

# Heritage from the Pocket

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# Heritage from the Pocket, *Imagine IC, Amsterdam*

Imagine IC is a network, active in and from the Amsterdam “Bijlmer” area. It is a metropolitan mix of people, and of an archive, a museum and a conversation spot about everyday life in the neighbourhood. We at Imagine IC appreciate tangible and intangible elements from our own place and time and presents them as additions to urban and national collections, archives and inventories. Imagine IC identifies what matters in people’s present-day urban lives and investigates how this touches all of us.



Youngsters are also part of the network. On the basis of themes, they document and present the items that are of crucial importance to them. In “Let’s Party”, for example. For this project, DJs, party labels and individual partygoers shared some 12,000 digitally-born documents about their party experiences. They opened up their “pocket archives”: the collections of images, sounds and texts we all make and keep on our mobile phones, as well as those we share and receive via our phones on Facebook and other social media.

**How does one track down intangible heritage that is so “everyday” that nobody notices it, heritage that is being practised by society at large?**

In the interactive archive installation “Let’s Party”, we made 900 documents accessible to the public. Imagine IC shares its residence with the public library. In our joint house, “everybody” could select items from the various party styles and phases to compile an exciting event of their own. You could choose parties you would never frequent in real life, so as to

now participate in the attribution of meaning to them after all. Strange beat? Recognizable ritual? At every party, arms go up in the air when the mood is right!

## COHESION IN TIMES OF BUBBLES

In an educational programme, “Let’s Party” focused on students in intermediate vocational education. Imagine IC promotes the understanding that heritage is not simply out there. It is something we make. And the more people take part in making it, the more



valuable it becomes. That, and the view that heritage is a potential cause of friction, that the negotiation about the question which music and rituals we choose from our party culture does not only provide us with heritage from our own time, but also with insights into other people’s lives. Handy for cohesion in times of bubbles!

Youngsters were given the opportunity to not only add their (positive or negative) appreciation of presented items to already-given meanings, but also include their own pocket archive items. Their enthusiasm to do so inspired the spin-off “In the Pocket”. In this project, they annotated a selection from the older (viz., dating from 2014) “Let’s Party” collection with up-to-date pocket archive items and shifting meanings. In addition, we zoomed in some more on the nature of heritage and how it is made.

Our contemporary, metropolitan heritage practice presents us with specific challenges. Some of those address the methodology of intangible heritage that emerges from the UNESCO



Convention of its safeguarding:

- how does one identify or make heritage with practitioners that constitute a vast and utterly fluid group?
- how does one include people who feel less (positively) involved with particular heritage elements into the appreciation process of those elements?
- how to deal with elements that are alive and kicking, that do not need ‘keeping alive’?
- how does one track down intangible heritage that is so “everyday” that nobody notices it, heritage that is being practised by society at large?

## LABORATORY

In “Let’s Party” and “In the Pocket”, we have come to regard the numbers in which habits like “arms in the air” and “making selfies” appear in divergent pocket archives as heritage indications. We also learned that youngsters take pleasure in making heritage in negotiation with each other. They wish to share what matters to them, not only with their friends, but also with others and with the future. In this process, transmission from the past, for example, is regarded by them in terms of “old school” music.

Meanwhile, pocket archives also bring along new puzzles, like how to deal with items that are shared by participants, but that you as an institution or a “network director” consider too embarrassing for public disclosure, like drunk selfies? And how to go about when a group of several hundreds of online participants provide items without any further qualifications, including images of people who cannot be approached? Needless to say, the pocket archive will remain an interesting laboratory for quite some time.

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