

What is Queer Heritage?

Queercache and the Epistemology of the Closet

ABSTRACT

The present article explores the possibility of queer heritage. In 2017, artists Kalle Hamm and Dzamil Kamanger organised a community art project called Queercache in Helsinki, and I use it as a case study on the heritagisation of queer pasts. Queercache borrowed its form from geocaching, presenting twelve caches with urban stories and memories. It asked whether phenomena which deviate from norms – the rejected past – can be recognised as heritage. As a means of analysing heritage discourse, i.e., the process of identifying and treating something as heritage, I use the concept of the epistemology of the closet. It describes and questions heteronormatively conditioned ways of knowing. The epistemology, and heritage discourse have commonalities, since both are processes of signification characteristic of modernity, the core of which are identification, valuation and knowing. However, Queercache nurtured queer memories without the stories necessarily meeting criteria associated with heritage such as continuity, authenticity and expertise.

Keywords: cultural heritage, geocaching, queer heritage, urban history, heritagisation

Deviant Heritage

A ROMA MAN relates an incident from his life towards the end of the 1990s:

I used to go to Café Escala a lot. I especially loved the karaoke. A group of Romani women showed up one time – Romanis couldn't get into straight bars to sing karaoke. I had to hide in the restroom for a couple of hours until the women had sung and left. I didn't want other Romanis to find out that I was gay and hanging out at gay bars. (Hamm & Kamanger 2017)

In this short story – a place-connected memory – living as a member of both an ethnic and a sexual minority creates a conflict and forces the person to hide himself. The story is part of the community art project Queercache staged by the artists Kalle Hamm and Dzamil Kamanger in spring 2017. Using small textual stories and visual material, the work described the history, present status and future hopes of Finnish sexual and gender minorities (Figure 1). The stories, like the Roma man's related memory, highlighted the conflicts and intersections of minority categories. The stories were divided into twelve geocaches placed across downtown Helsinki.



Figure 1. Queercache's Facebook banner.

In this article, I do not examine Queercache as a work of art or in the continuum formed by the works of the two artists, but rather view the work from the disciplinary angle of heritage studies. Heritage is a manner of speech and actions, characteristic of modernity, through which certain traces of the past are valued and considered as a contem-

porary and future asset (e.g., Dyer 2004, 210; Smith 2006; Harrison 2013; Evans 2014, 75, 88). In that respect, the idea of heritage is also present in Queercache. On the one hand, contemporary art – as a part of the art institution and the musealisation of artworks – is a form of heritage (Staiff 2015). On the other, Queercache drew attention to certain types of stories involving the past. It resorted to heritage practices and discourses when discussing the past of sexual and gender minorities while focusing its political thrust on the present.

By combining art, memories, history, and urban space, Queercache asks whether queer heritage is possible, and whether phenomena which deviate from norms – the rejected past – can be identified and recognised as heritage. It invites the person engaging with the artwork to think about how the classification of some tangible and intangible phenomena as heritage affects them, in this case the unexpected traces of the past of silenced and marginalised identities. Does the appreciation and nurturing of deviant or queer heritage – a gesture intended to be benevolent – tame it and turn it into something conformant and similar to everything else classified as heritage and, ultimately, a financial resource and a product to be consumed?

Questions about the possibility of a different kind of heritage are essential to Queercache, as deviation is referenced in the very name of the work. The term “queer” differentiates it from the Gaycache project implemented in Turku in May–June 2016 by Hamm and Kamanger (Hamm 2016; Pennanen 2016; Vehkasalo 2016). That project was also based on GPS navigation and finding geocaches. Both words, gay and queer, can be applied to homosexual people, but where the former has a more limited content, the latter covers a wider range of sexual and gender minorities. In Queercache, queer explicitly refers to non-normativity, deviating desires and attempts to reject the taming of the diversity of genders and sexualities into simple identities or consumer groups. Queer contains a political and activism-committed aspect (Warner 1997; Giffney 2004; Bernstein Sycamore 2008; Fryer 2012), which is also characteristic of Queercache.

Because the essential difference between the terms queer and gay is

part of Queercache, I have placed my analysis in the tradition of queer theory, and I attempt to depart from the subject-centric descriptions and straightforward reiteration of thoughts and texts produced by heritage administration – such as the rules of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), and the Council of Europe Faro Convention – which are typical of heritage studies. My text is not an art historical review of Queercache, but rather an analysis of the effects of queer on heritage and heritage on queer: I ask what queer heritage is.

I will begin by briefly describing the work and then proceed to discuss the relationship between Queercache and geocaching as a hobby. After this, I will present the views of critical cultural heritage studies, Laurajane Smith's (2006; 2021) in particular, on heritage as a process of signification. I will draw parallels between the interpretations of the nature of heritage and queer theoretical discussions on the past, and approach queer pasts as an enabler of a different present. I will identify the production of knowledge or knowing as the tie that binds heritage and queer pasts together. The concept of knowing implies questions of what is possible to know, how knowledge is created from observations and interpretations, and what the purposes of knowing are (Foucault 1984; Sedgwick 1990; Butler 1993; Hall 2017). Ultimately, queer changes the established ways of knowing and presenting the past in heritage discourse.

As a means of analysing knowing, I will use Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's concept of the epistemology of the closet, and her interpretation of how this heteronormatively conditioned epistemology defines modern culture and its ways of knowing – including heritage and urban space. Queercache both hides and reveals pasts and memories at the same time. It shapes and diversifies how knowing and active unknowing can be understood in an urban environment. In reminding the residents of the city of alternative types of heritage in otherwise familiar and safe environments, Queercache outlines how deviating otherness and a different remembering of it can be secured as heritage with the aim of changing the political present. For nurturing of queerness in heritage, it is important to shape the ways of knowing and presenting heritage so that they take queer pasts into account.

Queercache

The centennial of Finnish independence was celebrated in 2017, and the government set up a Finland 100 project to oversee preparations for the year of celebration. It hosted an array of events and projects (Suomi 100 2017), including the culture, art and communication project Finland 100 – In Rainbow Colours, which aimed at promoting “the history of sexual and gender minorities (LGBTIQ) as part of the history of independent Finland”. Queercache was included in this endeavour (Sateenkaarenväreissä 2017).

Toward the end of 2016, volunteers for the artwork were sought through social media. Ultimately, in addition to Hamm and Kamanger, six people participated in the planning, and the author of this article was one of them. In spring 2017, the group met several times on the premises of the Helsinki City Museum, contributed to the substance of the work, and searched for suitable places, related themes and memories. Each participant collected materials they found interesting from libraries and archives and presented them to the group, which then together discussed the contents of the work.

The two artists wanted the caches to deal with queer lives in the capital which had drawn less attention than such iconic gay figures as visual artist Tom of Finland or Moomin author Tove Jansson. Therefore, the group selected less known yet significant places, events and experiences of linguistic and cultural minorities, people with disabilities, and transgender people in the Helsinki metropolitan region. Although the participants significantly influenced the caches, the final selection of themes, text preparation and cache building were the responsibility of Hamm and Kamanger. The work was launched on June 26 at the Helsinki City Museum, and the caches were in place until July 30, 2017.

The caches were small, plastic freezer boxes placed in wooden boxes that were painted so as to blend into their environment (Figure 2). The lid of each box had a sticker explaining the work (Figure 3), and the content comprised a pencil, a sharpener, a small logbook and a piece of paper that described the work. In addition, the box held a text, printed in two languages and protected by a zipper storage bag, that revealed



*Figure 2. Queercache's wooden box hidden behind a downspout.
Photo: Visa Immonen.*



Figure 3. A plastic Queercache container. Photo: Visa Immonen.

the story of the cache. The texts of the work were in Arabic, English, Finnish and Swedish. There were also two laminated pieces of paper in each cache. One with a picture related to the topic of the cache and the other with a web address and QR code which led the reader to more information. Finally, the box contained a small quartz stone wrapped in translucent nylon pantyhose.

The coordinates of the caches were available on the artwork's Facebook page. During the time the caches were accessible, the stories related to them were also published on the page, one by one. The caches were spread across downtown Helsinki – most within walking distance of each other. The two most northern of the caches, located in Vallila and Ruskeasuo, were slightly further off, but could still easily be reached by public transport. The placement of the caches created a connection

between the environment and the content. For example, one of the caches was placed close to the former transgender support centre of Seta, the LGBTI rights association in Finland, and the story in that cache was a memory related to the place. Clothes and their significance in hiding or revealing one's internal authenticity played a central role in the story:

I started going to the meetings of the Transgender Support Center. My friends didn't know I was transgender and thought I was still a man. I wore men's clothes to work and at home, but you couldn't go to the meetings "in a lie", meaning in men's clothes. So before the meetings I would always change my pants into a skirt at a gas station. But not my other clothes. You had to wear a skirt because it represents something that men almost never wear. Tiia. (Hamm & Kamanger 2017)

The cache on the Pohjoinen Rautatiekatu Street, close to a nightclub called Hercules, described homonationalism. This concept was coined by Jasbir K. Puar (2007), and refers to the alliance between nationalism and sexual and gender minorities: by promoting the rights of nationally restricted minorities, the image of a state or nation can be polished – or vice versa (Schotten 2016; Kehl 2020):

Homonationalism has been gaining ground in Europe. Parts of the lgbtiq communities have started discriminating against lgbtiq people that come from other countries. This has occurred in Helsinki too. The Hercules night club only admits people who can show a Finnish passport, driver's license or official ID card as proof of identity; a passport of the country of origin or a temporary residence permit card is not enough. Hercules refers to the regulations of Valvira, the National Supervisory Authority for Welfare and Health. The DTM night club sees the residence permit as comparable to a driver's license, which is not an official ID but is used in many places as proof of identity. (Hamm & Kamanger 2017)

One of the twelve caches focused on the Roma, one on the history of Swedish-speaking sexual and gender minorities and one on the life

of Max Rand (1942–1992), the first publicly gay politician in Finland. Other caches were themed around reception centres, asylum-seekers, homonationalism, transgender history, the gender-assigning nature of the Finnish personal identity number, the treatment of transgender people in healthcare, genderqueer identity, and queers with disabilities. The twelfth and final cache contained a wish list for the future which included items such as transgender law reform and an LGBTIQ retirement home. The list continued the openly political and critical line of thought of the other caches.

Queercache and its stories, hidden in urban spaces but intended to be found, formed a network or a web in downtown Helsinki, connecting places and lives with the concept of queer. Geocaching as a hobby, which I discuss as a heritage phenomenon below, provided a link between memories and the present.

Queercaching in the World of Geocaching and Social Media

Queercache borrowed its form from geocaching, a hobby popular in Finland and around the world. The first geocache was hidden in the United States in 2000, and the number of hobbyists has since then grown globally to more than 7 million (Kettler 2017). Research on geocaching repeatedly points out that the hobby is not just about seeking and consuming caches but also involves preparing and locating caches in the terrain (Neustaedter, Tang & Judge 2010; see also Ihamäki 2014). The caches are waterproof containers that can accommodate a wide variety of objects. Typically, a container will reveal a geocache announcement, a small pencil and a logbook in which people visiting the cache can write down the date of their visit, their name, and any comments. There are different types of caches, and cache groups are constructed, for example, based on themes or storytelling. Despite the diversity of practices in geocaching, certain rules have been established. One such rule, stated on the largest website on the topic, geocaching.com, is that caches should be at least 0.1 miles or 161 metres apart (Kinnunen 2011).

The core of the hobby is moving around in the terrain, but the Internet plays an equally important role. In addition to giving descriptions of the

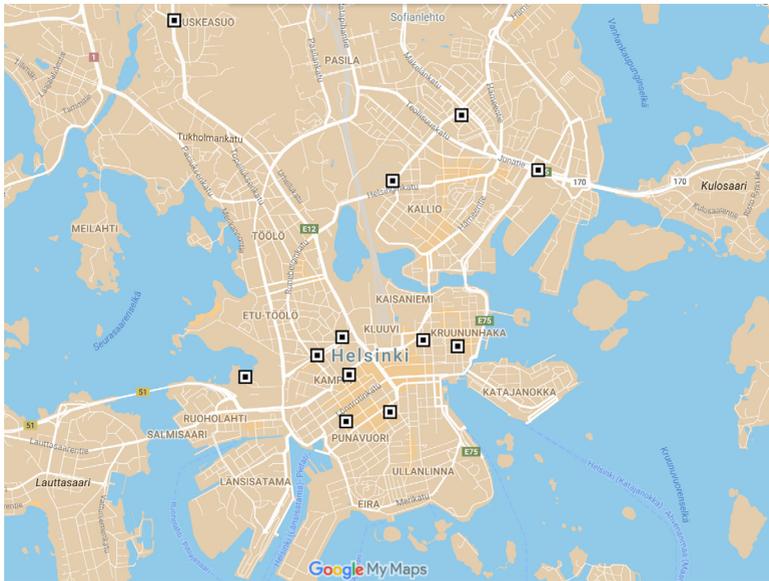
caches, their coordinates and other required information, the websites connect the hobbyists and provide them with a channel of communication. The coordinates retrieved from the Internet are entered into GPS devices or into regular smartphones. Although the coordinates provide direction, the caches can be searched for at any time and in any order, which gives the hobbyists great freedom to plan their travels. Some geocaches can be found swiftly and easily, but some can prove very demanding and difficult, and travelling the distances between them can be straining. Geocaching prompts feelings of success and discovery as well as disappointment and frustration.

Geocaching has formed a special relationship with heritage. In Finland, there is a clear statistical correlation between heritage sites and the placement of geocaches (DHH17, 2017). In addition, a case study on the most famous heritage attraction in Helsinki, the maritime fortress Suomenlinna, indicates that while the official route of the heritage site covers only a very small part of the islands on which the fortress is located, the geographical spread of the Pokémon Go mobile game items is clearly more extensive than the official route, but the locations of geocaches take the hobbyist to the most extensive area in Suomenlinna.

Museum and heritage work professionals have observed the popularity of geocaching and the opportunities it offers for conveying spatially connected information through play. At some heritage sites, deliberate efforts have been made to support and utilise geocaching activities for educational purposes (Rowland 2013). Geocaching has been observed to successfully render the unobserved visible in educational settings (Robinson 2011; cf. Schulman 2014, 27, 34–35). This creates a conflict with the core idea of caching; outsiders must not see the cache, and finding and opening caches must be done discretely (Vartiainen & Tuunanen 2014). It is perhaps the excitement related to hiding and finding that makes the hobby so successful in conveying information.

Queercache replicated many features characteristic of geocaching: communality, a plastic container with equipment, a geocache notice, information on coordinates spread through social media, and interest in heritage (Figure 4). The principles of the hobby were, however, applied

selectively. The caches were not placed in accordance with the distance rule (0.1 miles apart), nor were the coordinates announced on the established websites of the hobbyists. The polished visual appearance of the caches, and the fact that the cache texts were published separately were also a departure from common geocaching practice.



*Figure 4. The distribution of queercaches in downtown Helsinki.
Map: Visa Immonen.*

In addition to geocaching, Queercache resonates with other types of stories and desires expressed in social media. Geosocial services used by sexual and gender minorities include, for example, Grindr, HER, Scruff, and Tinder. They survey the desires of their users and help partners meet (cf. Cocks 2015). A Finnish point of reference is also the *Runkkupaikat* (Wanking Spots) service based on the Grafetee map service (<https://www.grafetee.com/runkkupaikat>). This service was a simple application created on an interactive map template where people could indicate partner preferences and sexual act desires related

to places. Although the original site has been closed, similar sites have appeared. Geosocial services are rather straightforward as channels for expressing desires, while they at the same time protect the anonymity of their users. They are an articulation of the constant oscillation between hiding and being discovered – knowing, being known, and falling beyond the reach of knowing.

Heritage Knowing

The body of Queercache was formed by memories and past events related to the urban environment, i.e., elements that can be called heritage. In Finland, heritage interest towards sexual and gender minorities has manifested itself in history writing, museum exhibitions and, for example, the collection of memories and archive material (e.g., Löfström 1999; Mustola & Pakkanen 2007; Karjula 2013; Taavetti 2016; Mustola 2017; cf. Steinbock 2018). Queer-historical urban sites have either been characterised by their temporary and variable nature (bars, celebrations, cafés, urinals, pride parades, private apartments) or been difficult to classify as relating to queer history alone (parks, hospitals, public pools, prisons). In Finland, unlike for instance in Amsterdam or Berlin, no public monuments for sexual or gender minorities have been erected to date, and the otherness of queer is hence revealed in the small scale and passing nature of its traces.

The past of sexual and gender minorities is, however, in the process of being turned into heritage in Western countries. Thomas R. Dunn (2016) calls this phenomenon queer monumentalism. He defines it as the attempts of sexual and gender minorities to create a shared, meaningful past captured in monuments, recognised by both minorities and the public alike. Dunn considers the assumption of permanence involved in monumentalisation to be both a benefit and a disadvantage. Because of their non-flexible nature, monuments do not reflect the variability and diversity of the queer past. In addition, queer monumentalism holds the threat of homonormativity, i.e., the pruning of minority heritage for the purpose of rendering it suitable for the heteronormative public. According to Dunn, the objections to homonormativity have created counter

publicity which criticises queer monumentalism and seeks ways of questioning and using gay monuments in alternative ways. There is, however, still a need for queer monumentalism, he argues, because in making the past of sexual and gender minorities visible lies a potential for questioning the heteronormativity of history writing and official heritage (see also Sullivan and Middleton 2020).

Queer monumentalism is a phenomenon based on the concept of heritage. In public discussions, the meaning of heritage is rarely clarified, but one definition can be found in the Faro Convention of 2005, ratified by the Finnish parliament in 2017 (Mattila 2017). The convention's second article states that "heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions". Consequently, heritage is connected to heritage communities, a term that refers to "people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations". Heritage is thus something passed on from the past, which a specific heritage community recognises as representative of values and meanings essential to it. Although the convention emphasises the significance of heritage to communities, it also places heritage within the domain of official institutions and defines the relationship of these institutions to both heritage and heritage communities.

In critical heritage studies, heritage is defined differently. Heritage is not deemed to exist primarily in certain entities, i.e., traces of the past, or even in heritage collaboration, but in the signification process that identifies phenomena as heritage. According to Laurajane Smith (2006) heritage is fundamentally an act of communication in the present for the present. It defines and expresses emotions, experiences and information anchored in the past (see also Harrison 2013; Smith 2021). Heritage institutions guide and encourage communities to attach themselves to phenomena defined as heritage, for instance, in the Faro Convention (Smith 2006; Harrison 2013). The concept of heritagisation refers to this material, administrative and social process through which a community

or an institution identifies a trace of the past as heritage and starts treating it correspondingly (Pendlebury 2015).

According to Smith, the dominant form of knowing heritage in Western countries is Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD). It is a process which defines how we think and talk of heritage and enforces a bundle of assumptions applicable to heritage. For example, AHD leads to differentiate expert opinions on heritage from the opinions of others, emphasising the value of expertise in identifying and nurturing heritage. AHD also guides to divide the values applicable to heritage into internal and external values: heritage appears innately valuable and authentic, and it is generally believed that societal discussions or conflicts will not diminish its value. Although heritage may have touristic and financial effects, these are, at least in official speeches, considered secondary to its core value. Another distinct characteristic of AHD is the strict differentiation between different layers of time, as it mandates that heritage refers primarily to the past, and only secondarily to the present and future. Authenticity is often equated with chronological age, and it is the obligation of the present to preserve this authenticity.

Frequently, the protection of heritage is justified heteronormatively, using the concepts of nation, patrimony and generations. Heritage is transferred from father to son, mother to daughter, and “seen to represent all that is good and important about the past, which has contributed to the development of the cultural character of the present” (Smith 2006, 29). Furthermore, as Jennifer Tyburczy (2016) points out, the most important institutions of heritage – museums – constantly use display as a technique for disciplining sexuality through the categories of sexual normalcy and perversity.

Since the publication of Smith’s (2006) analysis, many consequences of AHD have at least ostensibly become more moderated. The self-criticism of heritage experts has contributed to this development. Museums and other institutions aim to engage the public and minorities in heritage work. This trend is also apparent in the Faro Convention’s emphasis on community and the constantly growing number of phenomena deemed “heritage”. Queercache is a case in point as it was part of the

official independence celebrations and supported by the Helsinki City Museum. Moreover, heritage has also been ascribed value as a resource, i.e., heritage is increasingly presented as a source of economic growth, comfort, and well-being.

Despite the democratisation of heritage, Smith (2006, 37–38) warns that AHD tends to accept alternative views on heritage only so far as they can be assimilated into the old hierarchies of knowledge. For example, key actors in the implementation of the Faro Convention are still representatives of the heritage administration, who prompt communities to take interest in their own heritage. This reproduction of the established structures can be seen in dedicated exhibition spaces in museums, where parties external to the institution are given the opportunity to present their alternative interpretations. External parties' possibilities of providing their points of view are, however, limited to certain rooms or exhibitions and thus, perhaps unintentionally, marked as secondary in relation to the official heritage defined by experts. This problem of assimilation and normalisation is also something queer theoreticians are faced with when they consider the possibility of alternative pasts.

Queer Pasts

The queercache hidden in Lapinlahti, close to the building home to the first mental hospital in Finland, addressed the topic of psychiatric expertise in relation to being transgender:

Up until the 1970s a transgender identity was regarded as a mental health disorder. Veronica Pimenoff started as a psychiatrist in the North Karelian psychiatric precinct in 1979, and worked as a doctor at Lapinlahti in 1989–90. “I knew more than my patients did, but in Helsinki it was the other way around. In Helsinki transgender cases were handled by doctors who had no training or interest in the area”, she recalls. Gender reassignment surgeries weren't available in Finland until the 1990s. Before that people went to London, Casablanca and Tallinn for surgery. (Hamm & Kamanger 2017)

The passage recounts memories related to experts' and non-experts' knowledgeability or lack of knowledgeability on transgender issues. It says something about the past but aims at changing the future. Increasing attention has been paid in queer theory to the nature of such queer memories and the manifestations of alternative pasts and futures. In approaching the queer past, Ann Cvetkovich introduces the concept of "the archive". For her, the queer archive essentially refers to traumas of the past and the processing of them through art (Cvetkovich 2009, 53). In her analysis of the trauma that oppression has left behind, Cvetkovich concludes that the lesbian communities she has studied have used their difficult and negative memories to create counter-stories and counter-memories. This new type of collective memory is mobilised in political activity. J. Halberstam (2005) introduces the concept of queer temporality in the discussion. Queer temporality is defined in an inverse relation to reproduction, the continuum of generations and heterosexuality. It adheres to different types of everyday rhythms: passing moments, and discontinuity, and being identified or being left unidentified. Halberstam connects the existence of queer temporality with queer memory and queer archives and underlines the importance of collecting and caring for them.

Sara Edenheim (2014) criticises the attempts of both Cvetkovich and Halberstam to preserve the memories of queer subjects. The queer past that they conceptualise is characterised by the need for nurturing – a turn of phrase typical in heritagisation – and the capturing and rigidisation of queer traces of the past. Through nurturing, these traces will be transferred to the stage of heritage and, ultimately, education-ised. According to Edenheim, archiving always involves securing a certain type of future. The assumption, when creating queer archives, is that queers of the future will identify themselves in the archives, while cis-hetero people will be educated and use heritage to continue their bloodline and hetero way of life. Edenheim (2014, 52–54) argues that Halberstam and Cvetkovich neglect the analysis of the queer archive as a form of knowing. For them, the intelligibility and identifiability of desires in the materials are born concurrently with archiving – as if heritagisation would secure the preservation of past emotions and expe-

riences. Consequently, archiving is paralleled with life and being left out of the archives is equated with death. According to Edenheim, this ever-expanding heritagisation cannot be sustained, because its origin is the heteronormative concept of time, the desire to produce offspring, i.e., “the chain of generations” and its goal, ultimately, is to ensure the continuation of the present into the future (Edenheim 2014, 56).

In the same vein, Valerie Traub (2013) argues that the discussion of the queer past continues to suffer from significant shortcomings. The difficulties stem from narrow and dated views of history writing and archival practices. Although Traub does not mention Edenheim, her work also seems to hold an unnecessarily strict understanding of the archive as a reflection of the desires of the archivists. Although archives are indeed an outcome of historical development and the selection of various types of desire, the archivers’ intentions will never fully control how and for which purposes the archived materials will be used in future. Many queer scholars use archives for completely different purposes than what they were originally intended for (Taavetti 2018).

Extending Traub’s train of thought, it can be observed that Edenheim’s epistemology also includes another, material problem. Edenheim conceives temporality primarily as a textual and linguistic phenomenon. However, temporality is more than that. The past has its material and non-textual content, and the traces of the past do not only represent temporal disruptions but also a variety of continuums between the past, present and future, some of them material. Traces are multi-temporal and messy phenomena (Olivier 2011). The narrow understanding of epistemology as merely textual is a problem that may apply even more broadly to the concepts of the queer archive and the queer past. For Queercache and heritage, a more useful point of reference is Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s concept of the epistemology of the closet, which has both spatial and material dimensions (Janes 2015, 19).

Heritage and the Epistemology of the Closet

The expression “to be in the closet” refers to the attempt of an individual and the community to keep secret or withhold sexual and gender experi-

ences and lifestyles deemed as deviant from the public eye. The person inside the closet, however, may end up “opening the door” and “coming out of the closet”. Sedgwick (1990) inspects these expressions and the related practices from the perspective of knowing. The closet reflects the inner space of a person. This space – the soulscape – is deemed authentic and will, when known or revealed, relay the truth about the individual. Being in the closet and coming out of the closet are cultural actions and figures of speech that enable knowing and unknowing as well as the explicit and the implicit in the definition of sexuality and gender identity (see also Murray 2010, 48). The core of the epistemology of the closet lies in connecting knowledge and power: who reveals and opens the door of the closet, where and when; who assumes the role of the active subject in knowing, and how does the line between inside and outside structure authenticity. Unknowing and forgetting are also manifestations of cognitive power (Sedgwick 1990).

Queer geography has discussed the spatial and material nature of the epistemology of the closet (Brown 2000; 2011). Often sexual and gender minorities are not visible in the urban environment or other public spaces, yet they have always been present, expressing their desires ironically or in other indirect ways (Brown 2000, 1). Queer places, and minorities’ experiences of urban areas – typically unvoiced and hidden in solitude – have been examined in relation to the public, common knowledge of queer spaces. In Finland, the opportunities of doing this have been strongest in queer history writing related to the major cities: Helsinki, Tampere, and Turku (Juvonen 2002; Hautanen 2005; Jaskari, Juvonen & Vallinharju 2005; Melanko 2012; Pihkala 2013; Sorainen 2014). Urban spaces have been approached as places of oppression, loneliness, togetherness, partner-seeking and everyday life. The results have been popularised, for example, on a website presenting the gay history of the city of Tampere and through walking tours arranged by the Helsinki City Museum.

Although the epistemology of the closet has remained in use as a term in queer theoretical thinking, its theoretical focus has shifted (Brown 2011). Especially intersectionality, the analysis of the joint

effect of many social features – ethnicity, sexuality, gender, class status, profession, age, etc. – has been incorporated into the thinking of the closet (Hill Collins & Bilge 2016). For instance, the memory of the Roma man told at the beginning of this article lends itself to such an intersectional inspection. However, the epistemology of the closet is also expressed in new ways as the general attitude toward homosexuality has improved. David Halperin (2014, 86–87) gives an example of how the epistemology of the closet may result in the hiding of openly homosexual men’s gender ambivalence. In this scenario, the closet no longer hides their masculine gay desire, but the sensibility and emotions that are deemed feminine. The epistemology of the closet continues to operate, but the boundaries of knowing and unknowing are drawn differently.

The epistemology of the closet and heritagisation have commonalities. Both are processes of signification characteristic of modernity, the core of which consists of identification, valuation and knowing. They define the emotional, temporal, and spatial relationships between individuals and the community and, in both, experts – professionals of psychology, medicine, and heritage – serve as gatekeepers. Both also differentiate between the inside and the outside. While sexuality and gender identity are seen to open a cognitive channel to the soulscape of an individual, identifying the innate value of heritage, considered permanent and undeniable, will lead to the correct nurturing of it.

The epistemology of the closet and heritagisation also differ from each other in crucial ways. The former structures the individual and the individual’s human agency through sexuality and gender identity. In the epistemology of the closet, although it can be used as a source of creativity (Cocks 2003, 5), shame, keeping deviant features secret, and the cultural practices resulting from hiding them, are equally important to identification. Heritagisation, by contrast, is noble in nature. It regards the past and its authentic traces as the object of knowing and action. This concurrent resonance and disharmony between the two processes of knowing results in a deeper understanding of the nature of both heritage and queer pasts. Adhering to this duality, Queercache finds itself at

a crossroads of queer temporality and heritage. This difficult positioning between the two ways of knowing is based on the artistic nature of Queercache. As art, it is a part of heritage, but as a work of art, it also comments on its own heritage aspect.

Queercache and Heritage as Phenomena of Knowing

The queercache hidden at the address 27 Sturenkatu Street told the story of a reception centre that used to be located there. The centre was opened in response to the refugee crisis experienced in Europe in 2015. The story in the cache reminds us of the queer aspect of reception centres in Finland:

The Sturenkatu reception center had its own lgbtiq unit, which was closed on 30 September 2016. The unit was transferred to another reception center, which was closed down on 30 November 2016. Now lgbtiq asylum seekers are placed in the same centers with other asylum seekers. They suffer the most harassment from other asylum seekers who don't respect lgbtiq rights. This is why most of the lgbtiq asylum seekers don't support the current asylum seeker's [!] protest camp near the Helsinki Railway Station. (Hamm and Kamanger 2017)

By revealing the information, Queercache questions the view of asylum-seekers as a homogenous mass. At the same time, it shows how revealing and knowing involve power. The publishing of the locations of the reception centre in Queercache can be paralleled to the publishing and political activity of people who have a negative attitude toward asylum-seekers. The locations of the reception centres were made secret by the Finnish Immigration Service at the end of 2015 (Leinonen 2015), but extreme right-wing political groups started compiling lists of the sites and published them on the Hommaforum.org discussion forum used by people attacking immigration (Hommaforum.org 2015). When Queercache was launched, the reception centre in Sturenkatu had, however, already been closed; it was in the past and the purpose of publishing was different.

Although the location of the reception centre was divulged on both Hommaforum.org and in Queercache, the fact that the information was published at different times and in different places meant that the publications were shaped into cognitive actions of opposing goals and consequences. As a part of heritage activity, Queercache's relationship with knowledge was intricate. By divulging memories and events connected to places, it used a manner of knowing characteristic of heritage, where relating, knowing, and expressing the past are regarded as valuable.

The heritage aspect of the project was emphasised by the features borrowed from geocaching, where knowing is a physical and material feat connected to a place. On the one hand, the containers had been camouflaged to blend into their environment, and they were spread across the city in a way that made them almost invisible. Getting to the caches required movement and determination, and locating the stories and images therefore involved some effort. On the other hand, the caches upon discovery pointed out different historical meanings and temporal layers in the landscape (Figure 5). The historical authenticity of the stories was emphasised by the included Internet sources and additional material, and heritage work was referenced through collecting and processing the material and connecting memories to places. A degree of scientific objectivity was implied by using academic concepts, such as homonationalism, the rows of numbers of the GPS coordinates, and the descriptions of the locations of the caches. Together, these factors downplayed Queercache's status as a work of art and the human agency of the workgroup and, in particular, of the artists. As a work of art, Queercache's position in producing information differed from that of history writing, archives, and instructional communication. The concepts of queer and queer theory emphasise the significance of art in resisting attempts to impose conformity. Thus, Queercache as a work of art was able to observe the mechanisms of heritage knowing from a distance and to remind the audience of the epistemology of the closet, and how it depends on insinuations and secrets.

I have outlined the cognitive position of Queercache with Sedgwick's concept of the epistemology of the closet. The concept is built on a story



Figure 5. Contents of a queercache. Photo: Visa Immonen

of the external revelation of internal authenticity. In Queercache, the epistemology of the closet manifests in the play with the dynamics of hiding and revealing queer memories and as cognitive distancing and commenting the past from the perspective of art. The queer past is dual: on the one hand Queercache turns it into heritage that can be taken seriously, while on the other hand it objects to the conformity of heritagisation, nationalisation, and the heteronormative talk of “communities” and “generations”. The memories in the caches tell of conflicts and encounters in places where people expect something else (Delany 1999, 126). Queercache’s form emphasises the physical and local nature of knowing, but at the same time the geocaching activity is temporally and cognitively scattered. This might be viewed in parallel to urban space, where that which has been officially rendered into heritage can often retain its temporal and material continuity, while that which is not deemed worthy of heritage is doomed to disappear.

The possibility of navigating the environment using a map and coordinates and experiencing the multi-temporal and momentary nature of the city was an essential feature of Queercache. Visiting the sites required participants to plan their movements and their use of time, connecting each visit to a moment, different from other moments. The fact that the caches were removed after a certain period of time gave the work temporal points of reference. The temporal limit, combined with the temporal diversity of the content, reflected the continuous change of the urban space and the fragile nature of the queer memories.

Queercache – a collective effort the enjoyment of which required no monetary transactions – used the scattered nature of queer knowing, which destabilises the foundation of heritage knowing. Hence Queercache can be interpreted as a response to Dunn’s idea of queer monumentalisation and its problems with hetero- and homonormativity. The work made use of the effects of heritagisation, i.e., the appreciation that heritage is awarded and the cognitive power that is attributed to heritage knowing, but because of its temporal nature, Queercache cannot be regarded as a permanent monument. However, the Internet documentation ensures that Queercache has not disappeared completely, and it is therefore difficult to determine its precise heritage status. Although it would be possible to compile an archive of the Queercache materials, Queercache was not an archive but an event.

Illustrating the potential of the epistemology of the closet in contemporary art, Queercache connected different categories to each other: hiding and revealing, the private and the public, past and present, power and powerlessness. The physical impact on the urban space was minimal, but, through their stories, the caches attested to the multi-layered nature of the city’s heritage. The signification of a queer past, which is difficult to guide or dictate, emerged from these transgressions of boundaries. At the same time, the work contested the enforced conformity and heteronormativity that questions the value of collecting and recounting queer pasts. Through stories that did not necessarily meet criteria associated with heritage – such as continuity, authenticity and expertise – Queercache was able to temporarily nurture the memories of queer pasts.

Unlike museum exhibitions and urban monuments, Queercache vacillated between heritagisation and the epistemology of the closet. These contradictory ways of knowing revealed deviant heritage and, at the same time, adhered to the fleeting, disobedient existence of the queer.

VISA IMMONEN is Associate Professor of Medieval Archaeology at the University of Bergen, Norway. Much of his work focuses on medieval material culture in the Nordic countries, but Immonen is also interested in critical heritage studies. Among other things he has analysed the community of metal detectorists, and the practice of taking nude selfies at heritage sites. In addition, Immonen has written on the development of the concept of “heritage”, and how it relates, for instance, to the German concept of *Bildung*.

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