

Building Resilient Communities to overcome Diaspora through Producing and Sharing Immigrant Stories: Technology Design to Enhance Resilience

Shichao Zhao

School of Design and Creative Arts, Loughborough University, s.zhao@lboro.ac.uk

Additional Keywords and Phrases: COVID-19, Stigmatisation, Immigrant stories, Community resilience

1 ABSTRACT

British-Chinese communities in the United Kingdom have experienced an increase in discriminatory behaviour with other communities due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the stigmatisation it has brought about as a result of the speculated COVID-19 origins, thus, hindering the way in which British-Chinese immigrants express and demonstrate their cultural identities and having significant impact on not individual wellbeing, but also the communities, as an ethnic minority group. A pilot study, based on a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, explored how interactive technology can help British-Chinese immigrants express and demonstrate their cultural identities comfortably – this pilot study provided insight into how a PAR approach, combined with co-design activities, can prove beneficial in such a setting and enable participants to discuss their wellbeing, social issues and mental dilemmas confidently in a way that forms community bonding and in turn, community resilience, that stigmatisation may have originally taken away. There were various outcomes from this study, the first was the generation of an Arduino-based (and tested) interactive prototype developed through co-designing with participants (see Figure 1). Secondly, the key findings from this pilot study were that PAR combined with co-design activities can organically generate insight and offer researchers the opportunity to accurately identify the positionality of design strategies and solutions going forward. Additionally, the approach enabled the building of a safe space that helped earn trust and allowed freedom of speech – which motivated participants to open up about how discriminatory events and vandalism had impacted their wellbeing, or how their family life had become impacted as a result of cross-generational family members not being able to understand their mental dilemmas or find the forum to communicate them. Furthermore, it proved to be an efficient strategy that takes a bottom-up approach in expanding from small-scale neighbourhood impacts to larger scale societal impacts. Technology design and interactive technologies, alongside the correct approach are key to building resilient communities. Thus, there is scope to adopt this proven approach in building resilience within other communities impacted heavily by discriminatory events, stigmatisation and marginalisation, and thus facilitating the opportunity to improve community wellbeing.

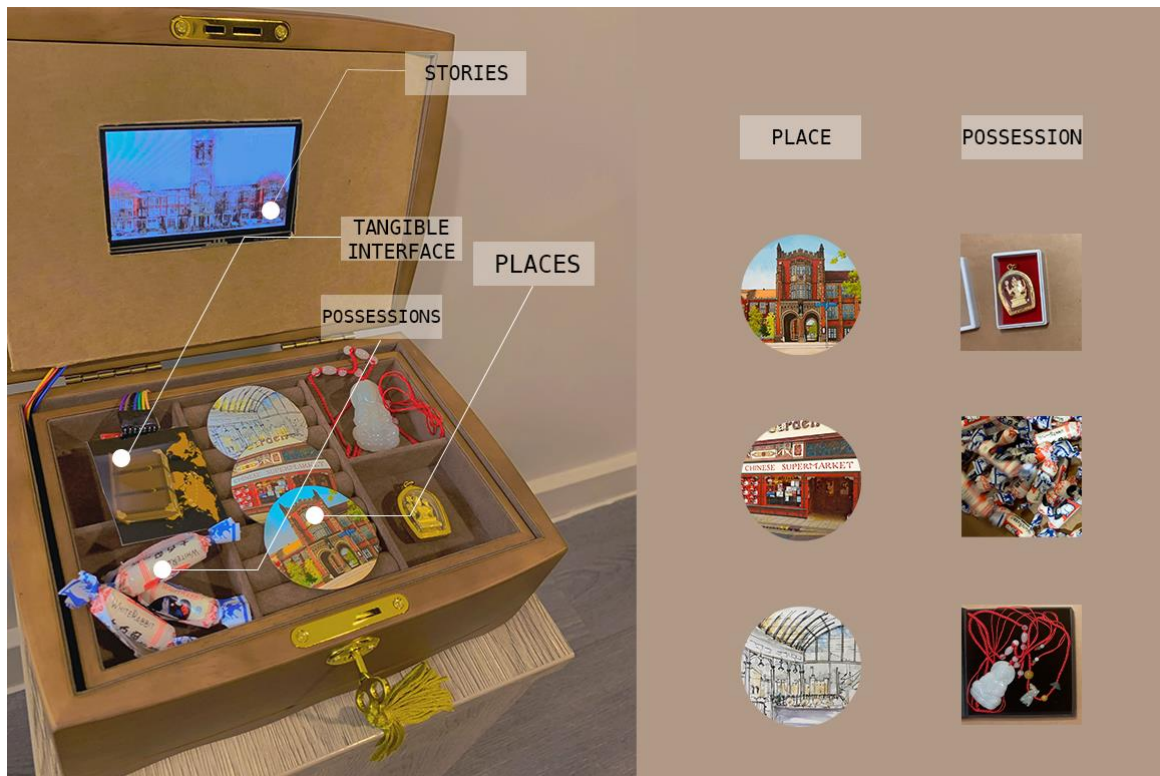


Figure 1: The contents of the 'Treasure Chest,' alongside the relevant places and possessions.