fund, which the University of Leeds this year is using to support participatory research. If you've got a question or a comment about what you've heard in this episode, then you can find the Preservative Party on LinkedIn and BlueSky. We'd really love to hear from you. This is a Research Podcast production.