Plural Heritages of Istanbul

Dr. Tom Schofield

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SUBMISSION DETAILS

This submission combines films, digital artefacts and written outputs created from an AHRC Newton project: 'Plural Heritages of Istanbul, The Case of the Land Walls'. The digital artefact 'Plural Heritages' is a smartphone app for Android. The app takes co-produced video and audio content from our project and embeds it a series of alternative, 'bottom up' (in the sense of deriving from non-expert, everyday perspectives) walking tours around the UNESCO site of the Theodosian Land Walls. The films are a set of 35 shorts, co-produced with local film crews and research participants.

There are two peer-reviewed papers published.

ROLE IN THE PROJECT

I acted as co-investigator in this project and directed all creative and design-led activities including the ethnographic design work (cultural probes) and the co-production. I contributed to defining the methodology for a large set of walking ethnographies.

Drawing on my experience of conducting ethnographically-oriented design activities I worked with RA Dan Foster Smith to create a set of 'cultural probes' (full details are given later in this presentation). Together we defined the form of these and Dan produced the graphic design. I defined the scope of the study, the interview method and led the data collection and analysis.

I conceived of the creative focus for the film co-production, led the conversation with participants and film crews (in collaboration with Dr Gönül Bozoğlu and managed the ethics and IP processes. I was responsible for the technical functionality of the project website which exposes the films to indexing, search and thematic organisation.

I collaborated on the design of a locative smartphone app with Dan Foster Smith leading the design. Dan did all technical work producing this.

Feltwell, T., Wood, G., Long, K., Brooker, P., Schofield, T., Petridis, I., … Lawson, S. (2017). "I've been manipulated!": Designing Second Screen Experiences for Critical Viewing of Reality TV. In *Proceedings of the 35th annual ACM conference on Human factors in computing systems* - CHI '17. Denver, Colorado: ACM.

Schofield, T., Vines, J., Higham, T., Carter, E., Atken, M., & Golding, A. (2013). Trigger Shift: Participatory Design of an Augmented Theatrical Performance with Young People. In *Proceedings of the 9th ACM Conference on Creativity & Cognition - C&C '13* (p. 203). New York, New York, USA: ACM Press. https://doi.org/10.1145/2466627.2466640

There are a mix of creative and scholarly outputs from the project. Our published papers focus (in the first) on the methodology which informed the creation of the app and the production of the films and (in the second) on broader methodological and theoretical insights for others doing critical hertiage work with technology.

The 35 Co-produced films, are available here on our project website.

The project app is available here and is documented here.

Schofield, T., Foster-Smith, D., Bozoğlu, G., & Whitehead, C. (2018). Co-Producing Collections: Re-imagining a Polyvocal Past with Cultural Probes. Open Library of Humanities, 4(1). https://doi.org/10.16995/olh.296 (80% contribution)

Abstract: In this article, we describe findings and methodological implications from a research through design (RtD) process conducted as part of larger research project in Istanbul, Turkey. The project aimed to identify and valorise alternative heritage narratives from communities around Istanbul concerning a UNESCO heritage site, The Theodosian Land Walls. Following a large-scale ethnographic phase, we produced and deployed 'cultural probes': sets of creative, speculative tasks given to participants in ethnographically-oriented design processes. Our probes were intended to gather rich personal data from participant interviews and to inform the design space of a mobile, locative media installation. The process of this research, however, revealed another use for probes in informing and organising co-production activities around heritage sites. We identify implications for this proposed use for heritage practice with collections exploring the potential of probes to support new kinds of participant engagement

Schofield, T., Foster-Smith, D., Bozoğlu, G., & Whitehead, C. (2019). Design and Plural Heritages: Composing Critical Futures. In A. Day & Z. Shenzong (Eds.), CHI '19:Proceedings of the 2018 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems. Glasgow: ACM. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1145/3290605.3300236 (80% contribution).

Abstract: We make theoretical and methodological contributions to the CHI community by introducing comparisons between contemporary Critical Heritage research and some forms of experimental design practice. Beginning by identifying three key approaches in contemporary heritage research: Critical Heritage, Plural Heritages and Future Heritage we introduce these in turn, while exploring their significance for thinking about design, knowledge and diversity. We discuss our efforts to apply ideas integrating Critical Heritage and design through the adoption of known Research through Design techniques in a research project in Istanbul, Turkey describing the design of our study and how this was productive of sensory and speculative reflection on the past. Finally, we reflect on the usefulness of such methods in developing new interactive technologies in heritage contexts and go on to propose a series of recommendations for a future Critical Heritage Design practice.

Newcastle University Team

PI Professor Christ Whitehead, Media Culture and Heritage, Newcastle University

Co-I Dr Tom Schofield, Culture Lab and Fine Art, Newcastle University

RA Dr Gönül Bozoğlu, Media Culture and Heritage, Newcastle University

RA Dan Foster Smith, Culture Lab and Fine Art, Newcastle University

Istanbul team

Co-I Professor Asu Aksoy, İstanbul Bilgi University

Co-I Figen Kıvılcım Çorakbaş, Bursa Uludağ University

RA Dr. Ayşegül Yılmaz, İstanbul Bilgi University

RA Dr Zeynep Kunt, İstanbul Bilgi University

How do different communities give meaning to major heritage sites? What happens when such meanings are intertwined with histories of conflict and marginalisation, or are not recognised in official heritage interpretations?

Our project explored the 'plural heritages' of the Istanbul Land ('Theodosian') Walls and their environs. This 5th-Century CE UNESCO World Heritage site stretches over six kilometres through the city. In my contribution to the project I worked with communities to develop a series of co-produced films and to embed these in a smartphone app, presenting local perspectives on the value(s) of the Land Walls. This production built on a set of ethnographic design activities so-called 'cultural probes' (see slide 9) geared to developing a shared space of speculation on the past and future of the site and its surroundings.

1. To rethink heritage valorization paradigms and management processes in Turkey, using the İstanbul Land Walls World Heritage Site (WHS) as an exemplary locus, through community engagement and co-production of information resources, both in situ and online;

2. To understand and represent (through scholarship and through public-facing resources) the plural relations between heritage, place and people's identities and memories within the complex context of İstanbul;

3. To promote models of community engagement and co-production that can a) encourage respect for, and promotion of, cultural diversity, facilitating intercultural dialogue, reducing conflict and protecting the rights of marginalised groups; and b) build capacity, skills and competence within the heritage sector;

4. To utilize digital technologies in providing multi-layered interpretation and presentation of the site.

TO ACHIEVE THOSE AIMS WE USED THE FOLLOWING METHODS

1. We co-produced alternative site interpretation materials in the form of series of 35 films and inlcuded those films in a heritage app for mobile phones.

2. We produced a series of methodology toolkits for heritage professionals in Turkey and internationally in inform policy and practice.

3. We undertook ethnographic activities including walking interviews (undertaken by Dr Bozoglu) and 'cultural probes' (see later slides for full details).

THE FILMS: CO-PRODUCTION

We worked with around 15 research participants and two local film crews to produce a series of short films which would be hosted publicly on the site vimeo.com and embedded in our app. Dr Schofield's role in the process was to organize and coordinate the co-production, provide technical guidelines for the films, deal with issues of IP and ethics agreeing on these collaboratively with research participants and to define a series of creative prompts for the films to respond to. These prompts were drawn from an earlier stage of the project in which we conducted a so-called 'cultural probes '(see next slide for image) an exercise wherein participants were provided with a set of specially designed creative activities and the results are used for an ethnographic interview. We describe our use of probes in our paper here (https://doi.org/https:/doi.org/10.1145/3290605.3300236.)

The films used a series of creative prompts, drawn from the probes asking participants to, for instance, write a letter to the walls and speculate on how the walls would respond.

This short film showcases our co-production process

Plural Heritages of Istanbul: Co-production

How do different communities give meaning to major heritage sites? What happens such meanings are intertwined with histories of conflict and marginalisation, or are not recognised in official heritage interpretations? The project explores the 'plural heritages' of the Istanbul Land ('Theodosian') Walls and their environs. This 5th-Century CE UNESCO World Heritage site stretches over six kilometres through the city. We have completed an extensive ethnographic phase involving numerous walking interviews with community members, producing a large body of data about people's relations to place history. Credits Crew 1 Camera: Ali Ergül, Goncagül Gümüş Director: Goncagül Gümüş, Ali Ergül, Editing: Engin Güneşoğlu Crew 2 Camera:Cem Hakverdi Director: Cem Hakverdi Editing: Cem Hakverdi Sound Burçin Aktan Film Research Development: Dan Foster Smith, Tom Schofield Research Team Asu Aksoy Gönül Bozoğlu Figen Kıvılcım Çorakbaş Zeynep Kunt Tom Schofield Christopher Whitehead Ayşegül Yılmaz Funder Information The project is funded by the AHRC (UK) and TUBITAK (Turkey) under the Katip-Celebi Newton fund. Partners Newcastle Unviersity, Istanbul Bilgi University; Anadolu University

1 - 12 of 34   Share

A letter to the wall: Şefik

👤 Digital Cultures

Produced as part of Plural Heritages of Istanbul: the Case of the Land Walls How do...

A letter to the walls: Ab...

👤 Digital Cultures

Produced as part of Plural Heritages of Istanbul: the Case of the Land Walls How do...

A letter to the walls: Fat...

👤 Digital Cultures

If you could write a letter to the Land Walls, what would you ask? Produced as part of...
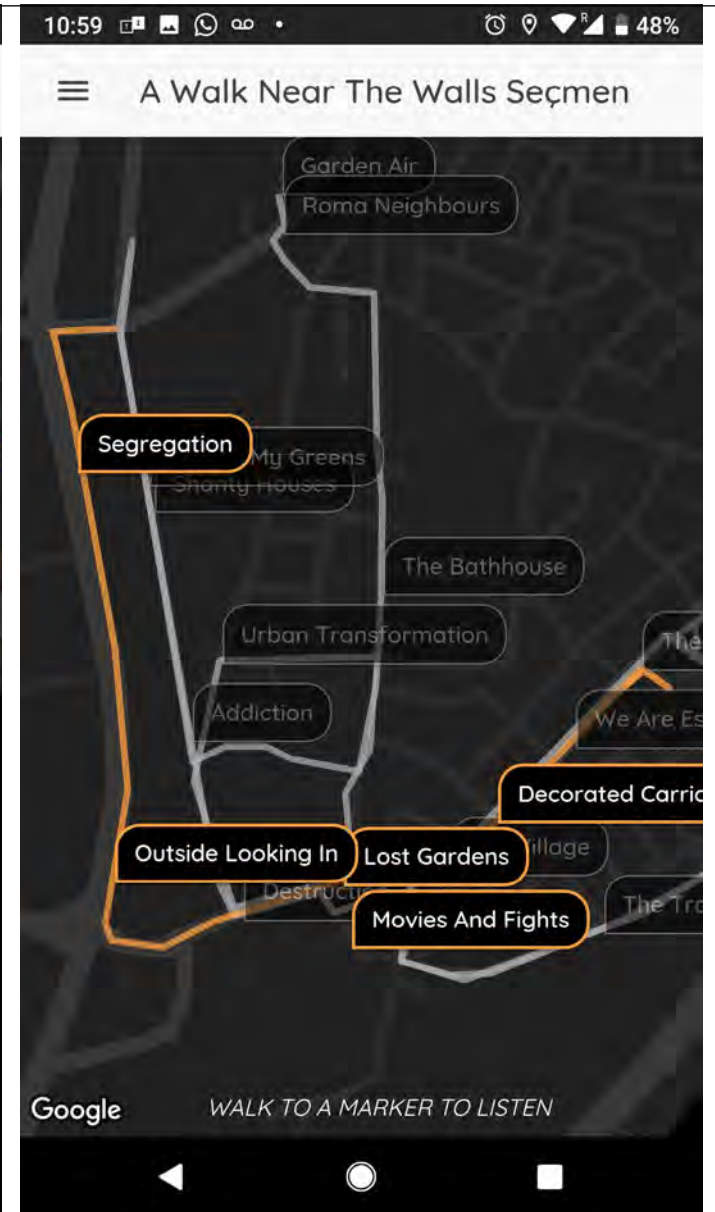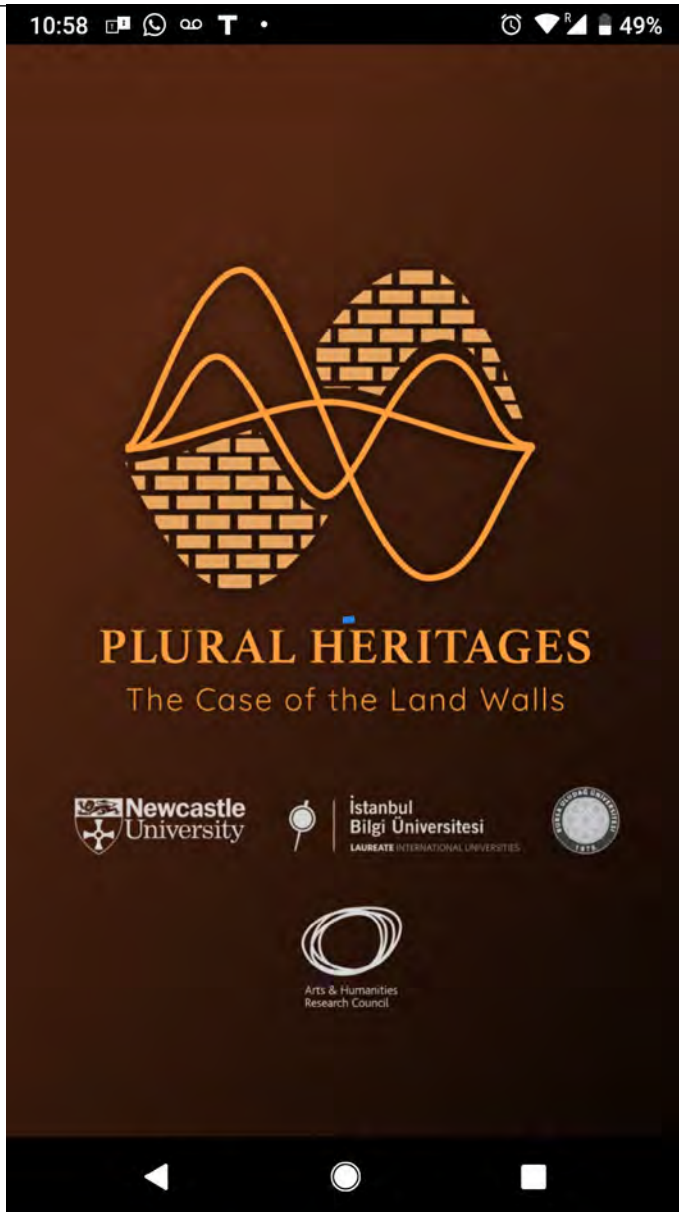
A letter to the walls: Rıza

👤 Digital Cultures

If you could write a letter to the Land Walls, what would you ask? Produced as part of...

THE APP

Plural Heritages is a smartphone-based GPS locative app that embeds co-produced films and extracted audio in a series of alternative, 'bottom up' walking tours around the UNESCO site of the Theodosian Land Walls. The app is available in English and Turkish.

Users of the app select from one of 3 different modes:

1. Walking Back in Time arranged participants accounts of historical events in their area along a walking route in chronological order. When using the app a sound file or video of the person recounting the story opens when a user arrives at the designated point. Several routes are overlayed and intersect when dates coincide.

2. 'A walk near the walls' curates a series of short tours that locate personal narratives about the past along a walking route. The clips were selected from longer walking interviews and display a thematic label on a map interface showing the progression from one subject to another. The various walks from different participants branch and cross, allowing users to segue from one narrative to the next promoting a 'plural' view of the history of the area.

4. 'Vantage points' locates the user as if they were able to augment their hearing to 'listen in' to different sounds of the city. From a set of predefined map positions, one can use the compass facility of the phone to point to a series of markers, laid out on the map. This triggers audio recordings of participants discussing their memories of various lost sounds such as the cries of itinerant yoghurt sellers or now disappeared cicadas.
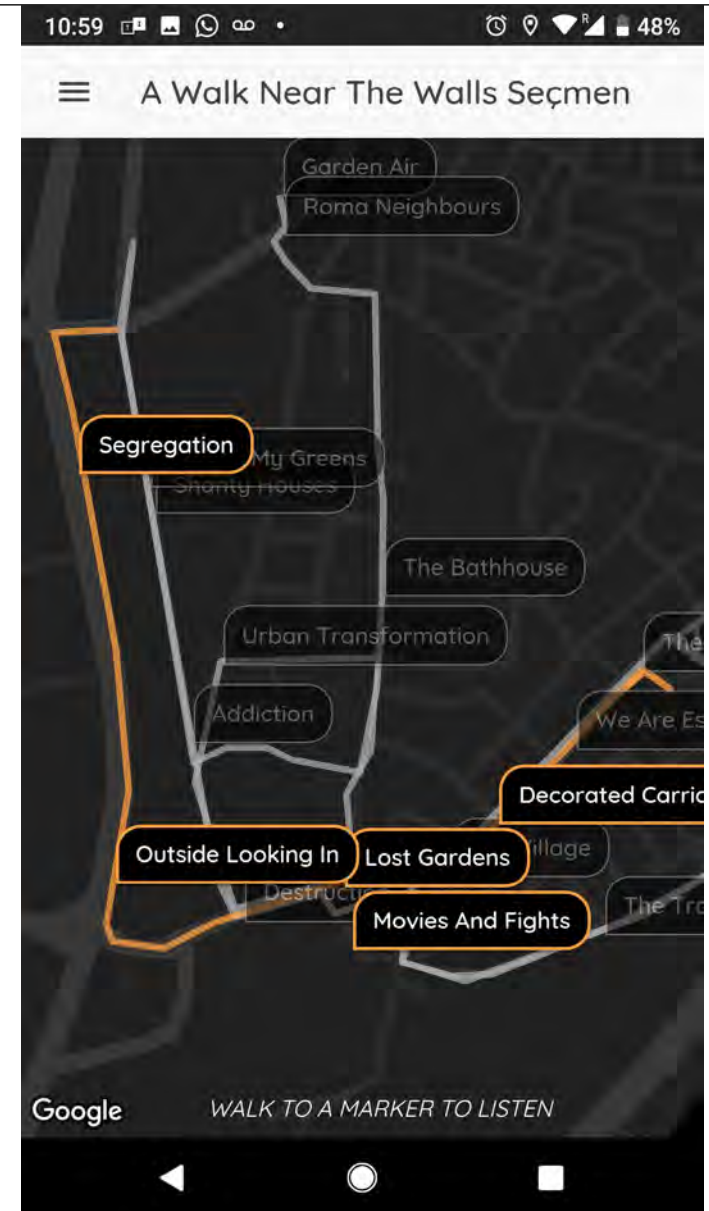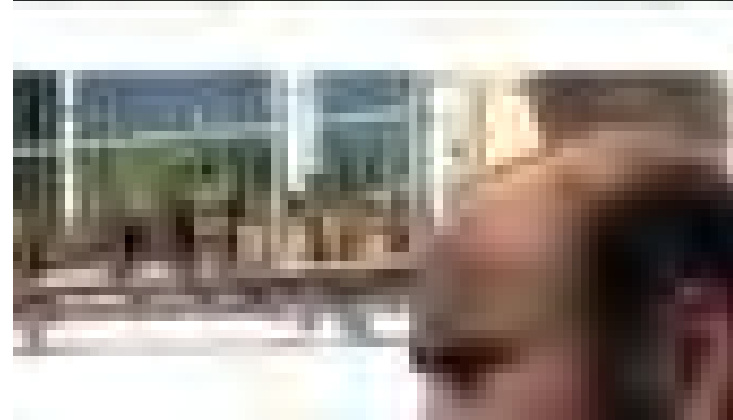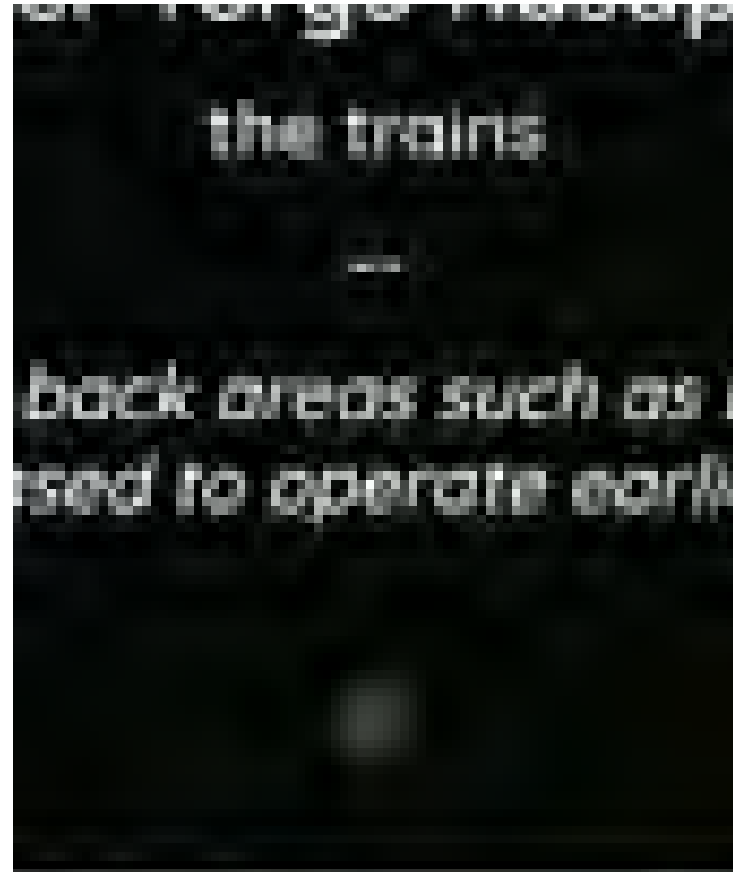
THE APP DESIGN

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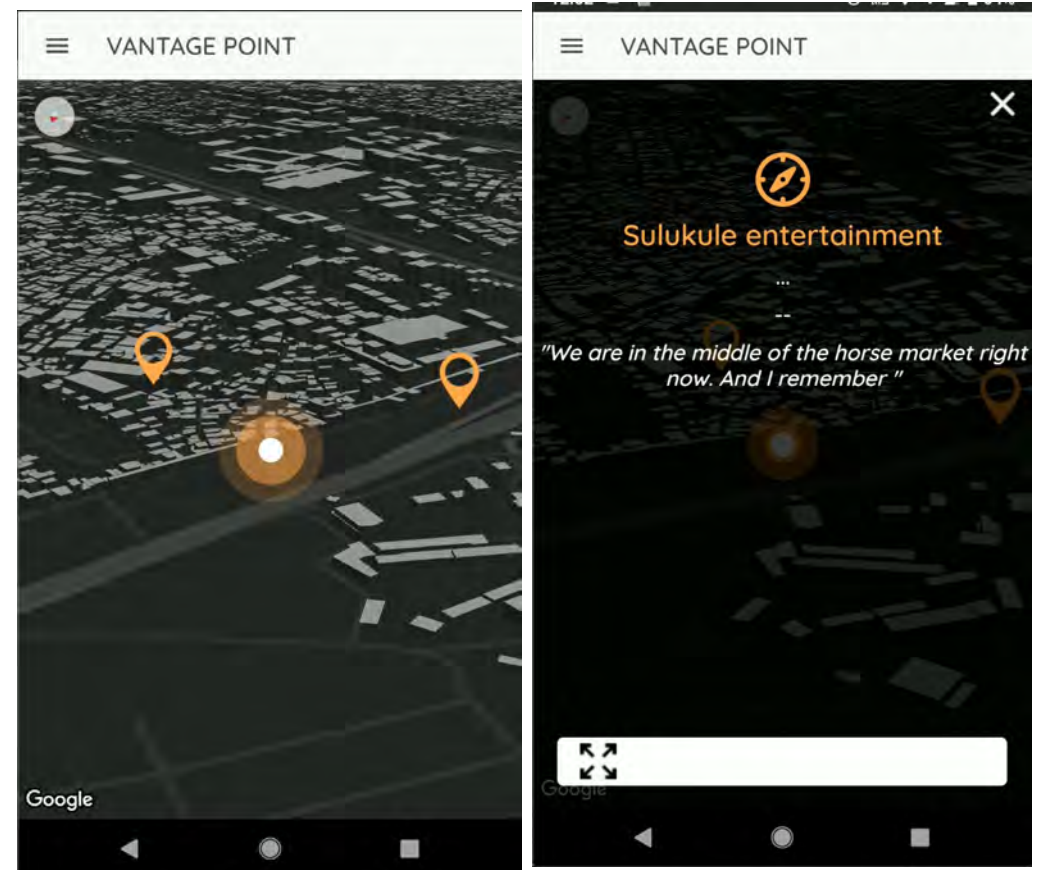
THE APP'S ORIGINALITY

Smartphone based heritage tours are ubiquitous. Our app differs by foregrounding understandings of heritage from the bottom up which may differ from official valorisations of heritage sites. The content was produced collaboratively and the app framework is available freely online for other projects to reuse freely under and open source license.

The app is available on the play store here.

Paper findings 1

Our paper 'Design and Plural Heritages: Composing Critical Futures' showed that there is significant shared theoretical background, clearly identifiable common terminology and points of shared theoretical interest, contexts for application and some promising related work between areas of design/Human Computer Interaction practice and contemporary research around Critical Heritage. Our observations from our cultural probes study underlined the applicability of such techniques in exploring a design space for the development of new interactive technologies. Finally, we pointed out that a much broader range of existing techniques might be productively repurposed to better contribute to a Critical Heritage design practice.

Paper findings 2

Our paper 'Design and Plural Heritages: Composing Critical Futures' focused on the usefulness of design techniques such as cultural probes in exploring various kinds of knowledge often overlooked in heritage practice. These included:

Sensory remembering: the activities we undertook and those we suggested for future co-production seem to encourage particularly senses-rich accounts of the past. We described how sounds, colours, and smells as well as sights and words were a significant feature of people's recollections.

Speculation about the past related to particular sites: our activities were designed to make people's accounts as location-specific as possible and to encourage them to think about different timescales as well as timeframes. Our interview data showed relatively little discussion about diachronic accounts of the past and instead often related to the spatial minutiae of historical narratives. Where exactly

soldiers entered the city, where figures from the past lived and died, how parts of the city were occupied and by whom as well as the kinds of sensory remembering described above were all features of people's recollections.

Connecting narratives of the past with politics of the present: the format of some activities, in particular 'A Letter to the Walls', encouraged a mixture of self-reflection and a relating to the places and events of the past. The writing of the letter sent from the present to the past introduced a frame within with such narratives could develop.

Our kit of 'cultural probes'