

Psychogeography With Technology

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Psychogeography, Co-Creation, Physical Computing, Play

1. BIOGRAPHIES

Tom Flint is a lecturer at Edinburgh Napier University. Tom's research revolves around interpretation of the arts and the communication of heritage through digital media. His practice is in creative technology and he has a history of building and exhibiting bespoke electronic devices and experiences.

Tanis Grandison is a PhD student at Edinburgh Napier University. Tanis' research seeks to understand how folklore and digital media can be used as a toolkit to unpack the meaning of place when situated within a Critical Heritage Framework.

Helena Barrett-Duncan is Creative Placemaker at WHALE Arts. Helena works with residents in Wester Hailes to develop and deliver a programme of regular creative activities, one-off events, and participatory public art installations that respond to local assets and aspirations.

2. OVERVIEW OF THE WORK

This submission is a co-created map of Wester Hailes which draws from methods of psychogeography. The map is touch sensitive. Touching pictures on the map triggers bespoke audio clips recorded by our co-creators. This map was created with local primary school children.



Figure 1 Completed Map

The project was conducted in collaboration with WHALE ARTS, a community led arts agency and charity. Wester Hailes is an area of Edinburgh situated approximately five miles west of the city centre. The area is a 1960s brutalist housing scheme built on ex-farmland. Wester Hailes is according to the SIMD (2016) one of the most deprived areas in Scotland.

The technology behind the map is two Bare Conductive Touch Boards. The touch boards use capacitive sensors to trigger sound files stored on a micro SD card. Touch boards have embedded sound circuitry enabling them to play the sounds stored on the memory cards through an attached speaker.

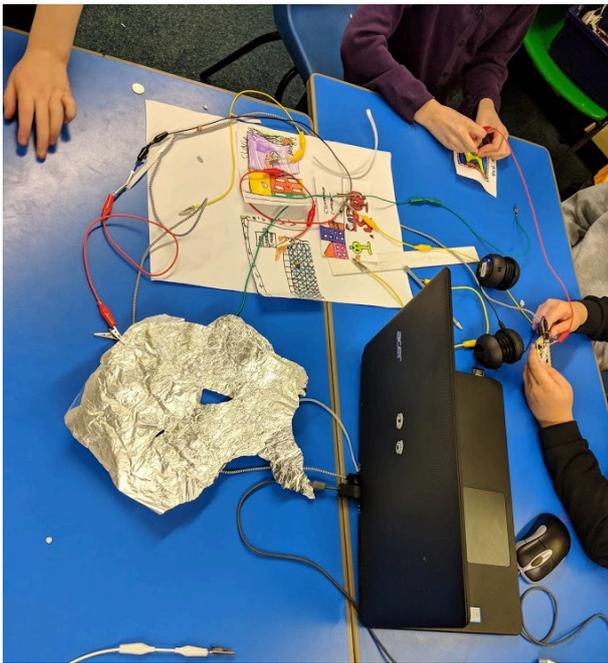


Figure 2 In-Class Playful Technology Session

The map was developed over a series of sessions exploring the notion of Psychogeography within class. Debord (1955) defined psychogeography as “the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals.”

The sessions ran over six weeks in a local primary school with a P5/6 class ranging in age of between 8 and 10. Informed consent was given by a responsible adult for all children. All children gave assent to take part in the sessions apart from one child who negotiated participation without being recorded.

The sessions began with discussions of the children’s experience of walking to school and the important land marks in their area. We then accompanied the children on a walk (derivé) around their local area with recording devices. The children were encouraged to use the recording devices to

reminisce and record stories and sounds of their area.

The recordings were edited into snippets and presented back to the children. Working in groups the children selected sounds and created images to accompany them. These were developed through playful in-class technology sessions.

The team worked with the children to construct a final prototype of the map which was then developed into a finished piece for exhibition.

As well as several local events, the map has been shown at Edinburgh Mini Maker Faire 2018. The children accompanied the map, delivering demonstrations throughout the day. Alongside the map display the children ran a live workshop constructing an interactive map of Scotland.

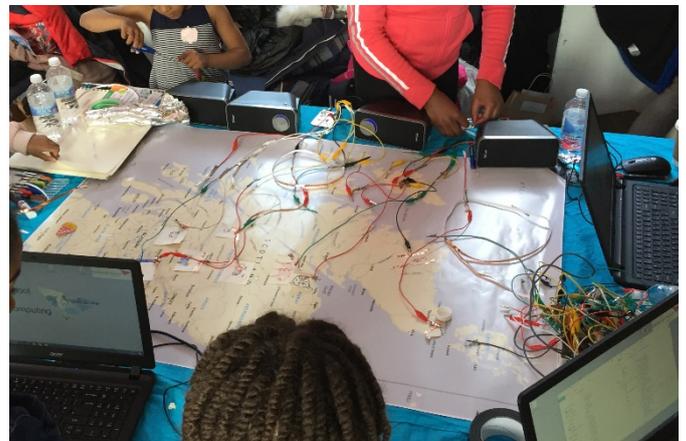


Figure 3 Live workshop at Edinburgh Mini Maker Faire

This investigation is the first in a series of technology interventions exploring themes of place and cultural heritage within Wester Hailes.

Evaluation has resulted in spontaneous written comments from participants including:

- “made me want to learn science.”
- “hard but easy”
- “imaginative”
- “extrordnery [sic] fun”
- “Phenomanal [sic] and Brilliant”

REFERENCES

- Debord, G (1955) Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography Available from <http://www.praxis-epress.org/CGR/3-Debord.pdf> Last Accessed 11/05/2018.
- SIMD (2016) Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Available from <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD> Last Accessed 11/05/2018.