

Institution: The University of Manchester		
Unit of Assessment: 32 (Art and Design: History, Practice and Theory)		
Title of case study: Developing a museum policy and practice for the curation of spontaneous memorials after terrorist attacks and their use for post-trauma recovery		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: June 2017-2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Kostas Arvanitis	Role(s) (e.g. job title): Senior Lecturer in Museology	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: October 2006-present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: June 2017-December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>One of the public responses to the Manchester Arena terrorist attack on 22 May 2017 was the creation of large-scale spontaneous memorials. Before Arvanitis' research project, there was little expertise in UK and European cultural and public sectors in collecting and digitising these kinds of memorials. In collaboration with cultural and public sector partners, Arvanitis developed a programme of research that produced impact in two main areas: 1) the research informed collection and documentation policy and practice in the UK and internationally, and developed new approaches to the digitisation of archives of spontaneous memorials; and 2) it enhanced understanding and application of the role of archives of spontaneous memorials in post-attack personal and community recovery.</p>		
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Arvanitis' research focuses on professional practices in the formation, documentation, digitisation and use of museum collections and archives. Following the Manchester Arena attack and the spontaneous memorials created across Greater Manchester, Arvanitis worked with Manchester Art Gallery (MAG) and other national and international partners to develop a collaborative body of research on archiving spontaneous memorials. This work was published in both museum and health-related journals, demonstrating the interdisciplinary application and reach of the research.</p> <p>Collecting, documenting and using spontaneous memorials: In June 2017, Arvanitis designed with MAG (via a 6-month residency funded by Manchester City Council, MCC) a research project to address the legacy of the extensive spontaneous memorials in Manchester. This co-produced work responded to the lack of expertise within MAG and the museum sector in the UK in dealing with such a body of material. This research on what is now known as the 'Manchester Together Archive' (MTA), a collection of more than 10,000 memorial items, produced [1]. This publication: 1) developed and evidenced an understanding of how MAG staff adapted and diverted from standard collecting processes; 2) argued that this decision entailed a creative process of negotiating perceptions of professional ethics and civic responsibility; 3) identified the role of the MTA not just as a representation of the spontaneous memorialisation, but also as a material, performative and sensorial extension of it in the museum space; and 4) demonstrated how the MTA impacted on MAG policy and practice and vice versa.</p> <p>Before this research, most of the relevant existing literature focused on the outcome of initiatives to collect spontaneous memorials, rather than the process and negotiation involved. Arvanitis' research addressed this gap by developing an innovative mixed-methods methodology that documented critically and creatively the process, decision-making and impact of collecting, digitising and making accessible the MTA. This included autoethnography, participant observation, qualitative interviews, creative workshops and documentary filmmaking. Arvanitis' research has offered a blueprint methodology that can be used in comparable cases elsewhere.</p> <p>The potential applicability of this research to other national and international cases was acknowledged and supported by a British Academy (BA)/Leverhulme Small Research Grant to initiate an International Network of Archives of Spontaneous Memorials. A two-day research workshop in September 2018 brought together 35 cultural and health professionals and policy makers from seven recent examples of large-scale memorials after terrorist attacks or disasters in the UK and Europe. This workshop proposed ways that work on archives of memorials might be embedded in post-disaster recovery policy and processes. Arvanitis captured the outcomes of</p>		

the discussion in a Network Initiation Report and developed a first-of-its-kind online resource for cultural professionals and policy makers dealing with spontaneous memorials [2].

Digitisation of spontaneous memorials' archives: The initial research raised questions about the scope, aims, use and users of a digital version of spontaneous memorials' archives. Building on earlier research [1, 3] that demonstrated the limitations of existing approaches, Arvanitis initiated a collaborative project funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) that offered an innovative model for the development of digital archives of spontaneous memorials. The project partners were MAG and Archives+, an archive centre of excellence in Manchester. The model breaks away from existing literature and professional practice, which tends to approach the digital archive as a digital copy of the physical archive. Instead Arvanitis' research project: 1) perceives such digital archives as collaborative and agile projects aiming to address different and contextual *uses* and serve different *users*; 2) treats the digital archive as a dynamic, responsive and evolving environment of and for a 'heritage of memory', that continues to change as people's relationship to and memory of the events change; and 3) offers a digital experience that embeds in it the therapeutic potential of the digital archive for people affected by the attack.

Role and use of spontaneous memorials and their archives in post-attack personal and community recovery: There is little academic literature on, and limited cultural professional understanding of, the psychological impact of spontaneous memorials on people affected by traumatic events [4]. Arvanitis collaborated with MAG and the Manchester Resilience Hub, an enhanced NHS outreach service hosted by Pennine Care in partnership with Greater Manchester Mental Health NHS Foundation Trust, Manchester University NHS Foundation Trust, and Northwest Boroughs Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, established in 2017 to co-ordinate care for thousands of people whose emotional wellbeing was affected by the attack. The collaboration aimed to understand the process, benefits and challenges of engaging families of the bereaved and other affected members of the public with the development and digitisation of MTA [4, 5]. This collaboration explored the role of archives of spontaneous memorials in post-attack recovery policy and practice.

3. References to the research

1. **Arvanitis, K.** 2019. "The 'Manchester Together Archive': researching and developing a museum practice of spontaneous memorials", *Museum and Society*, Volume 13, No 3., 510-532. <https://doi.org/10.29311/mas.v17i3.3203> [Output of BA/Leverhulme grant].
2. **Arvanitis, K.** *Archives of Spontaneous Memorials Network Initiation Report and Online Resource* (funded by the British Academy), www.spontaneoumemorials.org, April 2019 [Output of BA/Leverhulme grant].
3. Gilmore, A., **Arvanitis, K.**, and Albert, A. 2017. 'Never mind the quality, feel the width': big data for quality and performance evaluation in the arts and cultural sector and the case of 'Culture Metrics', in *Big Data in the Arts and Humanities: Theory and Practice*, ed. by Giovanni Schiuma and Daniela Carlucci, CRC Press - Taylor & Francis Group, pp. 27-39. Available from HEI on request.
4. Collins, H., Allsopp K., **Arvanitis, K.**, Chitsabesan, P., and French P. 2020. 'Psychological impact of spontaneous memorials: A narrative review', *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, Online First Publication, March 19, 2020. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/tra0000565>.
5. **Arvanitis, K.**, Everest, S., Hardman, A., and Knowles, B. 2018. Manchester Together Archive Films: '10,000 Objects', '2,000 teddies', 'Jo and Freda's story' and '22 Candles': <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCjKIVmx8fPxcSpe5O3DxRoA> , 25 July.

The research was funded through three related awards: 1) British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grant SRG/170307, 'Creating, Documenting and Using Archives of Spontaneous Memorials', 2018-2019, GBP9,945 PI **Arvanitis**; 2) National Lottery Heritage Fund, Our Heritage Grant, 2018-2019, GBP99,700, Partner; 3) Manchester City Council, Research residency (**Arvanitis**) in the MAG, 2018, GBP3,000.

4. Details of the impact

The research produced award-winning impact of significance and reach through two channels. It 1) developed innovative museum practice and informed policy on archives of spontaneous

memorials nationally and internationally [1, 2], and created and disseminated new approaches to the digitisation of spontaneous memorials [3, 5]; and 2) enhanced cultural and health professionals' understanding of the value of engaging people affected by terrorist attacks with the conservation and digitisation of archives of spontaneous memorials in post-attack recovery [4, 5]. The research impacted on a diverse range of beneficiaries, as follows:

1. Impact on collection, documentation and digitisation policy and practice in the UK and internationally

Manchester Art Gallery (MAG) is one of the UK's major art galleries: in 2019, it recorded 750,216 visitors and its combined GVA (gross value added) contribution to the local economy was GBP13,500,000 [A. i]. The research changed MAG's understanding of what a museum collection of spontaneous memorials is, leading MAG to treat the MTA as a continuation and expansion of its spontaneous memorialisation. This shift involved moving away from applying standard museum processes of documentation and collection management to the items of the MTA, and embracing its capacity to continue enacting the memorial's characteristics as a performative, responsive, public and collaborative process of heritage making. This impact was captured in a co-produced internal MAG collecting policy document, directly informed by the research. As Amanda Wallace, MAG's Senior Operational Lead, testifies, *"Arvanitis' documentation and research into the decision-making of the formation and documentation of the MTA has enabled MAG staff to critically reflect on the meaning and value of this material for the Gallery and indeed its audiences and stakeholders. As a result, the research has directly informed the development of a new collecting policy at the MAG, which has since been implemented in the institution"* [A.ii]. This impact was further highlighted by the Audience Agency in its 'Manchester Together Archive Evaluation Report' [A.iii], which states that *"new approaches to collecting and archiving emerged through the nature of the collection as a spontaneous memorial, in opposition to practices that project staff would usually engage in or were familiar to them as standard"* [A.iii]. The research also led to a more widely transformative process in MAG's purpose. It prompted MAG to consider the implications of the existence of this Archive in an art gallery context, and the extent to which the approach to MTA could be extended to the MAG's art collection more generally [A.ii]. This change in approach is evidenced in the decision to create a permanent public-private space for the Archive in MAG's gallery space, which positions the Archive in direct conversation with MAG's collections and visitors.

The research informed and shaped how the city of Manchester approached its memorial activity in the three anniversaries of the Manchester Arena attack so far, and its plans for a permanent memorial. For example, collecting and documentation approaches that were developed as part of the MTA informed the 'Trees of Hope' anniversary event in 2018, and the documentation of people's memorialisation activities in subsequent anniversaries.

The research has given spontaneous memorial collections a more prominent role in archival and museum practices more widely. For example, the Stockport War Memorial Art Gallery drew on Arvanitis' research to inform 'The Art of Remembering', a temporary exhibition in 2018. Over 2,000 visitors attended its opening and the Gallery received almost triple their average visitors in the months that followed. The curator Kate Turner stated that the research *"helped to interpret key objects in the exhibition in a way that was relevant to contemporary audiences. Being able to engage younger audiences with more recent examples of remembrance and temporary memorialisation had a huge impact"* [B]. Research informed the Manchester Museum's 2019 exhibition 'Jallianwala Bagh 1919: Punjab under Siege'. As Anna Bunney, Engagement Manager at the Manchester Museum said, it *"impacted on the exhibition and programme, by informing of [...] the need for staff training and support and the need for a quiet contemplative space for those engaging with the exhibition"* [C]. The research was also used as a best practice example of co-produced research between a university and cultural organisations in two Museums and Resilient Leadership Programme workshops held in Manchester in 2018 and 2019 (attended by 30 UK museum professionals who were enrolled on the Arts Council-funded national Museums and Resilient Leadership Programme, designed to help participants become cultural leaders). The programme director described the research: *"I can't really think of a better example of a gallery or museum enacting its social, cultural and civic purpose."* [D]. The research also led the Mass

Observation Archive to acknowledge the civic importance of spontaneous memorialisation, choosing to include such memorials in their guidance to “Mass Observer” writers.

Internationally, the research secured impact in Europe, New Zealand, and the USA. It informed the documentation and digitisation approach that the Museu d'Història de Barcelona followed after the terrorist attack in Las Ramblas in August 2017. As Josep Bracons, Head of Collections at the Museum, commented, *“the model developed by Arvanitis was also used by the Museu d'Història de Barcelona in engaging people in Spain with the 2017 La Rambla attack digital archive, [which has been] accessed by people from one hundred countries around the world”* [E]. Similarly, it was used to advise the National Library of New Zealand on the timeframe, methods and challenges of collecting and documenting spontaneous memorials, after the Christchurch mosque shootings on 15 March 2019 [F].

The project's online resource [2] and the linked Network, initiated by Arvanitis, have become a reference point for researchers and cultural professionals in the field. Gerome Truc (CNRS, France) writes that: *“Initiatives to collect and study spontaneous memorials have multiplied over the last 15 years, but without coordination. The creation of the spontaneous memorial network has made it possible to federate many of these initiatives, opening the way to comparative research work as well as the development of reference protocols and the sharing of best practices among archivists and international professionals. [...] this network constitutes for me, as for my French colleagues, researchers and archivists, a resource of great value and without equivalent.”* [see 2, online resource; public user comments]. Anne Eyre (Centre for Collective Trauma/Disaster Action) provides training, research and consultancy to authorities dealing with disaster. Eyre uses [2] in training for Multiagency Gold Incident Commanders across the UK, and comments that *“[t]he website continues to provide them –and me–with valuable resources, case studies and international contacts to help with the practical management of memorialisation after mass fatality incidents”* [see 2, online resource; public user comments].

The significance of the research as an international reference point for professionals is further evidenced by: an invitation for Arvanitis from the UK and Ireland Archives and Records Association to write a short briefing paper in its professional magazine about collecting spontaneous memorials [G]; a request by PhD student Èrika Fernandez, University of Alcalá, Spain to undertake a PhD research visit in Manchester under his supervision; the appointment of Arvanitis as the international member of the Society of American Archivists' Crisis, Disaster, and Tragedy Response Working Group; and an invitation for Arvanitis to present the resource and his MTA research in the ‘Urgent Collecting Roundtable’ at the 9/11 Memorial Museum in New York on 29 October 2019. Jan Ramirez, Executive Vice President of Collections & Chief Curator of the National September 11 Memorial and Museum, comments: *“I am both fortunate and grateful to acknowledge the significance of the online resource dedicated to archiving spontaneous memorials that you and your colleagues have compiled and continue to pilot as a service to scholars, practitioners and others researching this proliferating global phenomenon. This timely resource has become a reference point [...] for cultural professionals and archivists in the field, who can be pulled into the vortex of documenting, disassembling and preserving the components of these grassroots memorials [...]”* [H].

2. Impact on understanding of the role of archives of spontaneous memorials in post-attack recovery

The research enhanced understandings of the potential value of engaging people affected by terrorist attacks with the conservation and digitisation of archives of spontaneous memorials [4, 5]. The Manchester Resilience Hub has used the research to examine the application and impact of this cultural heritage of trauma on post-disaster social cohesion and community resilience [I]. The research films captured and communicated how the tactile acts of cleaning, washing, drying, packing and shipping objects left in St Ann's Square became part of people's personal and collective experience of processing the trauma of the Manchester Arena bombing. Cleaning and bringing the soft toys to *“their former glory”*, as a participant says in one of the films, embodied a cathartic process for the people themselves [5]. MAG and MCC initially saw the washing of the soft toys or dealing with the amount of candles left as practical solutions to a problem of volume

and storage and outside the parameters of the Archive. Arvanitis' research prompted MAG to reconsider these actions, and the role of the MTA, as part of a broader way to engage with individuals and organisations, in post-attack processes of personal and community recovery – which was then communicated to the wider public via broadcasting media and newspapers ([J] is one of several examples).

These ideas of recovery helped MAG to prepare for the visits to the MTA by family members of the 22 people who were killed in the attack and other stakeholders, a total of 144 people. As Wallace notes, *“MAG shaped the design of the visiting room and the interaction between staff and families through using Arvanitis' argument that the Archive was a continuation of the memorialisation itself (rather than just a collection of the objects from St Ann's Square). All 34 family members that visited the MTA were positive about its value and many stated that it helped them in their grieving process. Many also expressed the desire to visit it again and get involved in its development”* [A.ii]. As reported in the Audience Agency's Evaluation report, *“people had a positive view of their visit and felt connections with the material in the archive. The opportunity to explore the material, the discussion that took place during the visit around the archive and objects, and the opportunity for emotional engagement and personal reflection were particularly valued”* [A.iii]. The above evidence demonstrates the impact that the MTA has had on the post-disaster recovery process of the city and its people. This is further supported by: the standing ovation that the project received at a full MCC meeting on 3 October 2018; and the 'Working Together for Manchester' Award the project received in MCC's '2019 Awards for Excellence'.

The NLHF project to digitise the MTA used the research to develop a dynamic digital archive that embeds its potential for the psychological wellbeing of online audiences in the digital archiving process. 80% of 390 people who were surveyed by the Audience Agency about the significance of the digital archive agreed or strongly agreed with the potential of the MTA to help people affected by the Manchester attack. As two of the respondents stated, *“it can allow people to regain that sense of community originally felt at the memorial”*, and [the digital MTA is a] *“way to work through grief”* [A.iii]. This included the engagement of volunteers in the digitisation process. Arvanitis' research, which argued that psychological support should be available to volunteers working with spontaneous memorials [4], led MAG to develop a sensitive and supportive volunteering programme around the MTA and a relevant practical guide. 23 people volunteered on the project, giving 755.5 volunteering hours, with a value of GBP11,158.74 [A.iii]. Volunteers reported *“a range of impacts related to learning/lifelong learning; confidence and mental wellbeing; a feeling of purpose and sense of achievement; and a sense of fulfilment/personal benefit”* [A.iii]. The guide was included in The National Archives' 'A Year in Archives 2020' publication, which showcases influential best practice in the sector [A.ii].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- A. i) MCC, Report for Resolution, Manchester City Galleries report 12 February 2020, <https://democracy.manchester.gov.uk/documents/s15586/Art%20Galleries%20Budget%20Report%202020.pdf>; ii) Testimonial from Senior Operational Lead, MAG (1 November 2020); iii) Audience Agency, *Manchester Together Archive Evaluation Report* (October 2020).
- B. Testimonial from Director, Our Stories Heritage Consultancy and Curator of the 'The Art of Remembering' exhibition (25 October 2020).
- C. Testimonial from Engagement Manager, Manchester Museum (30 October 2020).
- D. Testimonial from Director, Museums & Resilient Leadership Programme (16 November 2020).
- E. Testimonial from Head of Collections, Museu d'Història de Barcelona (28 October 2020).
- F. Testimonial from Associate Chief Librarian (Acting), National Library of New Zealand Te Puna Mātauranga o Aotearoa (1 November 2020).
- G. Arvanitis, K. 2019. "Collecting, Documenting and Using Spontaneous Memorials: the case of the 'Manchester Together Archive'" ARC Magazine, August, 361, 11-13 (invited to write).
- H. Testimonial from Executive Vice President of Collections & Chief Curator of the National September 11 Memorial & Museum (28 October 2020).
- I. Testimonial from lead researchers, Manchester Resilience Hub (11 November 2020).
- J. *The Guardian* (26 July 2018): <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/jul/26/manchester-arena-attack-tributes-to-be-given-digital-archive>.