

# Digi-Mapping: Creative Placemaking with Psychogeography

Tanis Grandison  
Edinburgh Napier University  
Edinburgh, UK  
[t.grandison@napier.ac.uk](mailto:t.grandison@napier.ac.uk)

Tom Flint  
Edinburgh Napier University  
Edinburgh, UK  
[t.flint@napier.ac.uk](mailto:t.flint@napier.ac.uk)

Kirstie Jamieson  
Edinburgh Napier University  
Edinburgh, UK  
[k.jamieson@napier.ac.uk](mailto:k.jamieson@napier.ac.uk)

*Creative placemaking. psychogeography. children.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Tanis Grandison is a lecturer in the School of Computing at Edinburgh Napier University. Her research considers how digital media and technology can be used to facilitate creative placemaking, critical and community heritage practices. Central to her research is the use of Psychogeography to elicits site specific responses to place.

Tom Flint is a lecturer at Edinburgh Napier University. Tom's work examines cultural experiences. His creative technology practice is in collaboration with artists, helping to bring their context into digital technology. Tom also works with arts organisations to contextually digitise collections.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE WORK

This exhibit consists of four large (2m x 1.5 m) tactile talking maps that were co-created with primary school children in Wester Hailes Edinburgh, UK. In a collaborative partnership with local arts organisation WHALE Arts, the Digi-Mapping project sought to understand how young participants felt and expressed meaning about their local area.

These Digi-Maps represent different areas of Wester Hailes. They demonstrate meanings shared by participants combined with their visual representations of their local area. The maps have been made interactive using Bare Conductive TouchBoards. When pictures drawn by participants are pressed, they trigger recordings of memories, sounds and feelings shared and constructed by the young participants.

The area of Wester Hailes lies approximately 5 miles West of Edinburgh city centre. Built in the 1960's this brutalist housing scheme has consistently suffered from high unemployment and crime. According to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (2020) Wester Hailes is classed as one of the most deprived areas of Scotland.

The Digi-Mapping project was an opportunity for children to counter these negative reputations of their local area by sharing their feelings and experiences.

The Digi-Mapping workshops ran in each of the three primary schools in Wester Hailes. A total of 101 participants took part in the project aged between 8-11. The project ran in three primary schools, although four maps were created as there were two year groups in one school. The project ran over six two-hour sessions within class time.

Our research employed the methods of map-making and psychogeography to unpack and explore meanings about place (Caquard and Griffin 2018; Cochrane, Corbett and Keller, 2014; della Dora, 2009; Richardson, 2015). Video was recorded of the participants while taking part in the sessions. Video ethnography revealed collaboration and modes of sharing. Digital media tools such as audio recorders, tablets and Bare Conductive TouchBoards with laptops were employed during the sessions. Bare Conductive Touchboards were deemed most appropriate for this project as:

- They are relatively cheap, costing £55
- They are created with an audio focus – but are capable of other functions
- They do not require learning a programming language to start using them making them ideal for workshops with time limits.



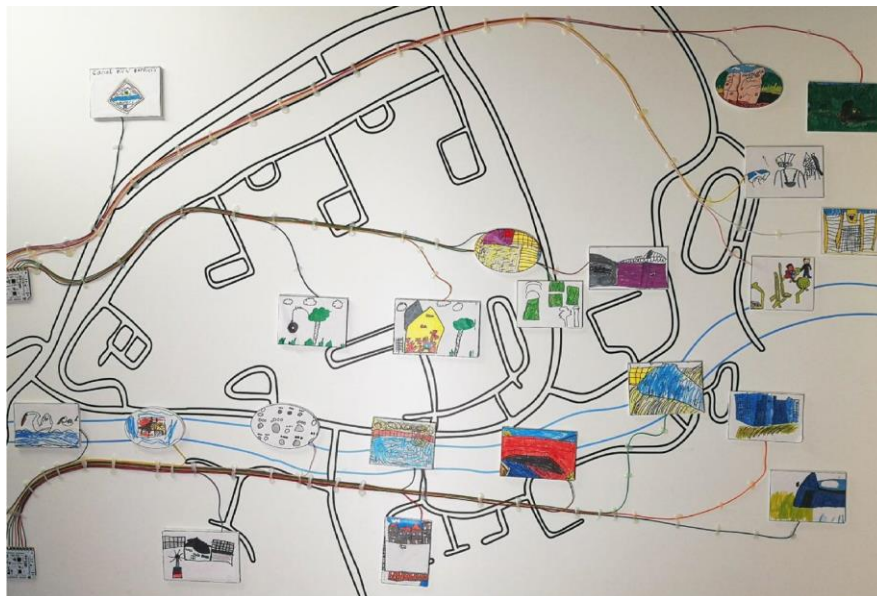
Figure 1 Digi-Map of Clovenstone



Figure 2 Digi-Map of Sighthill



**Figure 3** Digi-Map of Canal View Class A



**Figure 4** Digi-Map of Canal View Class B

In week one participants were introduced to the project followed by a short experiment discussing the psychogeography of the classroom. In groups participants were given large sheets of paper and asked to draw their walk to school from memory noting routes and objects that were striking. The week concluded with telling the facilitators what their top meaningful places were in the local area. Considering this, a psychogeography walk was planned for week two.

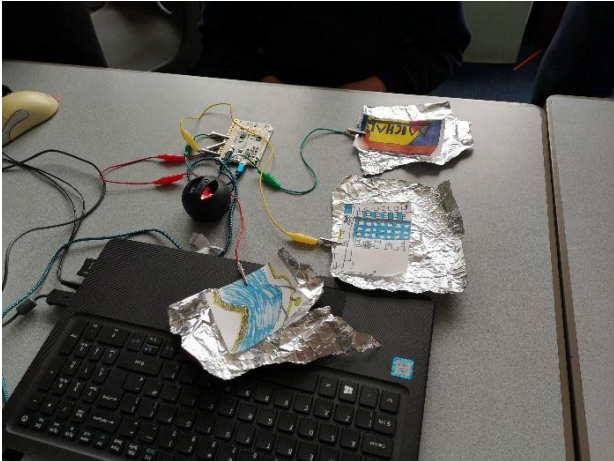
In week two, participants were given audio recorders and tablets while on a walk of the local area to points that were considered meaningful. The participants were encouraged to record stories, memories,

feelings and sounds along the way and to capture images of their walk.

Week three was where participants were introduced to the Bare Conductive TouchBoards and encouraged to listen to their recordings, gathered the previous week. Participants were challenged with making a drawing and making it interactive with sound by using tin foil and copper tape.

Activities in week four challenged participants to create drawings for the final map. In week five the groups of participants were given the task to choose sounds for the drawings created in week four and make them interactive. The images and sounds

chosen by participants in this session were the final content created for the map.



**Figure 5** Making Interactive Pictures

Between weeks five and six the research team built the final map. There was not enough time to do this in class and involved using potentially dangerous materials such as glue guns and soldering irons. The map also needed a considered aesthetic and robustness for display at different community and national events.

In the final week, participants got to see and interact with the final Digi-Map. The participants were also asked to complete a feedback form for the project. Verbatim examples of this feedback included:

- “I got to be imagining”.
- “made me want to learn science.”
- “the technology was fun and to know new places”.
- “extrordnery fun”.
- “Phanomanal”.

The wider research project sought to determine a framework for engaging in creative placemaking using digital media tools. From analysis of the Digi-Mapping project a framework consisting of 4Ps was established to guide practitioners:

- Participatory
- Polyvocal
- Performative
- Playful

The 4Ps framework is fully elaborated on in Grandison, Flint and Jamieson, (in press).

There have been calls by Courage and McKeown (2019) and Zicter (2020) that for creative placemaking’s continued success, a field of practice and methods needs to be better established. The 4Ps framework contributes to this call and further enhances creative placemaking’s practice and methodological approach.

### 3. REFERENCES

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