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REMAKING COLLECTIONS

Co-Producing Collections: Re-imagining a Polyvocal Past with Cultural Probes

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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.

The Beginnings of New Collections

This article describes the use of research through design (RtD) techniques deployed within a research project in Istanbul, Turkey. Our objective was to explore and find ways to present people's varied and complex relations to an important urban heritage site, namely the ancient 'Land Walls', which once protected Byzantium. We initially developed creative, speculative tasks, so-called cultural probes (Gaver, Dunne & Pacenti, 1999; Gaver et al., 2004) as a way of gathering rich data and a method for informing a design space for a locative media deployment later in our project. In this forthcoming work, personal stories co-produced by project participants and professional media producers in Istanbul will be embedded in digital public space using geo-locative technologies. Our cultural probe work was intended to help us develop interesting and perhaps locally specific ideas about public space that we could develop into interactive experiences. Emergent experiences and observations during the practical execution of our cultural probe work with participants, however, led us to conclude that such techniques might also perform a role in composing and organising a new born-digital collection. Our article makes methodological contributions for researchers working in participatory relationships with communities and collections by not only describing the application of this design method in our project context and discussing some of its findings, but also by proposing a new use for cultural probe activities in scaffolding the production of participatory media production work.

Much previous work has explored the space of engaging communities with existing collections. Some projects have taken the form of co-produced exhibition material responding to existing collections (Mason, Whitehead & Graham, 2011; Schofield, Whitelaw & Kirk, 2017) or rethinking cataloguing principles. Others have used co-design processes to make exhibitions respond more directly to their end-users (Claisse, Ciolfi, & Petrelli, 2017) or engaged artists to treat archival materials as the basis for new creative work (Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums, Tusk Music, & Pixel Palace, 2013). In our work however, we wish to ask how we might engage participants in the creation of a new collection, not in response to an existing archive or collection but by responding to a site and in opposition to a monovocal historical narrative told through that site's official interpretation. Our project is cast against a particular

instance of such an 'authorised heritage discourse' (Smith, 2006) and is founded in a conception of heritages as fundamentally plural. In our work, we adopt a position which conceptualises collection-making as part of a memory-making that processually shapes and reshapes our sense of the past, rather than simply evidencing a particular view of it. Some authors have recognised that the continuing practices of tradition continually re-invent those traditions for the future (Cang, 2007). There is, however, little published work about the explicit creation of new collections, born-digital or otherwise, envisaged as a response to a contested or difficult history (Were & King, 2012).

We use the term 'collection' not quite in the museum sense of (usually) ex-situ physical objects acquired for perpetuity, but rather in relation to choice and value systems and criteria, to make up a cumulative entity intended to have a logic, making it more than the sum of its parts (Pearce, 1995). The collection we discuss in this article is not made of pre-existing tangibles rehoused into a discrete space. Our nascent collection is made of film, photographic and audio productions in which people from different demographic groups explore their relations with a historic site and its environs. These productions are bespoke digital and memory artefacts that are simultaneously 'about' something (the Walls) and 'things in themselves' (people's creative and mnemonic engagements). They can be sited ex-situ in a museum building, like a conventional museum collection (i.e. being stored or exhibited there), but they can also exist online, and one could access the collection via mobile technology from anywhere, including at the very heritage site which it concerns.

We see the potential for a living collection that acknowledges the future-orientation of producing perspectives on the past. It is the past as experienced in the present and told and re-told for the future. We recognise, following Harrison, that 'different forms of heritage practices enact different realities and hence work to assemble different futures' (2015). How though would such a collection come to be? What circumstances would provoke its inauguration and what methods would help it form? We present one possible answer to these questions. We will focus not on the construction of the collection itself, which remains in the future of our project, but on the way that we have laid groundwork. We describe how now quite established exploratory design research methods allowed the establishment of orientation points

for the collection and our plans for carrying them forward into its future production. Our use of cultural probes during our work with participants led to a number of creative and practical ideas for the future co-production of heritage interpretation materials within our project. Here, we describe these while noting their concordance with key themes in critical heritage.

Collections Versus Interpretation

Within literature on museums, in design and in human computer interaction (HCI), work exists on the application of co-design or otherwise participatory creative methods in reinterpreting heritage material, recording personal responses to it, co-producing interpretation or otherwise augmenting an exhibition or gallery display (Ciolfi, Bannon & Fernström, 2008; Ciolfi, 2012; Galani et al., 2013). Other work describes the co-production of exhibition materials based on the contribution of local participants. Mason et al. describe a project with a regional municipal art gallery which invited creative responses from community participants, valuing in particular the 'mnemonic, affective, sensory, intellectual and personal dimensions' of their work (2011: 168). Realised partially on digital media in the form of 'touchscreens, projections, sound cones and an interactive map' (2011: 173), this work stood in dialogue with an existing collection which was to be the subject of a redesigned permanent exhibition. This work we bracket separately to the research above because the newly produced items, in our analysis, occupy a kind of ontological duality. They stand both as a form of creative interpretation of and in response to an existing, curated institutional collection but also, crucially, constitute a new collection in their own right. In this sense, the work of Mason et al., while sharing theoretical concerns with other participatory museum practice, departs from it quite radically in the way that it can be seen to compose new grounds for collection building. Our work takes a step further still. In the early stages of our project, we conceived of the grounds for the creation of a new collection independent of a museum setting and broadly independent of direct relationships to existing interpretation. Instead, our work exists in relationship to a heritage site and the people who, in various ways, invest it with meanings. Critically, these are not powerful heritage actors such as local politicians, heritage professionals and scholars, but rather people who live, or have

lived, with the site, or in whose lives and—sometimes—identities, the Walls play an important part. Our particular contribution is to discuss the application of creative co-design methods to conceptualising, producing and organising the foundation of such a new collection.

Project Context

Our research takes place in Istanbul, Turkey and focuses on one of the four areas of a UNESCO World Heritage site.[1] The Theodosian Walls are known more colloquially as the 'Land Walls' to distinguish them from the later sea defences which skirt the historic peninsula. The Land Walls extend around six kilometres across the peninsula defining the ancient rear perimeter of Constantinople and now cut through the contemporary metropolis. Their significant length and imposing physical size cause them to occupy a complex and contradictory space in the life of the city. As is often the case with the ubiquitous, for many they simply drop out of view. Also significant is the wide variety of city districts around the Walls and the diverse and sometimes diasporic make-up of their inhabitants. Alongside a continuous Greek and Armenian presence in the city, there are a variety of communities, including people from Syria and parts of the Arab world, the *bostancı*—allotment gardeners who make their living growing crops by the Walls—as well as the majority Sunni Muslim community, secularists, pigeon fanciers and homeless people – all of whom live in close proximity to the Walls (sometimes *in* the Walls), often in very different socio-economic circumstances. In addition to the picture of current communities, forced displacement has a long and troubling recent history in the city and in communities adjacent to the Walls. Pogroms against the Greek residents of the city in 1955 and intergroup tensions following the invasion of Cyprus in 1974 caused many Greek and Armenian residents of Istanbul to flee their homes. More recently, the forced displacement of Roma communities in 2009 provoked organised responses from local inhabitants, which ultimately failed in their

[1] The 'Historic Areas of Istanbul' includes the city skyline as well as the 'Archaeological Park, at the tip of the Historic peninsula; the Suleymaniye quarter with the Suleymaniye Mosque complex, bazaars and vernacular settlement around it; the Zeyrek area of settlement around the Zeyrek Mosque (the former church of the Pantocrator), and the area along both sides of the Theodosian Land Walls including remains of the former Blachernae Palace' (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, n.dat.). The inscription to the World Heritage List was made in 1985.

fight against a local gentrification which had ethnic undertones, as described vividly by Uysal (2012). To outline adequately the main complexities of contemporary Turkish politics is obviously far beyond the scope of this article. Many, however, will recognise how the conflict between secular and religious identities, between social classes and between ethnicities reaches into many facets of contemporary Turkish social and political life and in many ways is at its most visible in Istanbul because of its demographic, historical and spatial complexities.

Under article five of the convention (UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation [UNESCO], 1972), state parties to the convention must 'adopt a general policy which aims to give the cultural and natural heritage a function in the life of the community' (1972: n. pag.) and typically this involves a participatory and consultative approach to the management of sites. In the case of Istanbul's Historic Areas, however, the lengthy institutional process of developing a site management plan failed by some accounts not only to significantly consult communities with an interest in the Walls, but was also developed independent of reference to scholarship in heritage studies or archaeology being dominated by managerial approaches with some basis in urban planning (Shoup & Zan, 2013). Given the complex demographic with a concern in the site briefly and partially alluded to above, it is all the more troubling that a more considered participatory exercise was not undertaken.

The main sections of the Land Walls themselves were constructed on pre-existing structures in the reign of the emperor Theodosius II in the 5th-century CE and further developed over the subsequent centuries (Kuban, 2012: 49–70). Once considered impenetrable, the Walls were breached in 1453 by the Ottomans led by Sultan Mehmet II, later dubbed '*Fatih*' or 'Conqueror', signalling the fall of Constantinople, the end of the Byzantine city and the beginning of contemporary Istanbul. Despite the long and eventful history of the Walls, it is this event that dominates the heritage narrative as deployed in interpretation along the Walls (**Figure 1**) and in a major new municipal museum (opened in 2009), the Panorama 1453 museum, not far from a section of the Walls.[2] In the museum, the

[2] Notably, the museum commemorates the conquest itself rather than the far longer history of the Walls.

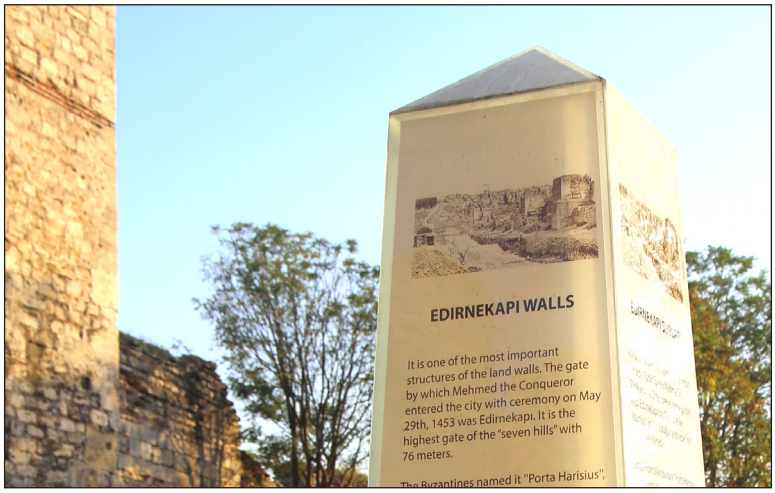

Figure 1: An interpretation sign by Edirnekapı gate. The structure is introduced through the context of the conquest in preference to its structural, strategic, geographical or otherwise historical importance. Photo credit: T. Schofield, 2017.

visitor is placed in the physical position of an attacking Ottoman solider at the moment when the Walls were breached. Thus the Walls are memorialised at the moment of their failure and, perhaps more significantly, at the moment when the historical forebears of some minority groups in the city sustained a catastrophic loss to the attacking forces as Constantinople fell. For some, the triumphalist narrative of this victory is an inspiring tale of technical and tactical ingenuity and resourcefulness. For others, the event is a cultural catastrophe that resonates uncomfortably with divergent contemporary expressions of Turkish nationhood (Bozoğlu, forthcoming).

Cultural Probes for Founding Collections

Much previous literature in HCI and interaction design has explored the use of creative techniques in processes of co-design with participants. Within this, the use of so-called 'cultural probes' in co-design processes has proved to be a provocative and occasionally methodologically controversial technique (Boehner et al., 2007). Cultural probes are collections of creative tasks given to participants in a co-design process. Designed to provoke 'inspirational' responses (Gaver et al., 2004: 22), the original probes were created specifically for a particular set of participants in a

process emphasising the importance of the probes' aesthetics in constituting a form of gift-giving exchange. Particularly pertinent here is the focus on a social, embodied or phenomenological conceptualisation of spaces in these probe designs. Personal mapmaking, creative photographic tasks and place-centred writing activities (such as sending postcards) were all employed in developing a more fragmentary, personal and affective response to the environment. It is for this reason that we adopted this response over other possible co-design methods. In particular, following Ciolfi, '[w]e argue that designing for true participation in cultural heritage requires moving forward by articulating specific features of place and designing for them' (Ciolfi, 2012: 64). As we will describe, place and its personal and social ramifications are key to the development of our project and the early stages of creating a collection.

Since the original ACM *Interactions* article (Gaver, Dunne & Pacenti, 1999), significant subsequent work has expanded the scope and nature of work with probes. Indeed, only eight years after the original work survey, almost 90 papers claim a methodology including the use of cultural probes (Boehner et al., 2007). A glance at the contemporary picture shows cultural probes and their variants being applied in settings as varied as organisation management (Vyas et al., 2008), designing for children's education (Wyeth & Diercke, 2006), exploring the social domestic spaces of elderly people (Leonardi et al., 2009), or working with victims of domestic violence from minority communities in the UK (Clarke, Wright & McCarthy, 2012). Cultural probes have also found some limited uptake as a method for thinking about the past in and out of the contexts of museums or other forms of heritage institutions or sites. Galani et al. used cultural probe techniques in designing for outdoor interpretation of a set of Neolithic sites. Their work, exploring so-called Rock Art (carvings found in parts of rural Northumberland in the north-east of England and elsewhere) sought new avenues to engaging with potential visitors. For these authors the probes were designed to support first-hand engagement, multisensory (and multimodal) experience and self-reflection—in a bid to shift away from perceived 'truths' or generalisations about visitor needs and behaviours at heritage sites. (Galani, Mazel et al., 2013: 190)

Galani et al.'s work was designed to produce more sensitive interpretation strategies where empathy between users and designers would form the basis of a more exploratory approach balancing elements of information and mystery. Schofield et al. (2015, 2017) describe the use of cultural probes in the creation of a new set of linked interfaces to a collection of contemporary poetry. Here a set of annotatable bookmarks allowed users of the archive to leave reflective notes and cross references hidden among the unsorted collection creating opportunities for new connections between items. Claisse et al. adopted cultural probes, cast as 'Creative Packages', in their work reimagining interpretation for a 16th-century house museum in Sheffield, UK (2017). Their work builds on the creative affordances of probes in two distinct ways: first by using creativity as a hook to involve museum staff in a dialogical relationship with designers, and second by using the creative tasks defined as a probe activity as a direct exercise in imagining alternative forms of museum display.

Designing our Probes

Within our project, the cultural probes had two main purposes which were reflexively interdependent: the first was to act as a mediating factor, a basis for a looser and more imaginative discussion with participants than might occur with more traditional ethnographic interview techniques. In an earlier stage of our project, a series of approximately 80 ethnographic interviews (many of which were conducted as walks with routes around the Walls determined by interviewees) had already provided a rich data set. The probes interviews provided an extension, feathering the edges of this activity, and were conducted with existing interviewees from the main ethnography. The second purpose was, as we have said, to focus particularly on personal, social and emotional senses of place. Consequently, our probe designs were calibrated specifically to evoke responses tied to identifiable parts of the Land Walls. This was not only because of the particular relationships between heritage, place and lived experience that we hoped to discuss, but also because a later output of our project was to be a locative media installation which would associate the co-produced content of our new collection with interactions in public space. Full discussion of the planned installation itself is beyond the scope of this article but it will suffice to say here that we have a particular interest in the quality of spatial interactions in public

space away from typical typologies defined by common locative technologies such as hotspots, geofencing and so forth. During the process of conducting our cultural probes interviews, we came to acknowledge the value of the probes in suggesting oblique strategies for the future co-production of personal stories. In some sense then, the focus of our article here was a corollary benefit. In the course of listening to participants talk about their reactions to the probes, a series of related concerns and refrains suggested to us that they might form the basis of future activities with these or other participants.

Probes Study Design

The participants in our project were drawn from a diverse cross section of Istanbuli society. To identify participants, we drew on a larger pool of participants in our research project who had been the subject of other ethnographic interviews conducted by project colleagues. This broader pool had been identified with a variety of approaches. Project researchers had approached community organisations, residents' groups, NGOs and also adopted snowballing and word-of-mouth as well as chance encounters to convene a diverse if not representative sample of involved parties. Our probes study was relatively small, comprising five interviews with a total of eight participants in three cases individually, and in two cases in groups of two and three respectively. Prior to the interviews researchers had presented the probes packages to participants. The packages contained instructions on how to use them. We met approximately one week later to discuss their responses in cafés, homes and businesses around Istanbul, all within a short distance of the Land Walls themselves. Interviews lasted between an hour and more than five, and were conducted in Turkish with the non-Turkish-speaking researchers being assisted by colleagues translating into English.

The probe packets contained five probes (**Figure 2**). We gave these the following titles for our own reference only: 'A tour of the Walls for someone who died before you were born'; 'Mapping the Walls' experiences'; 'If the Walls could talk'; 'Sounds from around the Walls'; and 'Flipbook of dated cards'. Most participants chose to complete three to four of the five possible activities.

Learning from the Probes Interviews

We have described how our cultural probes had two original functions within our research project—providing rich interview data with an emphasis on creativity and imagination and also provoking particular reflection on public space. We have also

Figure 2: Part of the complete set of cultural probes. Photo credit: T. Schofield, 2017.

mentioned that in the course of conducting our interviews we encountered a number of factors which suggested the value of these probe activities in conceptualising activities to form the basis of a new collection. Rather than a more holistic analysis of the interview material then, we will instead focus on a number of key discussion outcomes within the probe interviews that shaped the design of our future co-production activities. These are discussed below, activity by activity.[3]

A Diary of Sounds

In our original set of probes, we included a 'sounds diary'. This was a small notebook, visible at the far right of **Figure 2**, in which we asked people to record sounds they had heard and where they had heard them. We also invited people to take simple mobile phone field recordings around their neighbourhoods and suggested some free apps for them to use. We had an interest in the sonic environment of the Walls, founded in our earlier field visits in which we spent significant amounts of time walking in both guided and unstructured routes along and near the Walls. These walks had instilled in us a close interest in the sensory experience of the Walls within the city due to the often dusty, cacophonic, and visually and olfactorily varied urban environment. Our original probes pack contained five distinct activities and it was

[3] Names have been substituted.

always our assumption that some of the activities would prove less interesting to participants than others. Indeed, the probes were presented to people from the outset as a set of possibilities from among which they could choose to engage with all or some according to their interest. The sounds diary itself was an activity which consistently was left incomplete (indeed none of the participants used it, perhaps thanks to our suggestion to download and use an unfamiliar app), but responses to other probes suggested that a focus on the sonic environment of the Walls and in particular the perception that this was in an impoverished state in comparison to the past was a recurrent theme in our interviews. Among the sounds mentioned as lost were: the chirruping of cicadas in summertime, the laughter of children playing games in the streets, the call of milk sellers, the cry of seagulls that no longer came inland due to the extension of Istanbul's shore with artificially reclaimed land, and the quiet spaces of a city now overrun with traffic. These findings are of particular significance considering that the relevance of auditory (and other sensory) facets of memory remains under-theorised in heritage studies. Recently, however, Sather-Wagstaff (2017) has noted the significance of 'experiential, senses-inclusive meaning-making' as a challenge to 'purely cognitive forms of knowledge construction' (Sather-Wagstaff, 2017) supporting our rationale for the choice of a cultural probes method in this context. Meanwhile, Butler notes that '[m]odern life, with its multi-sensory bombardment of car engines, fans and motors [has] progressively transformed the soundscape of everyday life in all but the most remote areas (2017).

In other answers from participants, we were struck by the overtly sensory nature of people's recollection encouraged, we think, by the probes' design. In particular, one probe (a mapping activity in which we asked people to design a walking tour route for a person from the past) provoked responses where these sensory features were foregrounded. Although we had intended the activity to promote a sense of connectedness between the participant in the present and individuals from the more distant past, most chose to interpret this activity for someone from within their living memory, a cherished community member, an uncle, or an old friend. The places and spaces described were often small-scale, intimate but significant parts of their neighbourhoods—a garden, a cemetery plot, a market. Responses to this probe

suggested that it had evoked strikingly visual (the bright colours of recently dyed headscarves, drying in fields adjacent to the Walls) or olfactory (the smell of the horse market at Topkapı) recollections rooted in the local spaces of people's present or past communities. The prevalence of accounts of auditory aspects of experience, or of identifiable individual sounds marked a clear path to us for thinking about co-production activities focussing around sounds and their role in thinking and talking about the past.

If the Walls Could Talk

In another activity, we asked participants to compose a letter to a specific part of the Walls, building on the common expression 'if the Walls could talk'. We provided writing materials and an envelope on which we asked participants to address their letter to particular towers, stretches of Wall, gates or areas. Of all the probe designs we produced, this was arguably the most successful in evoking personal connections between the present and the past and consequently, we saw potential in adapting this activity for use in the future co-production. One participant from the Greek community, Kostas, wrote his letter to part of the Walls near to the area where the invading Ottoman army is thought to have finally breached the defences. Kostas' question to the Walls expressed a desire to have them bear witness to the truth (or untruth) of a historical event that he then related strongly to contemporary issues in Turkey. Kostas asked the Walls whether, in fact, the conquest had been an inside job so-to-speak (a well-known theory). He speculated as to whether this betrayal, if indeed it had taken place, was for financial reasons, perhaps a poor citizen lured by the promise of riches, or for political ones, perhaps a high-ranking leader of the city trying to cement their place in the new city which they saw as an inevitability. Kostas related these speculations to the contemporary and historical demographic make-up of areas of the city in an account which wound in descriptions of the city along the Walls at the time of the conquest and now, noting the suspicion in which some areas were held.

This direct bringing together of the past and present was also a feature of the answers to this activity from two other participants, interviewed together. Yusuf and Erdal were former residents of the region of Sulukule. Sulukule is a region within

the municipality of Fatih (which covers the historic peninsula) and close to the Land Wall gate of Charisius, Edirnekapı. Building on events through the 1990s, the area was comprehensively demolished around 2009–10 with many of the mostly Roma inhabitants being forcibly relocated to distant suburbs (Uysal, 2012: 15), making way for a modern housing development (for more, see Foggo 2007; Robins, 2011; Uysal, 2012). The gentrification of this area which had functioned as an entertainment district was a catastrophic loss of both home and livelihood for many in the Roma community. We establish this background briefly here to contextualise the contributions of these two participants which by their own accounts related strongly to these events. Their letters to the Walls also took the form of two questions. Yusuf set the scene in his letter by evoking an anecdote from the conquest. In this story, Sultan Mehmet II, on entering the city, reads a *firman*, a proclamation or edict, to the assembled people wherein he makes assurances that all citizens regardless of religious creed will enjoy the Sultan's justice. Yusuf wished to ask the Walls if indeed this event had taken place and further wished to ask Mehmet II himself his opinion on the justice of what had happened to Yusuf's community, which existed in the municipality bearing his name. Erdal's question meanwhile related to another vignette set in the immediate aftermath of the conquest. In this story, an old man has been imprisoned in a well after prophesying the coming fall of Constantinople. On entering the city for the first time, Sultan Mehmet encounters the man and frees him. The man then relates the final part of his prophecy to the Sultan telling him that although the city was bought with blood, it would be retained only with gold. The significance of this story for Erdal was also in its relationship to contemporary expressions of religious justice. Erdal wished to know whether these events had actually happened as told, because of the picture they paint of the Sultan's justice and the support they provided (if true) for his understanding of justice under Islam.

Both Yusuf and Erdal's engagement with this activity represented an exceptionally thought-provoking set of data bringing together personal reflection on historical narratives, speculation about the past and a socio-political perspective on historical narrative. Fuller details of these will be forthcoming in other outlets. Here, though,

we wish to focus specifically on the implications of this work for conceptualising and arranging a set of activities building on these preliminary findings to facilitate a new collection of born-digital material.

Discussion: Planning the Configuration of New Collections

We have noted above that the cultural probes activities we conducted had two initial aims: to collect rich, personal interview data emphasising the speculative and imaginative qualities of memory; and to inform the design of a locative media experience placing born-digital material in public space. In the course of conducting these activities, we came to the proposition that we could adapt or extend them as a set of framing activities to help conceptualise and organise our co-production activities.

Our project had, from the outset, the commitment to produce a set of videos, audio, photography and other media. This activity was cast as *co-production* following Mason et al. (2011) and came with a commitment to valorise the participation and contribution of both the production professionals (camera operators, directors, sound engineers and photographers) and community participants, as well as acknowledge the agency of the researchers in playing a part in configuring the work. In any such combination of interests, the business of participation is messy, contingent and subject to contestation over the 'correct' balance of freedom and control over the material to be produced. Our contribution here is less to provide correctives or recommendations to the 'right' kind of participation, but to suggest that explicitly creative and speculative activities of the sort encouraged by cultural probes work might provide a productive framing for co-production work in heritage settings. Cultural probes, if designed appropriately, can, like other forms of design prototyping, work to extend provisionality through a design process allowing people to 'interpret, react to and elaborate upon the ideas they present' (Gaver, 2011: 1551). The attraction of such techniques then is that they may provide just enough structure to focus an activity, relate it to others and improve its intelligibility while maintaining a kind of productive looseness that leaves space for people to think freely and work imaginatively. Our use of cultural probe techniques in this project built on the experiences of one of the co-authors of this article, Christopher Whitehead, who was part of the research team in the project described

in Mason et al. (2011). He reported that in some cases, too loose a framework for the co-production had resulted in some participants feeling confused or overwhelmed by possibilities and that this had led to some production outputs feeling unfocused. One possible remedy to such an issue of clarity might be to assign a more strongly authorial role to the production professionals, but evidently such a course of action would strongly affect the claim to participation in the activity and negate some of the positive outcomes associated with giving agency to production participants. This is part of the constant balancing act in any co-production project that seeks both to valorise and protect participants' agency while developing high-quality 'outputs' to be sited or circulated in public. Our contention is that cultural probes (and perhaps other creative design techniques from RtD practice) provide an opportunity to negotiate questions of agency and authorship through the production process itself. We further speculate that the unfamiliarity of the task to both parties, participant and producer may, notwithstanding the professional experience of the producer and the varied familiarity with the creative practice of the participant, provide a leveling effect by introducing a framework that is foreign yet accessible to both.

For our upcoming co-production period, we have defined a number of activities, loose briefs for producers and participants to work through and around. Among these are two activities resulting directly from our cultural probes work. 'Stand-ins for Sound' and 'If the Walls Could Talk' now recast as simply 'A Letter to the Walls'. These activities build on findings from our initial cultural probes work and are intended to establish the co-production around a number of key points of interest described in our conclusions below. In 'A Letter to the Walls', the project participants identify an area of the Walls to which they will direct their question or at which they will relate their statement. The film makers, photographers and sound recordists will work with the participants to develop their idea for presentation helping them to make their points in an engaging way that is accessible for others. By introducing a minimal prop, the letter, we hope to provide a framework for the activity which reproduces some of the features we noted in our original design activities, notably encouraging speculation, relating historical narratives to contemporary experience and anchoring stories to places drawing on the surrounding architecture to help participants and audiences

envision senses of the past. In 'Stand-ins for Sound', the process will be two-staged. In the first stage, the producers will draw on existing interview data from participants and conduct informal interviews to identify sounds from the Walls' environment that are significant to them. In particular, lost sounds (as described above) and sounds particular to specific areas of the city will be of special interest. A sound engineer will work to recreate sounds for individual participants, and in the second stage these will be played back together in public space as the participant and producers listen on. Reflection on this experience will form the basis of the resulting interviews on film.

Conclusion

At the beginning of this article we observed the variety of motivations and circumstances for the birth of new collections, born-digital and otherwise, and noted some difficulties in their conception and organisation. We propose that creative design activities such as cultural probes may be adapted to a number of interesting new applications in this context not only as an ethnographically-oriented design activity but also as inspiration for future points of interest and possible activities around which to build participatory co-production. It is explicitly not our claim that the use of techniques like ours will radically reconfigure the dynamics of power present in the interactions between institutions, community participants (and in our case media production professionals), but we do suggest that the building of creative framings for such production may be conducive to at least a more distributed form of creativity with clearly attributable agency to each of the three parties. We, the researchers, would be responsible for establishing the method, conducting initial activities and interviews and defining the basic activities. The participants would be responsible for considering their responses and identifying their value to audiences. The producers themselves would have the responsibility to use their professional knowledge to reconcile the aims of the previous two parties in a format which would strengthen the contribution of the resulting media.

We further suggest that activities like ours are particularly relevant to the co-production of personal reflective narratives on heritage sites due to the ways in which they appear to foster a number of interrelated features relevant to heritage research. These include the following:

- Sensory remembering: the activities we undertook and those we suggest for future co-production seem to encourage particularly senses-rich accounts of the past. As we have described, 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.

In identifying these features, we extend existing work in design and heritage from a focus on co-designing and co-producing new forms of heritage interpretation to presenting our method as an early recommendation for building new collections or born-digital material. This also responds closely to a number of pressing issues in heritage practice. Firstly, as indicated, imperatives and obligations for community engagement with official heritage attach to sites with UNESCO World Heritage status, and activity of the kind discussed in this paper offers a model for inspiration and application more generally, particularly in relation to urban heritage sites to which different meanings are attached. Secondly, the co-productions reflect the ways in which tangible and intangible heritages (respectively, the Walls and the longstanding cultural practices that relate to them) are intertwined, helping to dismantle a binary idea of heritage ontology (Deacon, 2004: 311) that is

misrepresentative and liable to compartmentalise and segregate phenomena that can be better understood relationally. Thirdly, our work responds to the Council of Europe's Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society of 2005. Seen as a corrective to longstanding theories of value embedded within the World Heritage Convention of 1972, which valorises above all the historic fabric of sites and makes relatively little reference to their social dimensions in the present, the Faro Convention:

> Emphasises the important aspects of heritage as they relate to human rights and democracy. It promotes a wider understanding of heritage and its relationship to communities and society. The Convention encourages us to recognise that objects and places are not, in themselves, what is important about cultural heritage. They are important because of the meanings and uses that people attach to them and the values they represent. (Council of Europe, 2005)

In this context, the activity we have described is a novel way to follow through on Faro ideals to 'put people and human values at the centre of an enlarged and cross-disciplinary concept of cultural heritage' and to recognise that heritage is not singular but plural, precisely because it signifies differently for different people and groups. If it is the meanings, uses and values of heritage that make it matter, then it is necessary for us to identify and experiment with ways of organising, collecting and publicly presenting these, in their plurality, through sensitive, ethical and creative research design.

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Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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