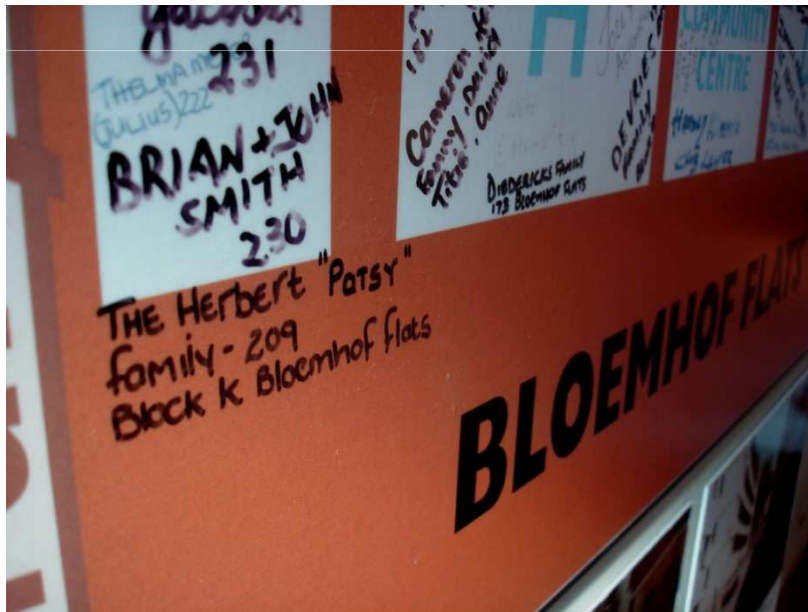


THIS IS MY STORY:

Partaking in cultural heritage creation at the District Six Museum



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Collaborative Visual
Computing Lab

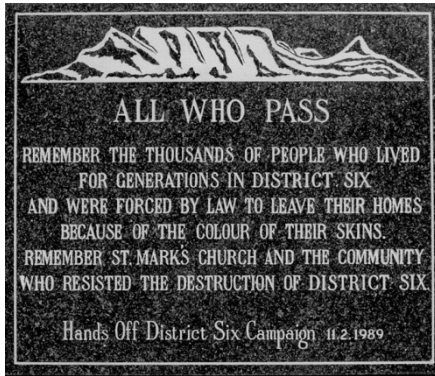
University of Cape Town

PhD student

ethnographic study

- Conducted over 3 months in 2007 at the District Six Museum, Cape Town
- Observing storytelling by two ex-residents as a means of informing the design of virtual storytelling systems
- This presentation
 - is about the powerful, non-digital use of user generated content at museum.
 - probably has very little to with my PhD!





district six background

- A vibrant cosmopolitan Cape Town inner-city suburb which was declared a whites-only area in 1966
- Over the following 11 years residents were forced to relinquish their properties to the government and were moved the Cape Flats into racially segregated 'townships'
- Almost all the buildings in District Six were destroyed and the land stands largely empty to this day





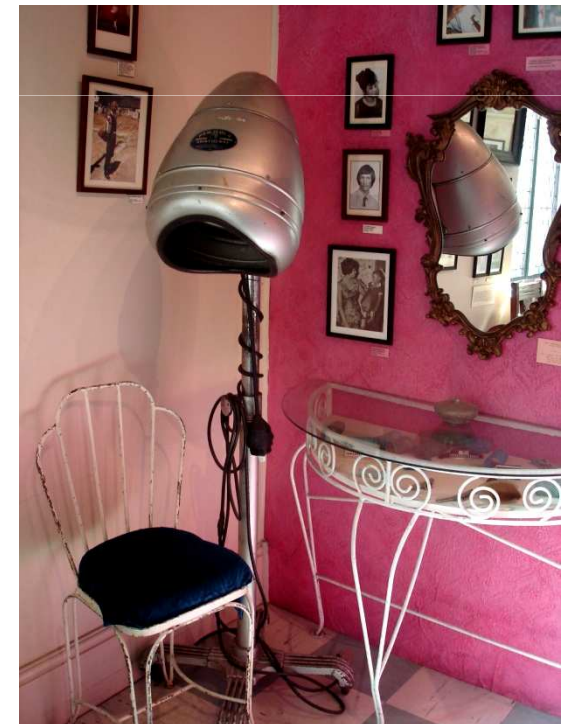
the district six museum

- Housed in a former Methodist Church on the edge of District Six
- An upstairs and downstairs level
- Exhibits focus on life in District Six and the history of forced removals



a community museum

Objects on display at the District Six Museum were largely donated by ex-residents



The objects often 'contain' stories of ex-residents – explicitly and implicitly



"We would play 'evergreen'
People wanted the bands
If you tried to get too jazz
'Moenie jazz speel nie m
But the highlight of the e
Then you have the peopl
In the early days there w
but in my day, people mo
and the Commercial."



‘it was modelled on people’s stories’

- Peggy Delport, museum founder and curator
 - The museum was not modelled on anything else, it was modelled on people’s stories. It started with empty space to which people brought stories and artefacts
 - The museum is very much about voice and testimony
 - There is a tactile craft aspect e.g. banners, inscriptive surfaces and direct engagement with the space, which is intended to provide a framework for interpretation
 - Organic process, layering of voices to give a dynamic feel and create contested space



‘i used to live here’

- Aerial Map of the former District Six area
- Ex-residents visiting the museum took to writing their names where they used live on the map's covering with Koki's
- Names are transferred onto the map when the covering is changed



‘as if *psychologically* wanting to reclaim’

“when ex District Sixers came to view the museum, they saw the map on the floor. Then they asked for pens, then they started writing their names down. *As if psychologically* wanting to reclaim that space where they used to live before.” (Joe)

'i'm going to show you my house'

Noor: "Ok, now my house-"

Child: "Over there? (*points to the map*)"

Noor: "No. I'm going to show you now, wait (*goes down on his haunches and points on the map*). My house was on the corner of Caledon Street and Rosberg Lane, you see Rosberg Lane?"

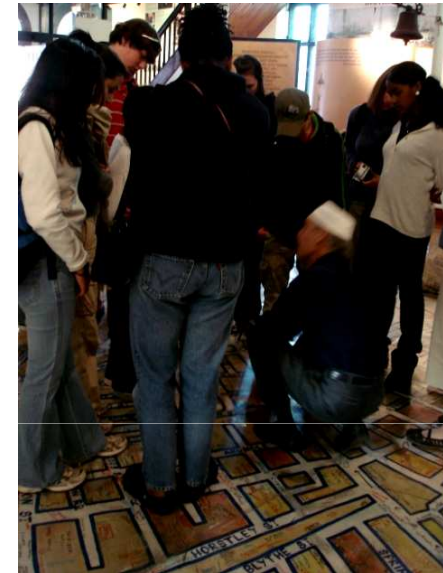
Child: "Yes."

Another Child: "(*reads*) Rosberg Lane."

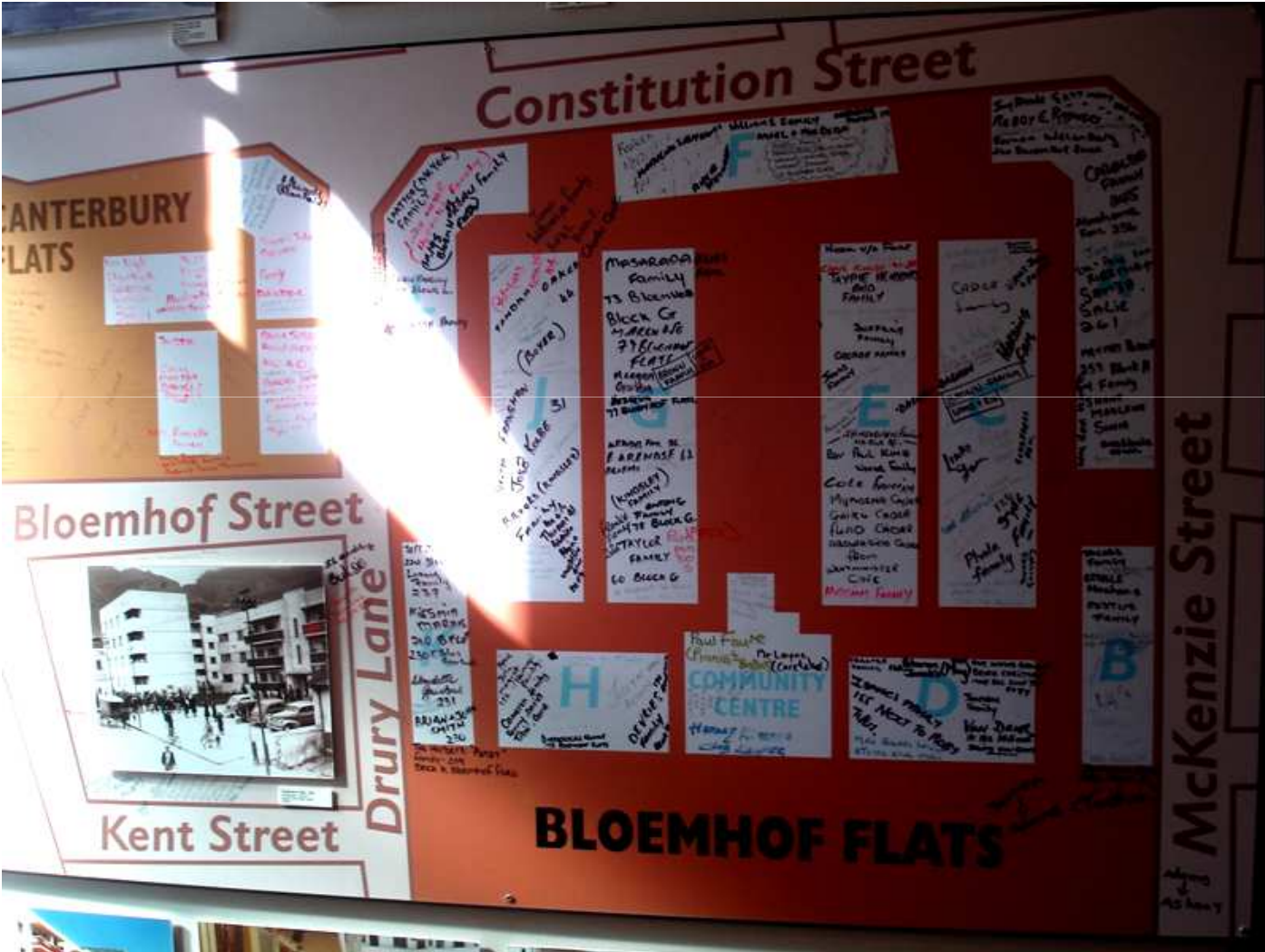
Noor: "Ok, (*pause*) you see in red there? (*points to his name written on the map*)"

Child: "Hmm"

Noor: "That's my name there. Ok, and this is what people do when they come in, they will write their names where they used to live. That's all the writing on the map."



‘i used to live here’



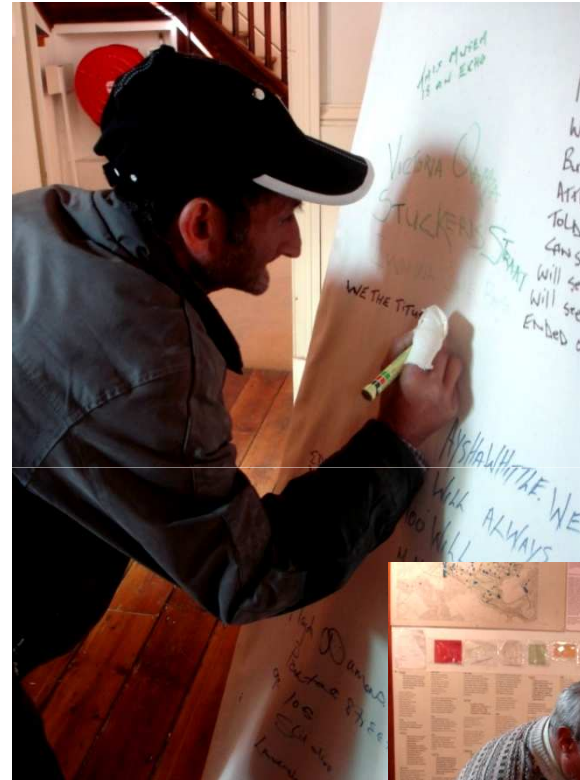


Bloemhof Flats was a large apartment complex which many people lived including Joe



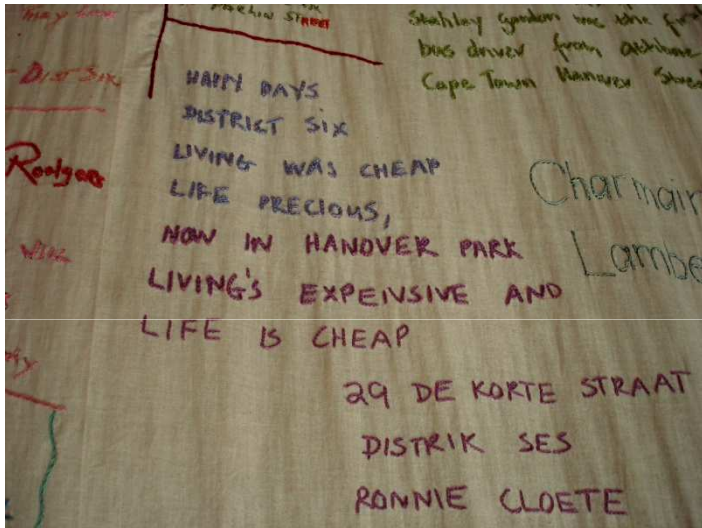
'we the Titus family...'

- Memory cloth on which messages, names and reflections are written in koki and later embroidered
- A cloth for ex-residents, their family and visitors
- Memory cloths are being embroidered daily in the museum



'happy days'

The memory cloth forms part of the tours



‘what a powerful experience...’

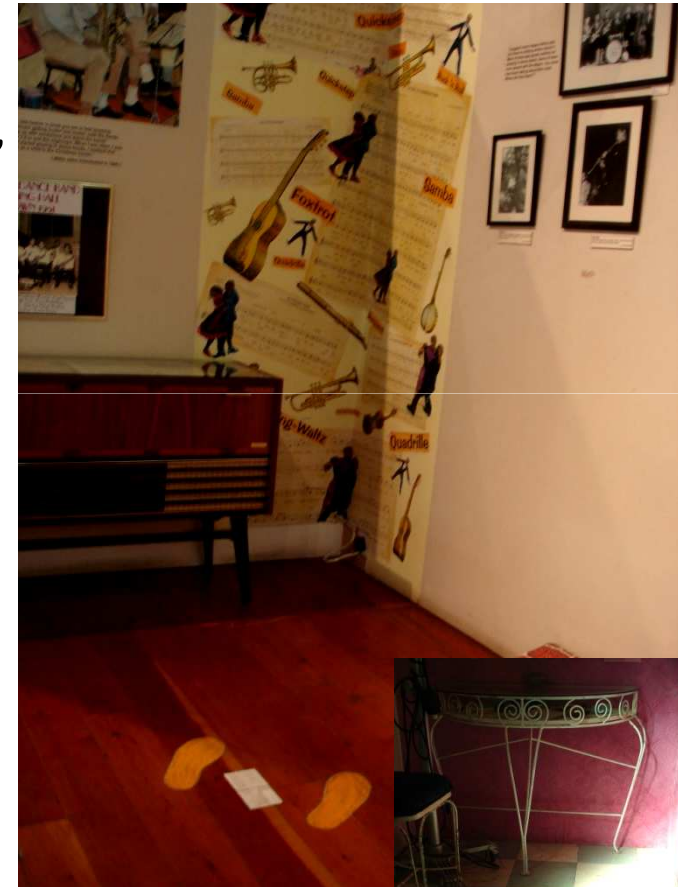
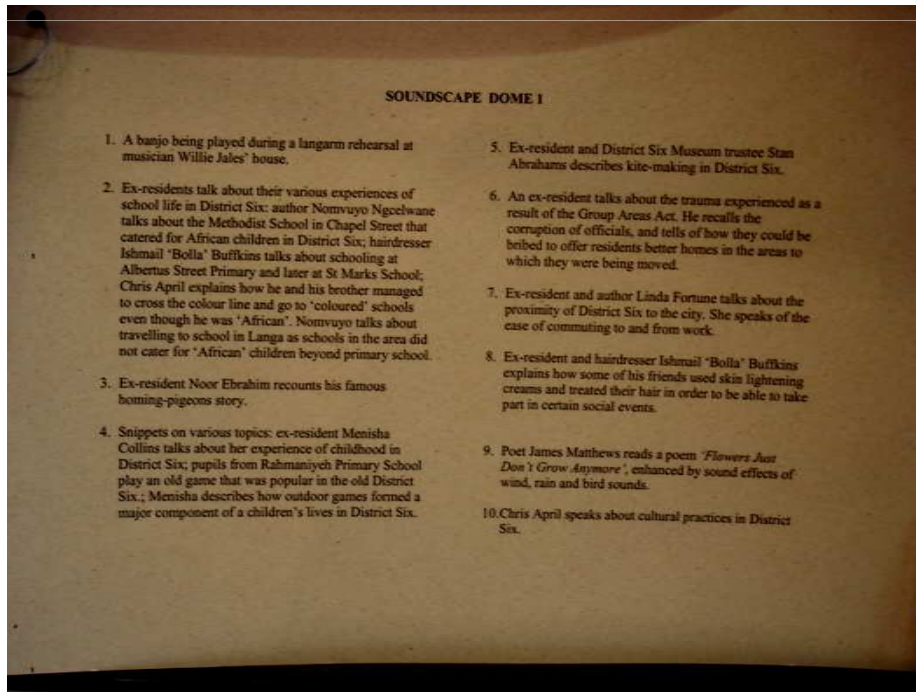
- “I never knew...”
- “My experience at the museum has touched me...”
- “Well done South Africa...”
- “...such inspiring stories”
- “The Meadow Ridge School would like to thank...”



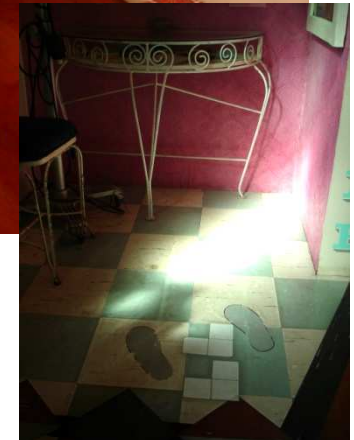


‘flowers just don’t grow anymore’

Sound dome installations playing ‘langarm’ music, poetry readings, stories about the barbershops, childhood and everyday life



stand here



user generated content (UGC)

“... a shift among some media organizations from creating content to creating the facilities and framework for non-media professionals (i.e. 'ordinary people') to publish their own content in prominent places.” (wikipedia)

- Conversational media vs. Packaged goods media
- Active, participatory, creative audience
- Largely seen as a digital, on-line activity

UGC at the District Six Museum

- The District Six Museum uses highly accessible, tangible 'technologies'
 - Donating objects and photographs
 - Koki on inscriptive surfaces
 - Voice recording
- During the museum's early days contributions were filtered and structured by curators or experts

UGC at the District Six Museum

- Some contributions shape visitors' experience of the museum while other's go practically unnoticed
 - e.g. The names on maps vs. memory cloths in storage
- Some contributions are ongoing while others have stagnated
 - e.g. Memory cloths vs. Sound library

UGC at the District Six Museum

- Pros:
 - Strong personal points of view
 - No technical expertise required by users
 - Natural modes of interaction such as talking and writing
 - Complex preservation is done 'post-hoc' e.g. transcribing names onto the map and embroidering the memory cloths

UGC at the District Six Museum

- Cons
 - Storage and lack of physical space
 - Lack of presenting ongoing contributions via the memory cloth
 - Subjective selection of some material to fit (albeit loose) structures and political histories

some questions

- Can we mimic the ease of tangible contribution digitally? (Touch tables, digital voice recording, mobile phones?)
- Which parts of complex organising or preservation can be done 'post-hoc'?
- What is the role of experts in filtering and moderating UCG contributions?
- Archiving of reams of UCG while sustaining sustaining contributions?

Your thoughts and questions