

When I see the photo of this place I feel....

- ✓ Please move around the room and share your feelings and experiences of the photos on the tables or walls.
- ✓ To share your feelings and experiences, please use the emoji stickers and post it notes.
- ✓ The stickers can be used to convey one or more emotional responses to the photo of the place, and the post it notes can be used to describe your thoughts, feelings and relationships to the place.

Pride in Place: Measuring Impact and Informing Change

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AHRC Place-Based Research Programme



Advancing People-Centred, Place-Based Approaches



AHRC Place-Based Research Programme Report Series, No.2, November 2024



“Create the conditions for a people-centred, place-based approach to be adopted and utilised more widely across and deeply within place-based work.”



Partnerships

Articles
And
Reports

Annual Place
Programme Event

Place-Based
Challenges

Early Career Place
Network

What's Possible?

- Challenge
- Can/should we measure pride/emotion?
- New methods with conventional approaches
- Community led and owned
- Why does it matter?



Why Emojis?

Established Academically

- ✓ Established method that builds from evidence in psychology and neuroscience (Madgin, 2021&26)

Tested in Place

- ✓ Tried and Tested in a number of Local Authorities and private sector firms across Scotland and England and beyond (Madgin et al, 2025; Owen et al, 2023&26)

Benefits

- ✓ Inexpensive
- ✓ Inclusive
- ✓ Focus directly on feelings and emotions
- ✓ Adapted to range of scenarios e.g. mapping
- ✓ Variety of Delivery Models: in person; (un)guided; online
- ✓ Deceptively simple
- ✓ Produce quantitative (measure impact) and qualitative data (inform change)
- ✓ Produce thematic and numerical data analysis



Why use an emoji method for Pride in Place?

Pride in Place is about more than visible improvement

It is also about how people feel in and about place, including:

- pride and recognition
- belonging and attachment
- frustration or neglect
- hope and possibility
- loss or ambivalence
- whether change feels done with people, not just to them



What can this method show and how can it be used?

It can help surface:

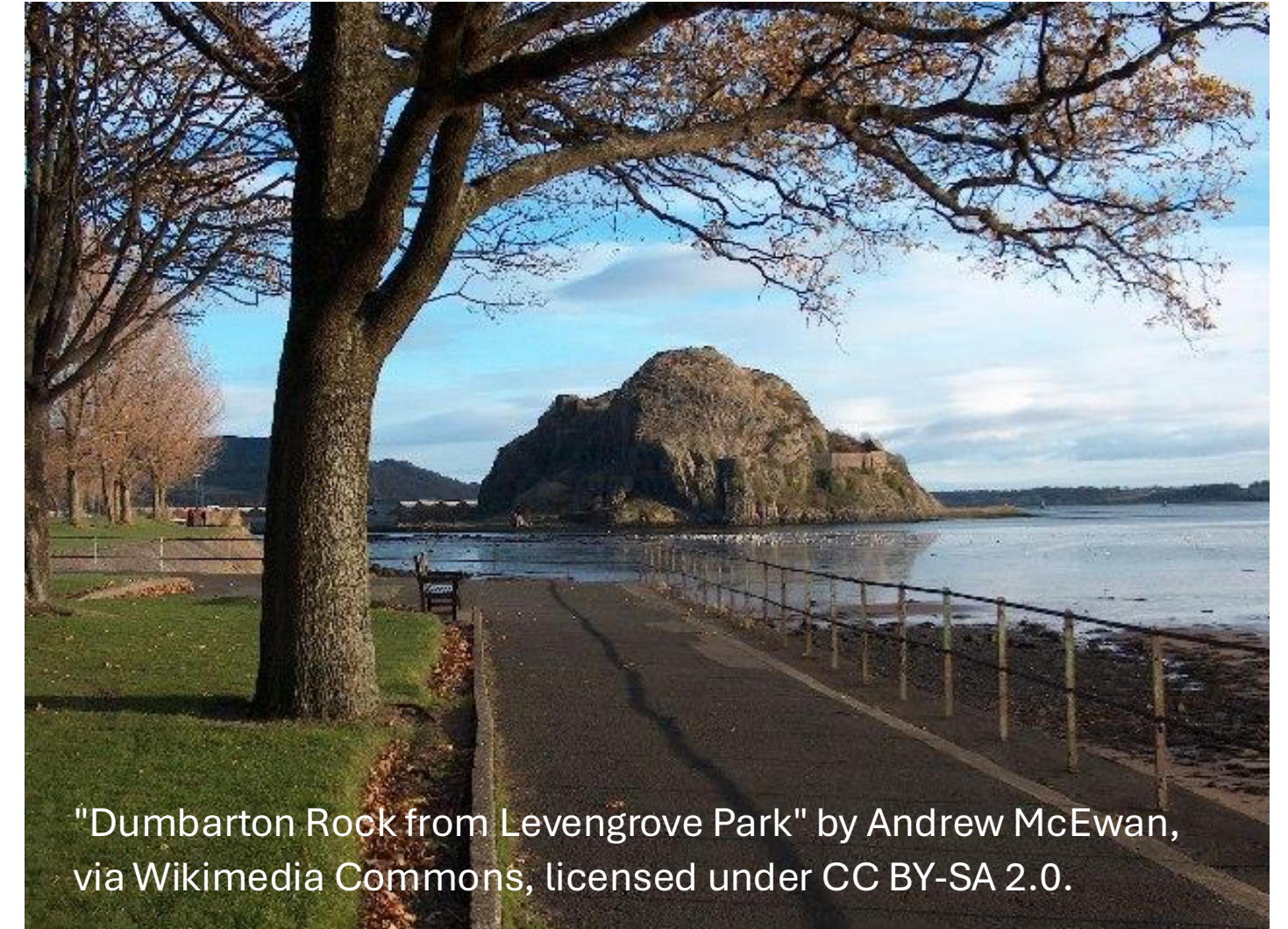
- how people feel about particular places
- which places matter, and why
- mixed responses, not just positive or negative ones
- how people experience change, decline or improvement

It can support a mixed baseline through:

- patterns in emoji responses
- short written explanations
- stories, memories and concerns
- shared reflection on what these responses mean

This can help:

- inform local decisions
- complement other measures of progress
- create a baseline that can be revisited over time



Why this matters for the programme

- Pride in Place is concerned with stronger communities, thriving places and resident influence, not only physical delivery.
- Evidence suggests people rarely experience one single emotional response to place.
- Simple, accessible methods can help surface mixed and locally specific responses.
- This creates an emotional baseline that can sit alongside more conventional measures of progress.



Group Reflections: From Response to Interpretation

- What kinds of feelings are coming through most strongly?
- Are people responding in similar or different ways to the same places?
- Where do responses seem mixed or ambivalent?
- What do the post-it notes add that the stickers alone do not show?
- What themes are emerging across the material?

Place

- Which place has the most positive emoji?
- Which place had the most negative emoji?
- Did anywhere have only positive emoji?
- Did anywhere have only negative emoji?
- Where are the neutral emoji?
- Where are the clusters of emoji?

People

- Are there similarities/differences in the emoji used by different people?

Time

- Which emoji appeared most frequently?
- How do the choice of emoji change over time?



From Interpretation to Application: Qualitative Baseline

“

"I used to come here because I knew people, I felt connected. This is ripping the heart out of Leicester, it's not just a shop closing, for me it's a chapter of my life that I will never get back.

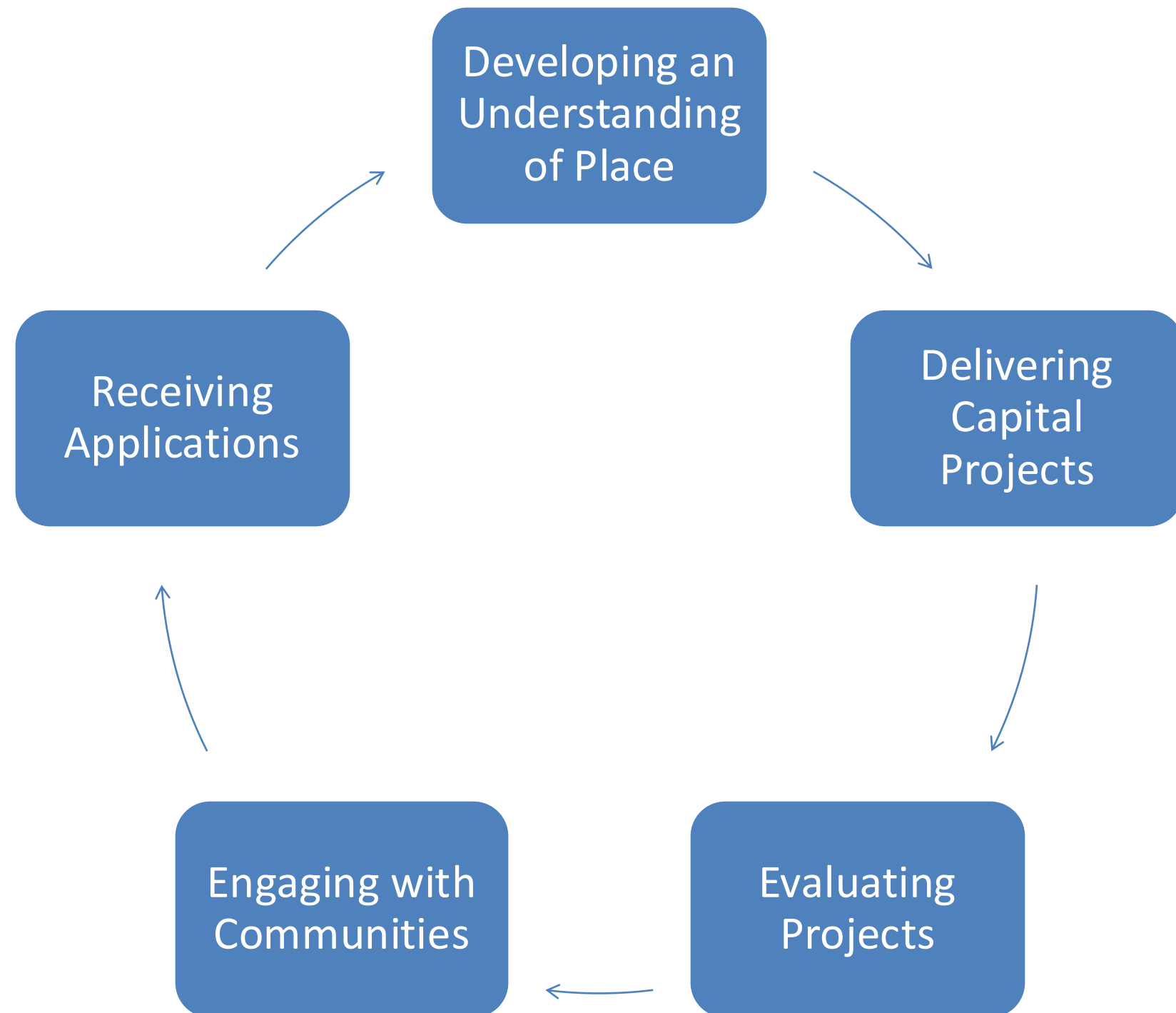


Shopper's funeral attire for last day of M&S store



Margherita Stevens described the store as her "safe space"

In Practice...



The Felt Experiences of Place Resource Kit



In Practice...

Stocks

Tangible and intangible assets, materials or information at specific point in time.

Flows of Services

Services as actions, processes, attributes or qualities that lead to benefits, along with production, are inputs to diverse benefits (or disbenefits) to society.

Benefits

Constituents of human wellbeing and public welfare arising from flows of services.

Stock

Historic Places

Flows of Identity and Experiential Services

Felt Experiences of Historic Places

Benefits

Socio-Economic Outcomes

Connecting People and Place: Valuing the Felt Experiences of Historic Places



AHRC Place-Based Research Programme Report Series, No 3, January 2026



Key Messages

1. Inexpensive, inclusive, flexible, focused
2. Measure quantitative impact
3. Use qualitative data to inform decision making

Questions and Discussion

Evidence Base and Resources

Developing a People-Centred, Place-Led Approach: The Value of the Arts and Humanities



AHRC Place-Based Research Programme Report, June 2023



Advancing People-Centred, Place-Based Approaches



AHRC Place-Based Research Programme Report Series, No.2, November 2024

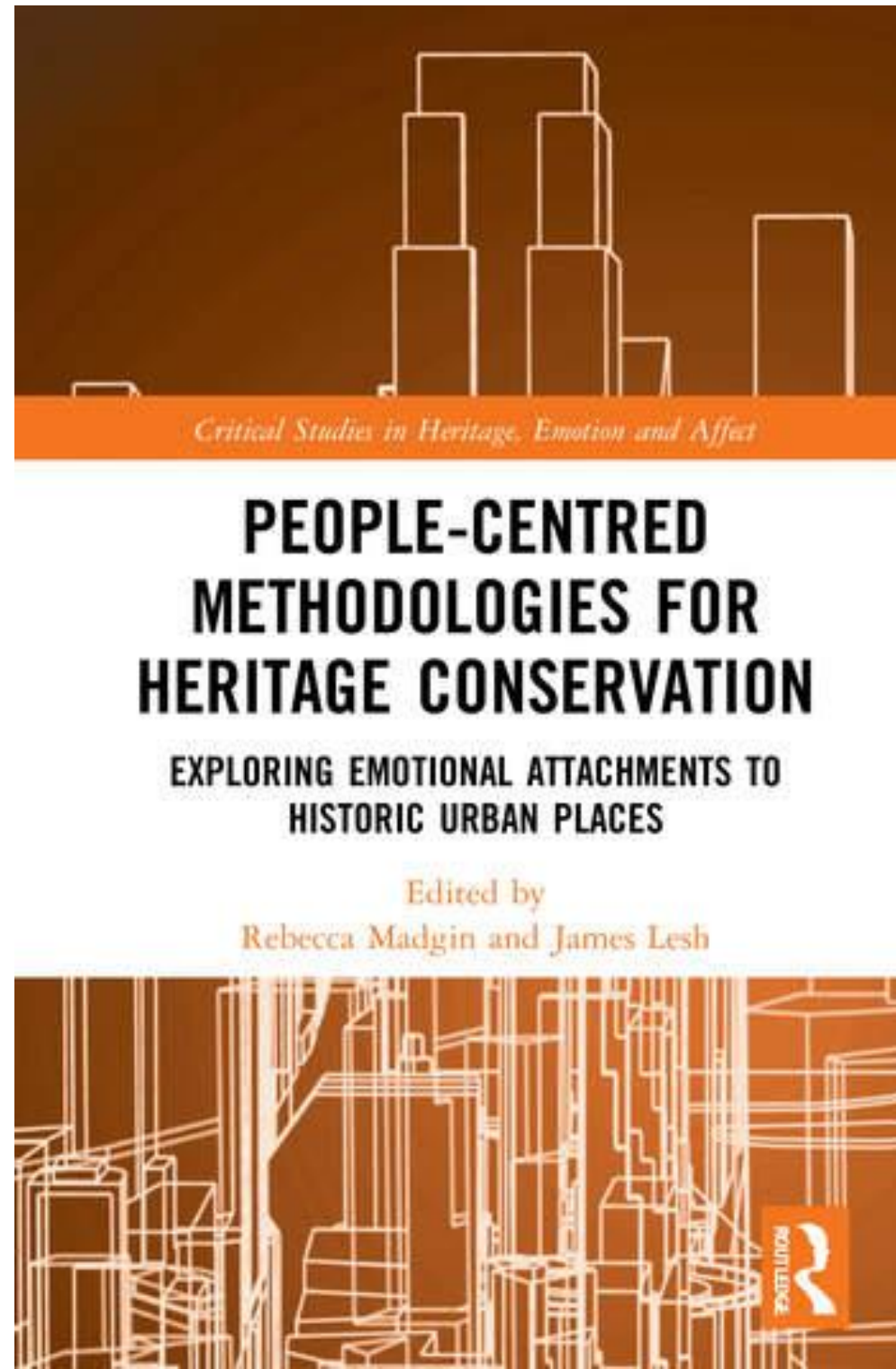


Connecting People and Place: Valuing the Felt Experiences of Historic Places



AHRC Place-Based Research Programme Report Series, No 3, January 2026





5 Emoji as method

Accessing emotional responses to changing historic places¹

Rebecca Madgin

Understanding why historic places matter emotionally is the aim of this chapter. Accessing emotional responses to historic places has traditionally been a challenge; partly methodological and partly because the theory and practice of conservation in the Western world is rooted in a belief that we can attribute significance based on a set of rational principles. This chapter primarily engages with the first challenge as it outlines the use of emoji-based methods as a way to access how and why residents in conservation areas in Scotland respond emotionally to historic places. However, the chapter also seeks to open up a dialogue concerning the wider relevance of the ways in which this kind of methodological approach and the knowledge it produces could be incorporated within evolving theories and practice of conservation.

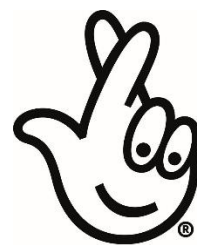
Emoji-based methods are an emerging methodology based on the incorporation of emoji commonly used in social media and messaging platforms. As will be discussed below, the use of emoji as part of research methods is relatively new and is mostly based on an analysis of emoji that are in existing circulation e.g., through social media. The approach taken in this chapter is to consider how the use of emoji could be combined within a more traditional workshop environment and by using qualitative methods such as photo-elicitation to enable a focus on how people *feel* about historic urban places, signified both by their choice of particular kinds of emoji such as 😊 or 😞 and their reasons for selecting the emoji.

Debates surrounding the role of emotions in historical and contemporary society continue across academic disciplines from the natural sciences, the social sciences and the arts and humanities. At the heart of these debates is a key question concerning whether it is possible to accurately access people's emotions and, if so, what kinds of emotions can be identified. Within the arts and humanities and the social sciences, researchers have devised several approaches to interrogating the role of emotions within time and in space (Wetherell, 2012; Rosenwein and Cristiani, 2018; Smith, Wetherell and Campbell, 2018; Tolia-Kelly, Waterton and Watson, 2017; Smith, 2020). The debates are as much methodological as they are epistemological, as they explore the primacy of text, practices and visual data in interrogating what emotions are, how emotions can be expressed and what emotions can *do* (Reddy, 2001; Scheer, 2012; Deitz et al., 2018). The chapter is located within this tradition of scholarship, as it seeks to understand how emotional responses to changing historic places can be captured through the use of emoji-based methods.

The Felt Experiences of Place Resource Kit



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