

# Designing Mobile Narratives

Discursive strategies and participation modes in Locative Media Art.

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## Abstract

This thesis investigates the design process of mobile-based narratives to verify whether the affordances and constraints of the supporting medium have contributed to shaping specific discursive strategies and particular participation modes. Have properties such as connectivity, location-awareness, portability and multimodality enabled narrative formats that gained force by contesting traditional patterns and classic narrativity notions? The unveiling of the research inquiry happens through a bricolage of methods in a dialogue between artistic and scientific domains. The study of the phenomenon comprises three correlated stages. The first is a theoretical literature review that investigates the artistic use of locative and mobile media, and their influence in the basic principles governing narratives. The second is a case study of *Blast Theory* artistic practice grounded in the ethnographic approach of a site-visit, and resulting in a qualitative analysis of four of their projects. The third moment consists of applied-theory activities that lead to the collaborative development of a geolocated narrative which serves to evaluate participant's experience.

## Resumen

Esta tesis explora el diseño de las narrativas basadas en dispositivos móviles, dedicándose a comprobar si los recursos expresivos y las limitaciones del medio contribuyen a la formación de estrategias discursivas y modos de participación particulares y específicos. Propiedades tales como la conectividad, la geolocalización, la portabilidad y la multimodalidad han permitido la aparición de nuevos formatos narrativos que ganan fuerza disputando los patrones tradicionales y las nociones clásicas de la narratividad? La revelación de la pregunta se da fruto la combinación de diferentes métodos, mediante un diálogo entre los ámbitos artístico y científico. El estudio del fenómeno comprende tres etapas. La primera es la revisión de la literatura teórica que investiga el uso artístico de los *locative media*, así como su influencia en los principios básicos que rigen las narrativas. La segunda es un estudio de caso de la práctica artística del colectivo Británico *Blast Theory*, basada en el abordaje etnográfico de una visita de campo y posterior análisis cualitativo de cuatro de sus obras. El estudio se extiende en un tercer lugar con actividades de teoría aplicada, incluyendo el desarrollo colaborativo de una narrativa geolocalizada que sirve para evaluar la experiencia de los participantes.



# Introduction

In the past decade, mobile and pervasive communication systems have been giving the impression of exerting a pivotal influence in the nature of narrative production and reception, stimulating situated and embodied experiences through movement. This thesis poses an inquiry that springs from the observation of storytelling practices that insert in the realm of public art using location as an aesthetic element. These formats adopt the physical navigation as interaction model and the cities as a diegetic space, employing mobile and locative media<sup>1</sup> to develop novel and experimental methods for exploring and experiencing urban areas. What happens to the art of telling stories when it incorporates the principle of mobility? Does this proximity mean a detachment from some narrative classic structures, conventions, and techniques? How these embodied forms of interaction can re-define screen-based experiences? A common tendency of those trying to offer a topology of the practices with pervasive communication systems is to center on the technology instead of giving attention to the artistic purpose, or to the content of it<sup>2</sup>. This study takes such criticism to make a move in the opposite direction. It examines the content and the supporting medium, accepting the premise that one is not disengaged from the other.

Narratives in mobile and locative-based artworks remain an emergent field for both, practice and associated theory. This doctoral research conjugates the two dimensions mapping the existing experiences and documenting an artistic experimentation within this context. It presents two distinct references together with some theoretical discussions about the topic, one resulted from the close observation of *Blast Theory* practice, the other from the engagement in the collective and collaborative development of *Chronica Mobilis*. With both creative processes, this study gives a step in recognizing or even codifying the methods, the challenges and the requirements in the

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<sup>1</sup> The term “locative media” was initially coined by Tuters & Varneilis (2006), as a title for a workshop hosted by RIXC, an electronic art and media center in Latvia during 2002. The term derives from the “locative” noun case in the Latvian language, which indicate location and vaguely corresponds to the English prepositions “in”, “on”, “at”, and “by”. Lemos & Josgrilberg (2009) defines locative media as the technological interfaces based on digital tracking systems that allow interaction between the physical, social and digital networks. Locative Media permit to identify the positioning of people and objects in physical space, generating data that inform where we are, what we are doing and how we can interact with our surroundings. Mobile phones with GPS receivers - Global Positioning System, 3G and Bluetooth technologies are some of the devices enable by locative technologies.

<sup>2</sup> See: Hemment, D. (2004a). Locative arts. <<http://www.drewhemment.com/pdf/locativearts.pdf>> Retrieved on March 12, 2012

creation of this particular kind of cultural production. The general objectives of this study are: I) to understand the context in which these narrative forms arise; II) to identify the discursive formations and the types of engagement proposed; III) to recognize issues in the design and implementation process of these artworks; IV) to evaluate the impact some participation modes has on the experience.

### *Context*

By the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, society lived a globally and significant penetration of mobile, networked and location-aware media with computing capabilities<sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup>. These communication systems potentially allowed new forms of presence and agency when mediating the human interaction with the world. A different vision of what technology, computation and communication could be came aligned to their widespread into the everyday life. The era of pervasive computing predicted still in the 1980's by engineers and scientists converted from a futuristic fantasy to a ubiquitous phenomenon in the networked cities. Devices became smart; objects became smart; and cities too. With the same adjective used to qualify so many things, it is worth to question: smart in what and to whom? While a pos-desktop paradigm is underway, personal information concentrates on the hands of few with surveillance turning into a real threat to the individual privacy rights.

The interaction with ubiquitous technologies embedded in the urban environment converted into an integral part of the cityscape, while mobile and pervasive devices became a broader consumer desire. Serving from convenience to comfort, these artifacts' applications capable of creating, delivering or relating information to specific contexts gained cultural, social, commercial and entertainment purposes. Their insertion on society triggered some notable changes in the communication process, generating new forms of experience. The mediated realities lived in the current days, for instance, mark this significative contrast when compared to the previous paradigm. Screen-based experiences put the audience members in a contemplative position, mostly in enclosed

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<sup>3</sup> In 2015, the ITU World Telecommunication/ICT indicators database estimated the existence of 7.085 millions of mobile-cellular telephone subscriptions. Currently, the number of smartphone users worldwide is 1.859 million. See: <[http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/statistics/2015/ITU\\_Key\\_2005-2015\\_ICT\\_data.xls](http://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/statistics/2015/ITU_Key_2005-2015_ICT_data.xls)>

<sup>4</sup> By 2017, according to *eMarketer/AP*, it will be over a third of the population. The statistics projected an estimated total of almost 2.29 millions of smartphone users in the world. See <<http://www.statista.com/statistics/330695/number-of-smartphone-users-worldwide/>>

spaces and in front of fixed displays to receive the same content<sup>5</sup>. In the place of the broadcasting logic in which one produce a standardized content directed to a mass consum, the digital and interactive media opened space to a distinct communicational model grounded on networks and collaboration<sup>6</sup>. Participative, it diluted the line that used to separate consumers and producers, allowing an active audience to collaborate and engage in the process of content creation. Users, interactors, prosumers<sup>7</sup> are some of the designations that appeared taking into consideration the current role of individuals in the communicative process.

Standardization is giving place to customized contents generated according to individual choices, or even with the system “feeling” the context and suggesting what the user might need in particular circumstances. On one side, the corporate developments seems to make this personalization process less a matter of individual preferences and more a desire of turning possible the ultimate cybernetic dream, that is the creation of individualized forms of surveillance and control. Corporations employ such supposedly “smart” communication technologies to develop a continuously geolocated, quantified, tagged and modeled self. While they aim to turn citizens into most profitable and efficient prosumers to the capitalist system, art seems to go beyond this corporate agenda. Artists understand the same media as a space for the experimentation with more embodied forms to experience the city and to critically look at this ubiquitous scenario.

In mobile-based narratives, participants<sup>8</sup> actively explore, manipulate, and contribute to a communicative process that gain the city area. Artists signalize a grown of location-aware and site-specific artworks by proposing strategies of telling and experiencing stories placed in real geographies. Cities figure as a surface to inscribe virtual annotations, which can dialogue with the connotative and denotative meanings already

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<sup>5</sup> See: Huhtamo, E. (2011). “Pockets of Plenty. An Archaeology of Mobile Media”. In M. Rieser (Ed.), *The Mobile Audience: Media Art and Mobile Technologies* (pp. 23–38). Amsterdam-New York: Rodopi.

<sup>6</sup> Scolari, C. (2008). *Hipermediaciones: elementos para una teoría de la comunicación digital interactiva*. Editorial Gedisa.

<sup>7</sup> The term, first coined by Alvin Toffler, refers to the blurring between the roles of consumers and producers. See: Toffler, A. (1981). *The third wave*. New York: Bantam books.

<sup>8</sup> This thesis refers to those engaging in locative narratives as participants, a nomenclature that expresses with more precision the bodily engagement and the physical role they play in the communicative process. As Raley (2010, p. 301) argues, “the literary uses of mobile and locative technologies present an implicit challenge to the culture of technicity and the instrumental use of location-based services, we might also say that mobile narratives summon *participants* rather than *users*”. This thesis also avoids the term audience because, as Scolari (2008: p. 285) observes, it refers to asynchronous consumption and exchange many-to-many.

present in the urban environment. Participants dislocate through an augmented diegetic space resulted from the merging of these physical and virtual domains. While walking through the streets, they can receive, produce and send local and relevant multimedia content from mobile devices. This data can provide complementary and historical information about that particular location, but can also immerse participants into an fictional and interactive story that runs in parallel to the real world. These distributed narratives can change according to participant's position in space, what turns their body into an interface. Employing geography to situate and develop the story, artists ended up proposing a multimodal, spatialised and embodied experience.

### *Structure of the Content*

The present study is, at the same time, a field research about and a experimentation with these mentioned Locative Art<sup>9</sup> approaches to narrative. Chapter 1, “Methodological Bricolage for an Arts-Based Research”, reveals the manner that the methodology designed came to attend the demands generated by the phenomenon under analysis. The details regarding how and why follow a flexible architecture with a bricolage of multiple tools of inquiry appear more precisely on the section “Research Design”. It explains the manner this study linked together, art and science, theory and practice, on a hybrid model that diverges from the commonly tendency to separate both domains. Rather than fit a research question into a fixed method, the study translates an active position that accepts the challenge of finding protocols that connect disciplines and knowledge. The result is an interdisciplinarity that crosses boundaries and combines arts-based research with traditional scientific methods. Instead of a distanced objectivity, the methodology applied opened space to engagement and self-reflexivity. This section also presents the reasons justifying the blend of the affective experience with the traditional discourse conventions in the writing style adopted on this thesis. It is still in this initial part that comes a reflection about the conditions of knowledge legitimation in the methodology designed for this Ph.D. study.

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<sup>9</sup> Lanfranco Aceti (2016, p. 10) moves away from the world ‘media’, centering on the aesthetic merits of the artworks to define Locative Art as “art that is spatially contextualized, art that encompasses artistic practices that draw from movement (and/or the lack of it) and location, which is their source of inspiration, content, materiality, and context”. See: Aceti, L. (2016). “Meanderings and Reflections on Locative Art”. Leonardo Electronic Almanac, v. 21, n. 1.

The following subsections of Chapter 1 are a thorough report about each of the three distinct and complementary phases contemplated on the research. It evidences why each step of the methodology was strategical and assisted the subsequent with the knowledge acquired. “The Theoretical Concerns of the Literature Review” brings the conceptual framework that supported the formulation of a model with categories for a qualitative analysis of mobile narratives. One of the elemental deals was to clarify and precise the narrative concept, recognizing the transformations in its theory and practice that respond to the mentioned changes. In a media-aware approach, the thesis recognizes what are the expressive properties of mobile media, and its potential to influence the narrative practice. This standard and exploratory theoretical research identifies the contemporary production associated with the topic, what helped to define a corpus of analysis for the study. Complementary to it, this phase investigates possible influences, continuities, and breaks between the emergent and the older cultural and artistic practices.

The references and the tools defined in the previous stage came to support a qualitative analysis of four selected projects developed by the British group *Blast Theory*. The outcome of the second moment in the research was a formal, conceptual and contextual comprehension of the phenomenon studied, through the analysis of *I Like Frank*<sup>10</sup> (2004), *Rider Spoke*<sup>11</sup> (2007), *A Machine To See With*<sup>12</sup> (2010) and *Fixing Point*<sup>13</sup> (2011) projects. Following an ethnographic case study approach, the research included a period spent with the artists and the observation of how they have been using mobile and geolocated technologies to create narrative experiences in the urban space. The subsection “Case Study and Field Research” gives details about the embodied and situated research outside the lab and into “the field”, with a site-visit, participant observation, and interviews with these designers and practitioners of Locative Art.

The third and final subsection of Chapter 1, “Applied Theory in a Practice-Based Research” exemplifies how the interrelation of narrative and locative media is a fruitful territory for experimentation. Practice-based approaches are somewhat rare at the Ph.D. level, especially in the Communication field. Nevertheless, this study engaged in a more empirical and practical experience by conducting a direct examination of the artistic

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<sup>10</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/i-like-frank/>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/rider-spoke/>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/a-machine-to-see-with/>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/fixing-point/>

process, exploring and experimenting with the design and implementation of a mobile and geolocated narrative. This subsection details the experience gathered in the development of *Chronica Mobilis*, presented in Barcelona on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2014, in *Hangar*. The collaborative creation of this artistic artwork allowed a holistic view of the relationship between the design of a geolocated narrative project, those exposed to it, and the social, cultural and business context in which it took place. The development of the project served for research purposes, allowing the evaluation of some aspects regarding participants' experience according to different levels of engagement and interaction.

Chapter 2, “Narrative Structure in the Digital Media Age”, presents an observation of how digital media have possibly affected narrative form. The preliminary results of the qualitative analysis of *Blast Theory* projects served to support the discussion and to manifest the diverse architectures digital narratives can adopt in the current scenario. On one side, the analysis of the artworks brought what are the shifts in the art of telling stories introduced by the digital media age. On the other hand, the trajectory of the British group provided primordial elements to the understanding of the radical changes society has passed through in the last decades. Most of the data presented in this Chapter 2, and in the next one, come from the material gathered in *Blast Theory* personal archives, as well as from individual interviews conducted with Matt Adams, Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj during the site visit to their studios in Brighton.

The first section of Chapter 2, “Media as a Semiotic Channel Affecting Narratives”, recognizes how stories generated or experienced through computers showcase new media specificity. Modularity, variability, interactivity, customization and database form are some of the features discussed that show digital media ability to impact narrativity and to influence the development of new storytelling forms. The study investigates how these properties have supported the emergence of innovative models that gained force by contesting traditional patterns and the classic notions of narratives. Essential in this section is also the elucidation that there is no media that conduit information without affecting it. The thesis discusses how communication systems are transmissive channels that also brings with them a particular language, specificities, and idiosyncrasies. As it argues, these features are precisely the ones that cause a consistent influence on narratives.

After identifying the aesthetic possibilities brought by the own and unique resources of computer-based systems, the subsections of Chapter 2 investigate by what means the distinctive principles shaping the language of digital media characterizes the emergent storytelling forms. It first recollects Aristotle's classic method of composition and transformation able to create a coherent story. It not just describes the traditional narrative structure based on matched situations but also analyses how the model has been systematically applied and reinforced as a standard principle through the centuries. The next step is so to investigate how the new manners of telling a story supported by digital systems contested and revised some established parameters. The section identifies the ruptures and also some agreed statements about a set of narrative consent properties that remain intact and go beyond media, observing how these parameters may acquire new features and display new behaviors in interactive environments. That is the case of the story-logic narrative arrangements.

Following this preliminary recollection of the classic model, the subsection “The Modular Design as a Narrative Structuring Model” treats the manner the digital came reshaping and in some cases disrupting traditional patterns and notions concerning representational process and media creation. It signals the ruptures triggered by new media and the innovative manners of storytelling that arose as a result of a productive experimentation with the foundational narrative elements and the resources brought by computer-based systems. The observation is to how artists have embedded in their practice some possibilities inaugurated by digital media: from the type of encoding data to the modular property, or to the interactive nature. The subsection gives particular attention to the modularity and encyclopedic nature, as these are the expressive aspects incorporated on the level of narrative structure that confers fluidity and variability to digital accounts. It investigates the contrasts between the mechanisms of organizing plot and discourse comparing the ones generated by digital media and the classic linear and fixed structure. Despite the ruptures, the great deal found by the study is still how to storytellers devoted to digital media can create meaningful narrative experiences.

The section “The Modular Design as a Narrative Structuring Model” of Chapter 2 discusses the individual customization supported by computers, observing the reactive and participatory trace of stories that adjust its content according to voluntary or involuntary inputs. It presents some of the interactive schemes based on architectures that allow choice and observe the way they transmuted the linearity and truncation

encouraged by the classic structuring model. The examples of different patterns to organize plot and discourse levels exemplify by which means computer-based narratives thrived a more multiple and discontinuous modes to present stories. Interaction, serialism, open structures and fuzzy logic are some of the organizing principles this study finds giving shape to digital accounts in a cult of nonlinearity.

After accentuating how interactivity became the most related aspect concerning stories mediated by digital systems, the section “Agency and Control in Interactive Systems” attempts to clarify what exactly this thesis refers to when using the term. The concept has its meaning clarified through the recognition of some essential qualities an interactive system must express, going from the dialogical ability to the potentiality of modifying itself dynamically. Intrinsic to the discussion is also the idea of empowerment of participants, what does not have to do only with the necessity of a system gives and mandates choice. Agency is the core concept used to argue how interactivity on narratives has to do more with the ability of influence and alter the story itself or its progression rather than to the fact of being active taking decisions among choices. The thesis then investigates when a more open interactive structure means a greater opportunity to participants affect the story, or either whether it represents an obstacle for preserving the integrity of the narrative meaning. The central question evaluated, and that remains in the interactive narratology realm, is so the degree of freedom participants should have to precisely control and co-author the narratives. More precisely, how to conciliate artists' control over the interaction with the necessary agency of participants. All this discussion anchors on the analysis of the four selected projects from *Blast Theory*, bringing examples of interactive narratives that creates a balance between open and closed structures.

The presentation of the outcomes generated by the qualitative analysis of *Blast Theory* projects extends to Chapter 3, named “When Narratives Meet Locative Media”. Before examining the core aspects characterizing mobile-based narratives, the initial section, “From Fixed to Mobile Communication Systems”, recollects the emergence of new practices based on mobility with the development of portable and context-aware media. After this brief introduction, the thesis revisits the thinking on technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to reach the discussion concerning a paradigm change. With the Ubiquitous Computing Project – UbiComp, the section bring elements able to rebuild the scenario and the agenda under the development of mobile communication and pervasive

technologies. With Locative Art movement, the study evidences how these media took prominence and artists incorporated them into their creative practice. The discussion presented allow to raise a critical position regarding surveillance and privacy concerns related to these context-aware media, and its artistic use.

The next section of Chapter 3, “Narratives based on Mobile and Pervasive Media”, has its focus on the phenomenon under investigation: the narratives placed into the physical world by the artistic use of mobile, locative and networked media. It comments some of the creative uses of these communication technologies that establish associations between contents and real sites. Despite the diverse denominations present on the literature that threat these new forms of telling stories, our attempt is not to find taxonomies or precise terms<sup>14</sup>. The purpose is to unveil the creative process of authoring to these platforms. As so, the thesis try to offer a better understanding of the strengths and limitations in the representational power of mobile media. Regarding the constraints, it observes how battery life, bandwidth, storage memory, or even the individual character of the experience imposed by the materiality of the medium can influence mobile-based narratives.

The section “Mapping the Space for Navigable Narratives” discusses a range of practices that has in common spatial journeys involving participants navigation through environments augmented with historical or even fictional data. Using *Blast Theory* as a case study, it shows the adoption of a more embodied art that happens in the city streets. It digs possible artistic and cultural references of an aesthetic of navigation, recognizing spatialised experiences that come from explorative games to pilgrimage activity; from artistic vanguards to Situationism movement. The study observes the impact that participant's physical presence in a place, or even that the site-specificity can have on the telling of a story. Moreover, it discusses whether these narrative practices can represent a Neocartesianism, or even a Technology-enabled Situationism, investigating the dialogue they establish with the cartographic precision of locative technologies and a possible critic that they address to the totalitarian urbanism.

“Performative and Full-body Interaction” section exposes the particularities of an interaction model that are not restricted to a desktop or confined to a screen, but

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<sup>14</sup> We treat them on this thesis mainly as mobile-based narratives, as we define and explain in this section of Chapter 3.

performed and enacted in the physical world. Before discussing the performative character of these experiences, the thesis reiterates how all classical and modern art can be interactive when observing them from a cognitivist perspective. Investigating what could be the differences, the study identifies the function exerted by the body on these new artistic practices with locative media. It evaluates the cognitive and physical demand they require with participants' body becoming an interface between them and the content. It then talks about the distinct and possible types of involvement, centering the analysis on the character of the interaction among the digitally mediated storyworld and the physically mediated story elements. The question raised by the topic is how to make people willing to take part in this physical interaction. The answer comes through the identification of the strategies adopted to keep participants engaged on mobile-based narratives, what can happen through the adoption of ludic mechanisms and game elements, or through a deep connection between content and space.

The final section of Chapter 3, “Editing the Diegetic Space”, analyses what are the implications in converting the cities in a diegetic space. It remembers how moving through the urban area has always been a performative practice and how the physical environment itself with its complex architectural and spatial language can be understood as a medium. Recognizing the connotative and the denotative dimensions present in the cityscape, it identifies artists serving from historical, ethnographic and also architectural information to create resonances and establish a frame and meaning to their stories. Moreover, the thesis notices a tendency to integrate, rather than to separate the physical and the story worlds. By the observation of *Blast Theory* practice, it identifies the mode they play and incorporate the urban space elements to activate the imagination of those joining their artworks. On the other hand, it inspects the manner the artists associate the walking through the urban areas to the unfolding of the storytelling with successive and sometimes simultaneously events triggered according to the movement through space. This section also lists the different manners artists can edit the physical environment, essentially by affording or constraining participant's movement and perception, respectively trying to reveal or conceal information. It ends analyzing the orchestration work *Blast Theory* does behind the scenes, and the function it has, dealing with the risks present on projects based on live experience as the ones the British group has been creating.

Chapter 4, “A Geolocated Narrative with Gameplay”, dedicates to expose the design and implementation of *Chronica Mobilis*. All considerations made in this part of the thesis refers to the process and activities devoted to the development the mentioned artwork, contemplated on the final stage of this doctoral study. *Chronica Mobilis* is a geolocated narrative experience with gameplay that incorporated all the knowledge acquired from the literature review and the case study analysis of this Ph.D. research. The interrelation between narrative and locative media gains an even more empirical approach here as a consequence of the practice-based methods applied in this phase. Chapter 4 answers questions regarding the creative process, recognizing what are the technological obstacles in developing such projects as well as how participants respond to determined modalities of interactive experiences.

A series of research questions addressed to enhance knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation guided the design of *Chronica Mobilis*. The section “Development Process” explains what were the core ideas and categories as well as the interaction and narrative concerns when building the concept for the geolocated experience. Through the description of the design process is possible to perceive how it followed a blend of *top-down* and *bottom-up* strategies. When revealing the development activities, it also details the manner found to overcome the necessity of having an interdisciplinary team for building such type of interactive artwork. This section details the open calls for contributions, the artists and researchers that joined the project, the remote and in presence collaborative process. It lists all the demands that appeared in the iterative design process based on playtest, the partners, the residence in *Hangar*<sup>15</sup> and the three-days workshop activities planned to precede the presentation of the work and directed to share the knowledge acquired from the development of *Chronica Mobilis*.

The section “Organization of the Narrative Content” goes deeper into the discussion about how to design and to implement a narrative that uses locative and mobile media. Using *Chronica Mobilis* as a reference, it maps what to take into consideration for building a meaningful story that dialogues with the urban space, exposing the interactive architecture chosen to organize this storytelling about the gentrification topic. The section explains the narrative formation, focusing on the semantic and syntax, on plot and discourse levels, introducing the central conflict and the strategies

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<sup>15</sup> *Hangar* is a centre for art research and production, offering support to artists, located in Poblenou, Barcelona. See: <<http://hangar.org/>>

adopted to unify the three distinct subplots that run in parallel in this interactive experience. The study justifies the reasons behind the option for a braided narrative design, explaining the artistic desire to evidence how differently the same person can experience, feel and understand the cityscape in distinct moments of their lives. It shows the manner to explore the nonlinear possibilities inaugurated by digital media, and to get benefited from the potentialities opened up by the creative use of locative and mobile communication systems. Following the tendency of narratives enabled by location-aware technologies, *Chronica Mobilis* reinforces the relations between site and story by juxtaposing and overlapping the real and the fictional layers. This section also explains some of the important design decisions taken in the creative process, from defining the locations to geotag the fragments of the embedded story, to participants level of control and influence over it.

After explaining the narrative structure, the thesis delineates the dynamics of *Chronica Mobilis* storytelling in the following section of Chapter 4. “A Gameplay to turn Participants into Storytellers” evidences how we rethought space and the options for narration through the use of mobile media, adopting ludic strategies as a conduit for engagement of participants with their surroundings. In *Chronica Mobilis*, we linked the fictional story fragments to some locations in the city, using it as the primary data element to players encounter in the game. The thesis explains the formal organization, the logic and the manner it works, exposing the definition of a set of rules, rewards, and goals, thinking about meaningful relationships between participants action and narrative outcomes. It also introduces the metaphor created for the game, and all the preparation to inject participants in the futuristic universe built to the game. This section allows to recognize the contribution of the play mechanics to integrate the different layers of participation proposed to *Chronica Mobilis*. Moreover, it evidences the strategy adopted to combine the two layers of story featuring on it: a pre-structured one awaiting discovery, and an emergent one that grows from players actions. The content presented in this section support to argue about the possibility of situating this interactive experience at the intersection of games and narratives, by considering that it exploits both of these traits.

The “Technical Overview” section complements the explanation about the core characteristics of the project, revealing how *Chronica Mobilis* uses a very simple hardware and software configuration. It shares information about the technical system

for tracking players, the tool for streaming, and the one for sending messages. It demonstrates the possibility to appropriated from existing applications, making a creative combination to solve possible demands of project like this. A more detailed explanation comes regarding the most expressive work done, that was the development of the map to show in real-time the position and the displacements of the three group of players exploring the urban space. The game dynamics exposed in the previous section of Chapter 4 acquires more details with the presentation of the tools that supported it. The functions and the respective applications employed comes described in here.

Just after the public presentation of *Chronica Mobilis*, participants fulfill a questionnaire reporting how had been their interactive experience. Their qualitative feedback is in “Evaluation of *Chronica Mobilis* Participants' Experience” section. The data gather from the open-ended answers comes classified into three main topics. Separate subsections present the feedbacks gave by participants of the three categories. “Participant's Feedback About Satisfaction and Sensation” refers to a cognitive level, concentrating all the comments that had to do with the feeling and the satisfaction they had when experiencing the artwork. “Participant's Feedback on Interaction and Usability” contemplates the system level, including all considerations done about technical, interactive and usability aspects. “Participant's Feedback on *Chronica Mobilis*' Narrative and Dynamics” dedicates to the content level, reuniting the comments those who take part made about the content and its presentation. The data collected through the questionnaire represents an expressive outcome for the study, as it helped to qualify and compare the experiences evoked by each one of the three participation modes contemplated on *Chronica Mobilis*.

This thesis reunites this content to bring a significative contribution to those interested in the creative practice with locative and mobile media. It can serve as an inspiration, as a guide, or as a material to a critical analysis of some experiments within this field.



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## RESEARCH DESIGN

The conditions of knowledge legitimation of this Ph.D. study are also a subject of this Chapter. Instead of a distanced objectivity, the methods applied show a clear engagement and self-reflexivity. The next pages justify why to assume this trace, evidencing the inclusion of the affective experience dialoguing with traditional discourse conventions on the writing style adopted for this thesis. This Chapter presents the research design of this doctoral investigation. Iterative, the methodology was fluid and maintained a flexible architecture rather than a static model. It had moments of adaptation according to the demands generated by the experience. Design decisions occurred from the beginning of the study until the end; from the conception of the Ph.D. proposal to the moment near the conclusion of the thesis. The Chapter explains the formulation of a methodology to link theory and practice in an attempt to demystify principles that tend to separate both<sup>16</sup>. The bricolage of methods done explores the relations between seeing, doing and analyzing, generating a hybrid arts/research model with a simultaneous process of research and development.

The study contemplated the three phases detailed in the next sections. The first one is the classic literature review directed to clarify the theoretical concerns involved in the field of study. The second one is the case study and field research, which culminates in a qualitative analysis of concrete examples. The third and final one is the applied theory phase, dedicated to the creation and development of an artistic piece that served for research purposes. The stages follow a strategical order, meant to assist in gathering knowledge to inform the subsequent step. Nevertheless, they did not necessarily happen in an exclusive or sequential timeline. There were sliding back and forth, mainly between the second and the third one.

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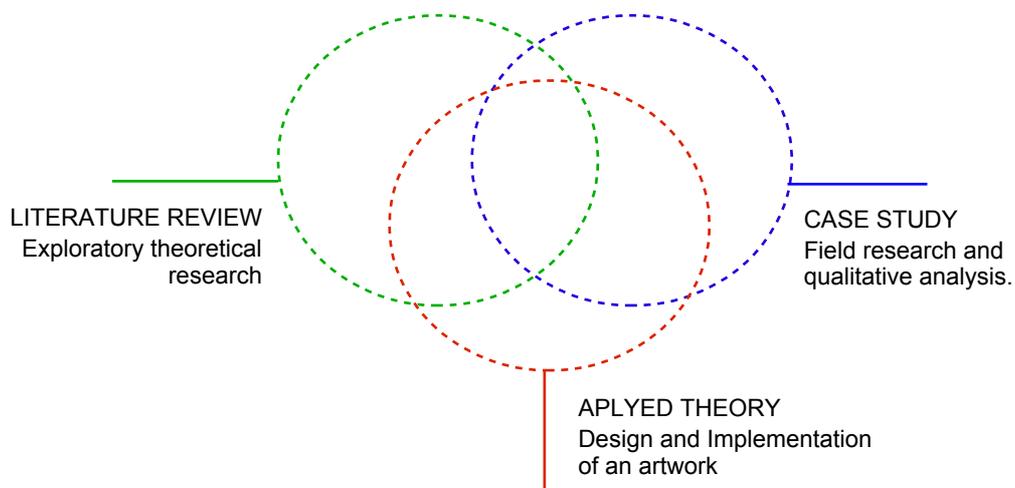
<sup>16</sup> The dialogue between both practices is one of the most relevant topics in the Art, Science and Technology community, as can be seen in different forums, such as *YASMIN*  
<[http://estia.media.uoa.gr/pipermail/yasmin\\_discussions/](http://estia.media.uoa.gr/pipermail/yasmin_discussions/)>

## 1.1 Metodological Bricolage

This doctoral study applies multiple tools of inquiry in a combination of art-based research and traditional scientific methods. Deciding to adopt the methodological bricolage meant accepting that there is no correct universally applicable methodologies, and that design methods and processes of inquiry should come in response to a particular situation. Such approach differs substantially from a tendency of human science that tries to fit a research question into a fixed research method. Combining diverse methods, as Kincheloe (2001) observes, bricoleurs can reexamine accepted interpretations, reveal new insights and alter old principles.

Avoiding modes of reasoning that come from certified processes of logical analysis, bricoleurs also steer clear of preexisting guidelines and checklists developed outside the specific demands of the inquiry at hand. In its embrace of complexity, the bricolage constructs a far more active role for humans both in shaping reality and in creating the research processes and narratives that represent it. (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 234)

The bricolage approach demanded an active rather than a passive research position, in the challenge of finding or fashioning tools that connect disciplines and knowledge. The result was a methodology that has an interdisciplinary character, crossing the boundaries of usually separated domains: art, science, and technology. The research comprised three distinct and complementary phases.



*Figure 1:* The three stages comprised on this Ph.D. research.

The study started with a wide exploratory research in the theoretical and analytical discussions and understandings about the contemporary narrative practice based on locative and mobile media. This first section was largely a standard literature review, articulated with this research interests and orientation. The primary concern related to the properties of mobile and ubiquitous media that have possibly influenced new ways to produce and experience stories. The study investigated the expressive resources of these communication systems as well as its constraints. In the terrain of media studies, it also paid especial attention to the definition of the narrative concept, identifying the transformations in theory and practice in the face of the new technological context. This initial theoretical review directed to precise this primary term involved in the study, unveiling a tension that resides between narrative and interaction. Moreover, the efforts were to bring references, to define parameters and to guide the analysis of the case studies examined in the subsequent stage of my doctoral research.

The second phase comprised an embodied and situated research outside the lab. I went into “the field” to meet and understand how artists were using mobile and geolocated technologies to create narrative experiences in the urban space. I followed a qualitative ethnographic case study approach centered on the projects developed by the British group *Blast Theory*<sup>17</sup>, with a site visit, participant observation, and interviews with these designers and practitioners of locative media art. The analysis of their artistic process and their artworks generated a formal, conceptual, contextual and relational comprehension of the phenomenon studied.

These two initial stages – the theoretical review and the qualitative case study analysis – had a significant role to inform and contribute to the third part of the investigation, grounded in a practice-based research method. I wanted to approach the artistic phenomenon I was studying not just by interviewing practitioners and analyzing their projects. I was sure about the importance of using others' experience to test the hypothesis of this study, though it was not meant to create theoretical reductions or label these case studies according to predetermined concepts or a fixed system. Rather than reflecting upon the artistic phenomena only through case studies, interviews, and other explanatory texts, I decided to get even closer to the process of creating such interactive

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<sup>17</sup> *Blast Theory* is a group based in Brighton, UK and led by Matt Adams, Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj. The artists are renowned internationally for using interactive media to propose new forms of performance drawn on popular culture and games. See: <<http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/our-history-approach/>>

experiences. My desire was to engage in something more empirical and practical, conducting a direct examination of the artistic process. The dialogue with my thesis director, Dr. Roc Parés I Burguès, convinced me about the idea of how relevant would be to explore and experiment with mobile and locative technologies, to understand their expressive potential not only as tools but fundamentally as a new social communication medium. The practical propose was then designing and implementing a narrative experience enabled by this media to take place in the city streets.

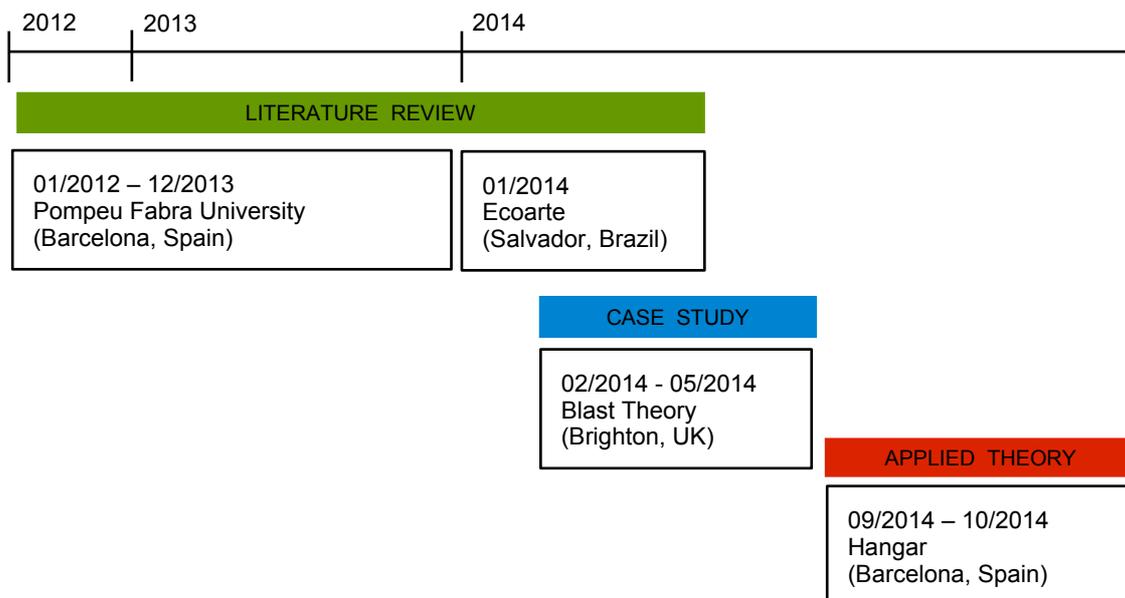
I believed that I could gain knowledge from the making of such kind of project. In the words of McNiff (2008, p. 31): “There is no better way to understand a particular aspect of creative practice than to research it in this direct way”. That was why I decided to invest in a research method that included the artistic creative process and experience as part of the investigation inquiry. In art-based approach, as underlined by he, the actual making becomes an elementary manner to examine the experience of both, researchers and the people involved in their studies. The method, especially applied to explore the nature of art experience and its creation, offers alternative tools of inquiry. The domain systematically engages art as a form of research. It focuses on the epistemologic process of knowing-by-making. The artistic procedures becomes a primary mode of inquiry, with the practice representing not just data for investigation but also playing a significant role in the study and analysis of the phenomena.

We are discovering how these art-based methods, making use of a larger spectrum of creative intelligence and communications, generate important information that often feels more accurate, original, and intelligent than more conventional descriptions. (McNiff, 2008, p. 30)

Practice-based research has played a significant role in the domain of interactive art, though these kinds of creative processes depend on digital technology, what includes considerable obstacles to overcome in the practice. As described by Candy (2011), the research in this domain mainly falls into two interrelated areas: as a way to investigate how to design and implement some technologies involved in the piece of art, or as a research directed to the understanding of how audiences respond to specific interactive experiences. Regarding the technological obstacles faced when adopting practice-based methods to the study of interactive art, she mentions two ways the practitioner-

researchers use to overcome it: going down the route of collaboration with experts in computer technology or becoming an expert themselves.

The third moment of my doctoral research marks the development of an artistic project, conducted to investigate a mobile and locative narrative concerning both, its design process and the audience's experience. I overcame the technological obstacles faced in this stage of my study by associating with researchers, technologists, and artists who collaborated and shared the experience of designing and implementing an interactive project conceived for research goals. A structured process guided the practice, with a series of research questions and objectives addressed to enhance knowledge about the problem I was investigating. This research phase represented an opportunity to experiment with narrative techniques and audience modes of participation. I implemented specific discursive strategies and lately evaluated them through the observation of audience's interactive experience in response to that. The research outcome expected from this applied theory method was also the transferability of the understanding, creativity and insights reached as a result of the practical process, considered useful to inform and contribute to future professional applications in the field.



\* These are the main but not all the activities realized at each stage of the research.

Figure 2: Periods and locations where some of the activities of three stages happened.

As a whole, the knowledge generated through this research methodology came: part from a standard theoretical review, part from the adoption of an experimental approach to ethnography, and part came from the practical experience in the artistic process of developing and testing a geolocated narrative experience. The accounts that follow in my thesis are more embodied than distanced and generalizable, as they ground in highly situated qualitative research methods. Instead of claiming for an epistemological objectivity, I assumed a particular partiality involved in the knowledge presented in the following pages.

The scientific search for truth and certainty requires a distance maintained between the knower and what can be known. The notions forged by the empiricist tradition considers that the interactions between researchers and their research participants can be a potential source of distortion and bias. In my embodied research position, I refused to claim truthfulness or an epistemological guarantee. I also rejected the belief that a method of inquiry founded in a considered objective observation, in an external and disinterested perspective, is more impartial, unbiased and reliable.

Different paradigms address research problems in various ways. As Rolling (2013) argues, the existence of diverse ways of knowing the world does not mean that one scientific method is more reliable than others. The quantitative classificatory and statistical domain, he exemplifies, guesses what might happen, undertaking repeatable experiments with a controlled set of variables, aiming at producing evidence to prove the researcher's hypothesis. On the other hand, he compares, arts-based research approaches knowledge creation in a different way. According to him, it addresses urgent questions about critical aspects that researchers can not measure with exactitude or generalize as universally applicable, or meaningful in all context. On his analysis, that is why the arts-based domain privileges hybrid empirical, interpretative and naturalistic theory building practices.

Scientific practices are indicative of the bias to deduct and generalize rules explaining the natural order of things through objective observation and experimentation so as to delineate a universal and causal reality—a “reality” that is abstracted from and independent of all compromising variables, taken as verifiable, stable, and replicable across all contexts. In contrast, arts practices are indicative of the bias to understand the multiple re-scriptings of experiential meaning constructed by differing observers to occupy any given local context, so as to more accurately represent our variable and

contingent realities. Both biases are rooted in researcher predilections towards distinct yet overlapping methods of inquiry. (Rolling, 2013, p. 52)

The conditions of knowledge legitimation in research methodology is a long matter in Social Science, and that would not be different in an era characterized by the loss of certainties and absolute frames of reference. Considering such context, Patricia Lather (1993) attempts to re-inscribe validity having in mind the contemporary postpositivist approach. She argues for a needed re-articulation of what epistemological guarantees means nowadays. The re-articulation takes into account that we are in a historical moment marked by the crisis of representation, in which a postmodern culture has made “the real” a contested territory. With all the critiques to the realism, universalism, and individualism, to her, the scientific knowledge legitimation goes contrary to the dominant validity practices, which masks the rhetorical nature of scientific claims with methodological assurances.

These are all concerns that de-center validity as about epistemological guarantees. Such post-epistemic concerns reframe validity as multiple, partial, endlessly deferred (...) What follows is, in effect, a call for a kind of validity after poststructuralism in which legitimation depends on a researcher's ability to explore the resources of different contemporary inquiry problematics, and perhaps, even contribute to 'an *unjamming* effect in relation to the closed truths of the past, thereby freeing up the present for new forms of thought and practice. (Lather, 1993, pp. 675-676)

Lather (1993) opens up new lines for a critical Social Science that rupture with the idea of validity as a regime of truth. The reconceptualization proposed by her states validity as “an incitement to discourse”, or “as a space of constructed visibility of the practices of methodology”. Validity, in this case, means more an incitement to see, and an apparatus for observing and giving to be seen “the inthought in our thought”.

I employ a strategy of excess and categorical scandal in the hope of both imploding ideas of policing social science and working against the inscription of another 'regime of truth' (...) Rather than prescriptions for establishing validity in postpositivist empirical work, like Walter Bejamin, I offer 'a forthrightly personal and deliberately ephemeral antithesis' to more conventional and prescriptive discourse-practices of validity. (Lather, 1993, p. 677)

Following her reasoning, research legitimation comes then from a nomadic and dispersed validity, what directs to the assumption that interpretation is temporary. She evokes the rhizome as a metaphor for the re-inscription of rigor, working as a model for the postmodern knowledge.

Rather than linear progress, rhizomatics is a journey among intersections, nodes, and regionalizations through a multi-centered complexity. As a metaphor, rhizomes work against the constraints of authority, regularity and commonsense, and open thought up to creative constructions. (Lather, 1993, p. 680)

Galloway (2008) also freezes a kind of contemporary interpretative validation that is grounded in a theoretical understanding that “what researchers witness, participate in, and create is always multiple and partial”. She bases such belief on the ideas of Latour and Law, in the ethnographic practice described by them and what was broadly termed the “practice turn” in theory, or actor-network theory. Considering the exploration of these complex relations between seeing, doing and writing, she believes that the social must be explained instead of providing the explanation. That, to her, generates a more productive piece of knowledge. “One that is more processual and relational than structural, one that tells many stories subjectively instead of one objectively, and one that raises more questions than provides answers” (Galloway, 2008, p. 33). She interprets it as more productive, exactly because it leaves the matter open and provides readers with multiples entries passive of interpretation.

I am self-conscious of a certain partiality present in the accounts that are to come in the following pages. They do not represent a definitive or final pronouncement about the matter. They are not an ultimate conclusion reached through a rules-based way of knowing and assessing the world, considered reliable by a logical positivism. Authority comes from engagement and self-reflexivity and not from a distanced objectivity. I assume that the accounts produced by my research are more subjective and somewhat affected by my perspective. That is mainly why I wrote the narrative in this thesis in first-person, potentially incorporating what Richardson (1993) named as “feminist-postmodernist practice”, a violation of the social science emotional rules or normative constraints for writing.

There is a sense of immediacy, of an author’s presence and pleasure in doing the work. Lived experience is not “talked about,” it is demonstrated; science is created as a lived

experience. Dualisms - “mind-body,” “intellect-emotion,” “self-other,” “researcher-research,” “literary writing-science writing” - are collapsed. The researcher is embodied, reflexive, self-consciously partial. (Richardson, 1993, p. 706)

I decided to adopt and explore ways of writing that resonates my experience and that were in agreement with my understanding of validity and knowledge legitimation. I chose a model of discourse connected to the research methodology I designed for my doctoral study. If I violated borders between domains giving an interdisciplinary approach to my research, I also violated discourse conventions that exclude the affective experience of the author to state that social science writing is supposedly emotionless.

### 1.1.1 Theoretical Concerns in the Literature Review

The emergent narrative forms framed by this doctoral research receive varied designations: “Mobile Cinema”<sup>18</sup>, “Locative Narrative”<sup>19</sup>, “Locative Cinema”<sup>20</sup>, “GPS Film”<sup>21</sup>, “Spatial Narratives”<sup>22 23</sup>. These are some of the terms attributed to similar storytelling practices that spatialize and geolocate content, employing mobile and pervasive media to support an interaction model based on the physical navigation in urban spaces. The theoretical concern of this thesis was not necessarily related to the achievement of a unified concept, despite the apparent lack of an agreed definition to

<sup>18</sup> Pengkai Pan uses the term “Mobile Cinema” in reference to a type of computational visual narratives that delivers its narratives segments on wireless devices, inviting the audience to navigate physical locations and interact with the environment. See: Pan, P. (2004). *Mobile cinema* (Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology).

<sup>19</sup> Jeremy Hight considers “Locative Narratives” a new hybrid location-based narrative form written utilizing GPS and wireless to digitally enhance the landscape by adding layers of information. See: Hight, J. (2006). *Views from Above: Locative Narrative and the Landscape*. *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*, 14(7-8), 1-9.

<sup>20</sup> A reference to the concept of “Locative Cinema” appears, for instance, on an international Commission for “Locative Cinema”, opened by three partnering organizations - ZERO1: The Art & Technology Network in conjunction with the Sundance Film Festival’s New Frontiers Initiative and Banff New Media Institute at The Banff Centre. The Commission defined the “Locative Cinema” considering artworks able to engage people using place as a key element of the experience, what can be done by the use of a ranged of platforms See: <<http://www.zero1.org/about/press/locative-cinema-comes-life-commission-sundance-film-festival-banff-centre-and-silicon>>.

<sup>21</sup> Scott Hessels named as “GPS Film” artworks that tell stories by exploring a real world environment, proposing experiences tied to the movement of the viewer using for this GPS-enabled PDA or mobile-phone. See: Brunet, C. S., & Fiorelli, M. (2008). *GPS Film Nine Lives: experimenting with new forms of narrative and moving pictures*, An interview with Scott Hessels. *DOC On-line: Revista Digital de Cinema Documentário*, (5), 92-97.

<sup>22</sup> The term “Spatial Narratives” appears connected to the idea of location-aware and interactive narratives. See: Dow et al., (2005, June). *Exploring spatial narratives and mixed reality experiences in Oakland Cemetery*. In *Proceedings of the 2005 ACM SIGCHI International Conference on Advances in computer entertainment technology* (pp. 51-60). ACM.

<sup>23</sup> See also: Martins, T., Correia, N., Barrenho, F., & Romão, T. (2005, October). *InStory Client—a Browser for Spatial Narratives and Gaming Activities*. In *Actas 13º Eurographics Portuguese Chapter Meeting* (pp. 133-138).

this current phenomenon. Instead, it devoted to recognizing the fundamentals shaping these narrative practices and the context in which they emerge. Before that, however, there was the vital necessity of precise what would come referred under the narrative label. Even defining it as a communicative and discursive practice, the evaluation of possible changes in the art of telling stories would only be possible with the specification of the particular principles governing it.

At first sight, defining the term might not look a complex matter, because narratives appear to be an inherent principle of the human condition, and stories the primary vehicle and strategy of human's personal memory and expression. Everybody has got a story to tell, either actually or in make-believe. Everybody knows how to tell events represented as a sequence of facts chained by a chronological or a causal connection. But, does that resume what narrative means? The answer is definitely not, especially when existential, cognitive, aesthetic, sociological and technical approaches have also been exploring the phenomenon. Recalling such perspectives, Ryan (2004a) lists some of the possible attributes related to the concept. Narratives are a way of giving meaning to live. They are also a mechanism to explore different realities through the creation of dreams and fantasies. Moreover, the narrating act is what enable humans to deal with time and destiny, to create and project their identities. Narratives are a fundamental instrument of human thought, and so an indispensable capacity of cognition<sup>24</sup>.

All these broad and diverse traits and functions reveal the multifaceted character that the phenomenon gained after the explosion of interest in it and the consequent extent of its diffusion. The concept became prominent, and its study diversified after what Kreiswirth (2005, 1995) called “narrative turn” in humanities. Such extension included the use of narratological paradigms not just by historiography and nonfiction narratives<sup>25</sup>. Spreading across disciplinary boundaries, a spectrum of fields ranging from social to natural sciences got concerned and interested on its inquiry. Even the classic narratology based on the structuralist paradigm to explain its object of study witnessed a

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<sup>24</sup> Regarding the cognitive approaches, see for instance: Bruner, Jerome. *Actual Minds, Possible Words*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986. Tuner, Mark. *The Literary Mind*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996.

<sup>25</sup> Fludernik (2005, p. 43) link the name of Hayden White to the wake of the “narrative turn”, as he was the one who “demonstrated the presence of literary generic frames in the narrative writing of history”, arguing how the plot construction can affect the historiographic discourse. See: White, H. (1980). The value of narrativity in the representation of reality. *Critical inquiry*, 7(1), 5-27.

reorientation and diversification of theories with a series of subdisciplines<sup>26</sup> coming “in a reaction to post-structuralism and the paradigm shift to cultural studies” (Fludernik, 2005, p. 37).

Hyvärinen et. al (2006) evaluates that the transdisciplinary approach to the concept – whose study serves to the understanding of life, experience, and literary texts – brought not only synergy in the development of a common framework but vast contextual differences and contradictions on its use. Whether interdisciplinary studies of narrative directed the attention to the importance of the phenomenon in mostly all language-based practices (Nünning, 2003), the popularity achieved by the term figures as a central cause in the dilution of its meaning (Ryan, 2007; Jannidis, 2003). The gained prominence turned this inherent human condition into an intricate matter to define. Some of the terminological consequences of the nonliterary and nonlinguistic applications of the concept are precisely the dilution of the narratological basis, the loss of precision, and the metaphoric use of narratological terms (Fludernik, 2005).

Ryan (2007) argues that such interest could be a result of a postmodern disbelief in the scientific certainty on the achievement of truth, or even of the current significance gained by the understanding of the mind. Regardless of the cause, what she highlights is a tendency of making the concept stand for a variety of means. It denotes “content”, as well as “belief”, “value”, “experience”, “thought”, “explanation”, “representation”. Jannidis (2003) points to the same considerable expansion amplifying the realm of what can fall under the narrative designation. He also observes that this increasing in popularity, that goes from literary theory to cognitive psychology, theology and jurisprudence, did not make the definition any clearer but the opposite. To him, it broadened the complexity of the term. Recognizing such unstoppable growth and trying to clarify the nature of Narratology, he inquires whether all these varied manifestations share a common core.

Whether there is a universal meaning unifying the countless forms of the phenomenon, it might appear in the first attempts made by narratologists to precise the concept. This literature review went back in a pivotal movement to rescue the essence of the term, what could potentially avoid the dilution happened over the time. In addition to it, this

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<sup>26</sup> Fludernik (2005) mentions subdisciplines such as psychoanalytic narrative approach, feminist narratology, cultural studies-oriented narrative theory, postcolonial (readings of) narrative.

initial Narratology stage in the development of a theory introduces a number of key terminologies and categories, as well as expressive features and poetics of narratives. Despite the passion for typology and classification present on this early structuralist phase, the semiotics and the grammar they inaugurated in a quasi-linguistic formalism and empiricity<sup>27</sup> (Fludernik, 2005) could serve as a guideline to the analysis conducted in this doctoral study.

Nevertheless, the primary definition presented in the *Dictionary of Narratology*, written by Gerard Prince (1987), rejected in a very restrictive way any other possible narrative forms that were not language-based or speech-act. Moreover, on a classical structuralist approach, he presumed the occurrence of an act of storytelling addressed by a narrator to a narratee, what excluded from the narrative domain all dramatic performances that do not use an overt narrator, or that do not represent events retrospectively. By this reasoning, a live enacted performance would not constitute a narrative because it misses a crucial condition: the sequence of events it dramatizes occurs directly at that moment rather than in the past and recounted by a narrator.

Even looking archaic considering the current effort of narrative theory to cover a variety of media and genres (Ryan, 2004b; Murray, 1997), such classic premise of anteriority keeps appearing in most recent narratologists writings. H. Porter Abbot (2002), for instance, defines narrativity including the condition of the totality of the narrated events lie in the past. To him, a key criterion of narratives is that the story must attain closure; it must exist prior to its presentation. He nourishes such argument based on the time of narration to question that computer games as MMORPGs (massive multiuser online role-playing games) appear to have but do not contain narrative. He excludes these cultural forms from this classification considering that anteriority is an essential property that qualifies stories. As Jannidis (2003) argues, this reasoning also rejects other forms of live reporting, such as the broadcast of matches, just because the narrated events happen at the moment of the telling and for the first time.

Visual and dramatic narrative modes<sup>28</sup> had its existence accepted only with a less radical structuralist and formalist position, that expanded the range of the concept anchored on

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<sup>27</sup> Categories related to focalization and narrative temporality, for instance, first presented in the Gérard Genette's model (1980) were some of the contributions we could get from the classical narratology theory.

<sup>28</sup> Barthes (1975) recognizes the presence of stories in many cognitive and communicative activities, that goes from spontaneous conversations, to visual art and dance.

a distinction between story and discourse<sup>29</sup> (Barthes & Duisit, 1975; Chatman, 1980; Brémond, 1973). Such binary opposition, which resembled the *langue* and *parole* structure of language described in the linguistic insights of Ferdinand Saussure, turned into one of the conceptual pairs grounding some of the Narratology findings (Fludernink, 2005). The differentiation of story and discourse supported a cross-disciplinary approach that broadened the concept to cover a variety of narrative media and integrate other types of text.

When introducing the idea of disengagement between form and substance, Seymour Chatman (1980) differentiated two fundamental levels of narrative: what is told from how it is told. According to him, story is an event or a sequence of events and discourse the representation of those events. While one is a cognitive construct, the other is the encoding of the former in material signs. The combination of both, or in other words the actualization of the story, is what gives form to a narrative. The proposed binomial led to the understanding of story as a self-ruling and invariable structure, existing independent of the techniques that support it. Its fundamental properties would remain, even with different media representing or transposing, enacting or recounting the same story. With such binary opposition, some structuralist narratologists, such as Brémond (1973), assumed that artists could translate all narrative aspects into all possible media.

The subject of a story may serve as argument for a ballet, that of a novel can be transposed to stage or screen, one can recount in words a film to someone who has not seen it. These are words we read, images we see, gestures we decipher, but through them, it is a story that we follow; and it could be the same story. (Brémond, 1973, p. 4)

Herman (2004) comments such Narratology tendency to consider that narratives is medium independent. He observes how it defines the phenomenon based on the form of its content and the way to structure it to encode a narratively organized sequence of events. Whether the approach recognizes that media serves as a vehicle for stories, to him it also states that narrative exists independent of them. They are independent, according to such reasoning, thanks to an autonomous and invariable structure that remain unchanged despite the different formats or the diversity of media that can give a story concrete form. Even considering that the medium-free theory supports the fact that

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<sup>29</sup> Russian Formalist literary theory first proposes such distinction between the events of the story and the manner it is told, what referred to the couplet as *fabula* and *sjuzhet*. See: Propp, Vladimir. (2010). *Morphology of the Folktale*. University of Texas Press. And also: Shklovsky, Viktor. *Theory of prose*. Dalkey Archive Press, 1991.

a variety of communication systems can create narratives, such generalizing approach lead to some methodological consequences. The most important is certainly neglect that all representation taking place in a medium has its shape influenced by the context, by the style and the degree of elaboration of the telling act.

Discussing representation in abstract terms has its inconsistencies, notably on a doctoral thesis that supports the hypothesis referent to a change occurring in the narrative practice due to the emergence and influence of a media context. The more reasonable would be so investigate narrative as something anchored in a medium. How do not consider the characteristics of each particular medium that could dictate fundamental properties of a determined representation? Why disregard the role of the medium just to accept that narrative can be present in a wide range of systems? The explanation to all these questions is probably the reason why the communicative model of classical narratology, as well as the dichotomy between form and content, remained as a reference in the narrative studies to be lately rejected.

The idea of narratology as a medium independent metascience contrasts starkly with the findings that have actually been produced by research in the discipline. The vast majority of narratological findings, as presented in the standard introductory texts, are clearly linked to specific media, and it is not uncommon to find that their validity is confined to the most prominent strand of narratology, the analysis of narrative texts. (Jannidis, 2003, pp. 38-39)

Herman (2004) identifies a tendency in Narratology studies that, instead of thinking about autonomy and independence, considers narrative as radically medium dependent. In a reverse perspective to the medium-free approach, such antithesis underlines that the nature of a supporting communication system can affect the relations between text and story. Media, in this case, is a determining factor in the narrative structure. Rimmon-Kenan (1989), for instance, argues how Narratology can neglect the medium and relegates language to an external and irrelevant position in relation to the semiotic format of a narrative.

When commenting such media dependency perspective, Herman (2004) evokes the Sanders Pierce's theory of signs to explain these semiotic dimensions possibly present on the narratives form. He illustrates it, by mentioning the possibility a medium has to create relations with storyworld events: iconic relations with physical movements in the

case of dance, and conventional relations with linguistic unities in the case of written text. Further, he quotes a criticism made by Barbara Herrnstein Smith, who argues that stories are not preexistent structures but socio-symbolic transactional acts always involving someone who tells and those to whom they tell. He also observes that linguistics investigating spoken and written discourse outline such situated character of the storytelling practices and the socio-communicative logic context in which they operate. These narratologists examine the interactional nature of narratives to expose how they take form through the relations established between tellers and recipients. As so, they intuit that “stories are necessarily particularized; hence, retellings produce not different versions of the same story but new narratives-in-contexts” (Herman, 2004, p. 54).

These media-aware models of the modern narratology claim to the fact that each medium does not just conduct and transmit messages, but also convey different semantic values. Following a semiotic approach, media are not all the same essentially because they do not offer the same narrative resources. Each communication system opens up different affordances at the same time as they impose some constraints to the re-presentation of a story. This theoretical perspective informs the thesis that each medium has its specificities, efficiency, and expressive potential, being a self-contained system of signs that encodes a story according to some particularities. Considering so, they generate an entirely different story rather than distinct versions of it.

The theoretical approach of this doctoral thesis avoids overlooking the medium-specific properties by the same manner as it rejects a more abstract medium-independent concept. The problem with the latter is to ignore an important aspect related to narrative remediation: two media can convey similar meanings, representational and expressive strategies. As Herman (2004) argues, define stories as radically dependent on their media can work as an almost medium dependence antithesis to the previous narratology thesis. He highlights the quasi-dialectic fashion of medium-free thesis and medium dependence antithesis, to present what would be a synthesis: the medium dependence of stories is a matter of degree. The presentational formats shape but not determine stories. Whether the narrative has many parameters that remain unchanged regardless of the genre, there is also a range of ways the properties of each medium can implement them. There is a broad system of constraints and some aspects more resistant in narrative remediation. On the other hand, two media may

share narrative design principles. Features in two different forms might be functionally equivalent.

Jannidis (2003) observes that some phenomena are too unique to a certain medium that sometimes it is hardly feasible for meaningful structural descriptions to be independent of the medium of representation. That is the case of “focalization” for text, or “bullet time”<sup>30</sup> for cinema. As he analyses, the bullet-time technique exploits the indexical connection of cinematic signs and their referents. A text can not create the same effect because of the symbolic nature of the linguistic sign. On the other hand, he observes that some narrative phenomena are not media specific. That is the case of “analepsis” and “prolepsis” techniques. There are expressive resources and constraints of a medium that are unique. They act in the implementation manner of some narrative principles, sometimes allowing to explore specific discourse strategies. Nevertheless, various narrative forms can share certain representational features as two media can also share a common channel or principle for encoding stories. One medium can try to imitate the effects of another, or even some media can be a product of the integration with others, what is the case of mobile phones. Whether particular expressive resources, coding strategies, and design principles can be common to several communication systems; the notions of character, event and fictional world are some representational aspects of narratives that could apply across media.

Ryan (2006) is another narratologist that endorses an cross-disciplinary approach to narratives in a media-aware position when defining the narrative phenomenon in the current days. The pertinence of her approach comes from the fact that it enables a definition that situates in the middle ground between the medium blindness and the radical relativism. She recognizes that some theoretical aspects can be either medium-specific or applicable to several media. According to her:

1. Narrative is a cognitive construct with an invariant nucleus of meaning, but this construct can take a variety of shapes, which we may call avatars of story, and it can be actualized to variable degrees, depending on how many of its core conditions are fulfilled.
2. As a type of meaning, narrative can be allowed to mind and can manifest itself pragmatically in a variety of ways. I call these multiple manifestations the modes of narrativity. (Ryan, 2006, p. xix)

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<sup>30</sup> Bullet-time, is the “dynamic camera movement around slow-motion events”. See: <http://www.matrixfans.net/movies/the-matrix/the-making-of-the-matrix/#sthash.BAnFuMIF.dpbs>

In the terrain of narrative media studies, Ryan (2006, 2007) postclassical definition of the phenomenon tend to stress precise semantic features to prevent the term dilution and, at the same time, expand the concept and the study to a more inclusive range of texts and experiences. The development of a digital narratology arise attending this demand to respond questions such as: how to customize narrative patterns to the properties of the medium; or still, how much of these transformations are tolerate for these new forms still receive the narrative denomination? Modern Narratology has been redefining the concept itself and its analytical parameters, revising the nature of narrative to let it break free from limited forms of analysis that have been traditionally produced.

If classical narratology fails the test of interactive textuality, this does not necessarily means that interactive textuality fails the test of narrativity. It rather means that narratology must expand beyond its original territory. (Ryan, 2006, p. 98)

The case study projects framed by this doctoral investigation are part of a context emerged in the last decades that evidences an innovative stage in the production and experience of stories. The expressive resources of digital media seem to play a crucial and notable influence on narratives. Storytellers working with these communication technologies, for instance, question a range of traditional conventions, like the structure of plot, the sequentiality of events, and the temporality. They do that, supported by concepts associated with a digital culture and logic, such as interactivity, participation, and agency. The changes anchored by the systems they use to mediate their practice are so radical that sustain a belief on the emergence of a new storytelling paradigm. Such transformations on the narrative core principles open space to criticisms and contradictory opinions. What the qualitative analysis directed in the second stage of my research takes into account is exactly these possible changes in the mentioned narrativity conditions.

Ryan (2004b) remembers that narrative not just survived all the technological innovations that happened along its history but also exploited new possibilities every time it happened. She calls for the fact that it demonstrated to be a mutable concept and not ahistorical and anachronic as the classical narratology presumed. As a situated practice tailored to precise circumstances, its definition can evolve through history and remains present. Much of the narrative power would come exactly from its ability to

change form. That resiliency would not be different with the emergence of a new digital media. In response to the digital revolution comes the development of new modes of narrativity. The author traces the diverse opinions about what would be distinctive or innovative in the new storytelling models that emerged. Among the considerations on the matter, to her, the question that remains is not if narrative will survive, but which prediction should we follow:

George Landow, who claims that hypertext will reconfigure the narrative experience by turning readers into coauthors; Janet Murray, who regards digital media as a new stage on which old narratives will be replayed in new dimensions (as the title of her book, *Hamlet on the Holodeck*, suggests); Espen Aarseth, who thinks that the future of cybertexts lies not in storytelling but in computer games; or Katherine Hayles, who equates digital meaning with complexity, fragmentation, fluidity, resistance to totalization, aporia, paradox, emergence, or self organizing capabilities. (Ryan, 2004b, p. 337)

To her, most of the features assumed by the digital narratives do not point in the direction of a transformation in the core logical-semantic conditions of narrativity. Although they have no impact in the cognitive model through which we filter or make sense of a narrative, digital texts produce creative alternatives to the practice of storytelling, in the semantic, syntax and pragmatic levels.

But there is more to narrative theory than the formulation of basic conditions. A complete grammar of language comprises three elements: semantic, syntax, and pragmatics. In narrative theory semantics becomes the study of the plot, or story; syntax becomes the study of discourse, or narrative techniques; and pragmatics becomes the study of the uses of storytelling and of the mode of participation of human agents in the narrative performance. Digital media affect narrative in three ways. (Ryan, 2004b, p. 354)

In the semantic level, Ryan (2004b) sees the impact of digitallity on narrative not as a matter of developing a new logic. Instead, she identifies the introduction of new discursive forms, such as the hypertext technique that leads to a sort of jigsaw puzzle mode of reading. As she evaluates, new ways to present stories demanded new interpretative strategies, what generated new modes of involvement. In the pragmatic level, to her, the difference is that people can now exchange stories in real time, impersonate a character, participate in the collective creation of a story, explore a world

in the pursuit of a story, or even attribute various degrees of prominence to a narrative in the total communicative event.

A multimodal range of resources integrates and potentializes the contemporary storytelling practice mediated by computer and networked systems. Some features truly unique inaugurated by digital media conferred fundamental attributes to narratives. The literary experience and the interaction between reader and text, for instance, gained new dimensions when mediated by electronic communication systems. Aarseth (1997) introduces the concept of “ergodic literature” and “cybertext”, which is a subcategory of it, pointing to a different understanding of “reading”. He observes that the reading act in electronic literature is an activity closely associated with performance and personal improvisation<sup>31</sup>. As he analyzes, the cybertextual process requires the formulation of a semiotic sequence or a selective movement that results in a physical rather than a mental construction on the head of who is reading. He calls it a performance in an extranoematic sense, or *ergotic*. "The ergodic work of art is one that in a material sense includes the rules for its own use, a work that has certain requirements built in that automatically distinguishes between successful and unsuccessful users" (Aarseth, 1997, p.179).

After the impact of digital media in the narrative realm, the advances in ubiquitous computing and the widespread of mobile and geospatial technologies have pointed to a new impact in the creation and reception of narratives. A pervasive context with information and communication technologies incorporated almost everywhere, have been making mobile phones, instead of the desktop computer, become the prominent networked device. Narratives incorporate concepts associated with this new computational paradigm. Not only narratives, as Raley (2010) observes, but a diverse set of artistic practices that are now grouped together as *locative media*. To her, this is a category that came in an expansive manner accommodating a wide range of artistic uses of location data and location-aware networked mobile devices. As she argues, these storytelling practices does not have to do with the use of mobile devices to read some texts that would be meaningful in other media. These are "native" mobile narratives,

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<sup>31</sup> Espen J. Aarseth does not define “ergodic literature” as medium-specific. He observes, for instance, that also paper-based literature can be ergodic as electronic texts. To him, even the concept of cybertext is not restricted to the study of computer-driven, or electronic textuality. In his words, such limitation would be “an arbitrary and unhistorical limitation” (Aarseth, 1997, p.1). Instead of it, he defines the concept of cybertext focusing on the mechanical organization of the text and in the performance of what he calls the consumers, or users, of the text.

composed and delivered on it, and meaningful in a full sense only on that platform. Narratives that are, to her, a genre and mode of new media writing.

Raley (2010) defines this as “an instance of “unframed” media practice, unframed in the sense of unbound from the desktop, detached from the singular screen and thus fixed spectatorial perspective, dependent on signals rather than cords for data transfer in one's immediate vicinity” (Raley, 2010, p.300). She analyses that some of these locative narratives are poetic and narratological, mobile and sited. In an experiential difference from the previous practices, they engage participants with the material world and also articulate it as a narrative environment. Recognizing possible innovations that comes as a result of the literary experimentation with mobile and pervasive technologies, Raley (2010) poses a serie of question that, to her, traverses and ground the field of electronic literature. Some of them represents the core that moved this Ph.D. research.

What are the literary and disciplinary implications of this development? What happens to narrative when one departs from the structures, conventions, and framing techniques of the page and screen? How should we think about reading mobile narrative – my concern in this essay – when “reading itself” cannot account for the different modes of engagement it encourages? (Raley, 2010, pp.300-301).

Considering this current scenario of a vast penetration of cellular phones with GPS, Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez (2010) also recognizes a potential growth of “geolocated narrative for mobile devices with social components” (p. 346). To them, these new storytelling forms would base on the creation of information spaces<sup>32</sup> like the “Global Poetic System”, a work that goes beyond the desktop screen, combining GPS, literary texts, and civic spaces. The application relies on a complex networking of software and hardware, resulting in a combination of literary information and geographic positioning. The artistic experience uses geolocation to explore and tie together “four types of interfaces (mobile phones, PDAs, desktop clients, and web applications) and three ways of reading (literary adaptative texts, literary classic texts, texts constructed from the interaction of the community)” (Gutiérrez et al., 2009).

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<sup>32</sup> In “Electronic Literature as an Information System”, Gutiérrez et al. (2009) reason that computers mediate eletronic literature, so it is an *information system* because requires methods to “enter information into the system, to process it, and to render an output for readers”. Using a definition from computer science, they call *information system* “a set of persons and machines organized to collect, store, transform, and represent data”.

The capabilities brought by mobile and geospatial technologies seems to be pivotal in the emergence of new narrative genres. They materialize in different ways of conceiving actions in the urban space using geospatial and mobile technologies. Relevant to this contemporary practices are aspects such as the mobility and the embodied interaction, the diegetic space mapped onto geographic location, the participant audience, and meta-author. The new forms situate among the range of digital post-narratives. Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez (2010) defend the idea that these electronic particular type of literature differs from other classic modes, as locative narratives deliver information according to determined temporal and spatial conditions.

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the objective of the qualitative analysis proposed by this study was not necessarily to come with a unified term or definition for these emergent narrative forms. The idea was not even to reinforce a contrast between a new and a traditional storytelling practice, considering that such approach would not necessarily lead to a better understanding of the phenomenon under study. Hight (2010) recognizes that Locative Narratives often comes associated with the experimental forms. He recalls the positive and negative connotation of these labels, arguing what the term *traditional* connotes, or even what are the semiotics and the associations to the term *experimental*. By doing that, he comes to evidence the subjective and problematic interpretations of the borders separating traditional and experimental writing:

Is the “experimental” tag a designation of breaking form in some capacity? In pushing tools and hybridizing? Is it also of being an approach that has a cultural/semantic expectation of breaks in form, cross, pollination and, to some, complexity before a more “traditional cohesion and ease in approach and overall structure? Is the “traditional” tag a designation as formalistically sound by design, working with the tools long established and their parameters but with fore-knowledge of their limitations, strengths, conventions and canon? Is this also though prescribed often as “safe” and overlaid with notions of familiarity for better or worse and less complexity in terms of complex form, layered readings or plays on expectation? (Hight, 2010, p. 318).

Instead of putting the attention on a false dialectic between the borders of these transcribed spaces, Hight (2010) believes that the study of these emergent narratives should direct to the tools it makes available and the content it mediates. The inquiry should go beyond the understanding of whether it is avant-garde. It should focus on the functionalities and the realm of possibilities it brings. As he emphasizes: “Its impact on

literature as a canon is impossible to measure as it is an infant in a hall of giants, but one thing is for certain, it has opened up a new era rich with possibility and deep resonance within form and meaning” (Hight, 2010, p. 317).

Even avoiding such dialectic between traditional and experimental labels, Hight (2010) considers the differences brought by locative narratives a sign of a relevant paradigm shift. Nevertheless, he makes a disclaimer that the effects of digital literature do not presume that the new is going to replace or kill the older. In other words, he categorically affirms that books are not to die. To him, locative narratives term is an umbrella that includes several other forms that represent “a way to write with the physical world, to read within the physical world and to give place and history a voice” (Hight, 2010, p. 317). One of the specificities he attributes to this new forms is the distinct manner of writing a narrative using the elements of the physical world. As he analysis, the writing incorporates place in a selection of its details and meanings to raise or to give a particular tone to the story integrated there. He compares such process of selecting elements of the physical environment to the selection of words when building a text. Hight (2010) proposes to think about Locative Narrative as literature, which combines the textual sense of place with the place itself. Among the paradigmatic shifts, he mentions the integration of the story into place, what made the reading act turns into an active and motion practice. Moreover, he observes that:

Locative Narratives often breaks architectures of linearity, completion, specific architecture as one moves in open architecture space, in many possible paths and this works and linkages of writings and their meanings and points in space and story space (moment, scene, etc). Experiential interface becomes the form and this ties directly to Roland Barthes's concept of the “death of the author” in a new and profound way (Hight, 2010, p. 319).

Following this approach, this thesis avoided to make oppositions but did not disregard the differences inaugurated by location-based stories. The goal moving the analysis of the case studies presented here was the identification of discourse strategies and participation modes that come in a contemporary attempt to radicalize the art of storytelling. The study of the selected mobile and locative projects should serve to investigate whether the way to conceive and experience accounts have altered fundamental narrative dimensions. To be able to do so, this preliminary literature

review and theoretical research stage served to formulate a guideline to the next phase of this doctoral investigation.

Using Parés & Parés (2002) framework<sup>33</sup>, the qualitative analysis conducted on this research followed a triad of levels, investigating the narratives on the system, cognitive and HCI level, understanding the interaction, the interface, and the experience they generate<sup>34</sup>. The analysis concentrated in the syntax and pragmatic level, looking for new possibilities created by the way of organizing the narrative discourse and the manner audience can interact with the content.

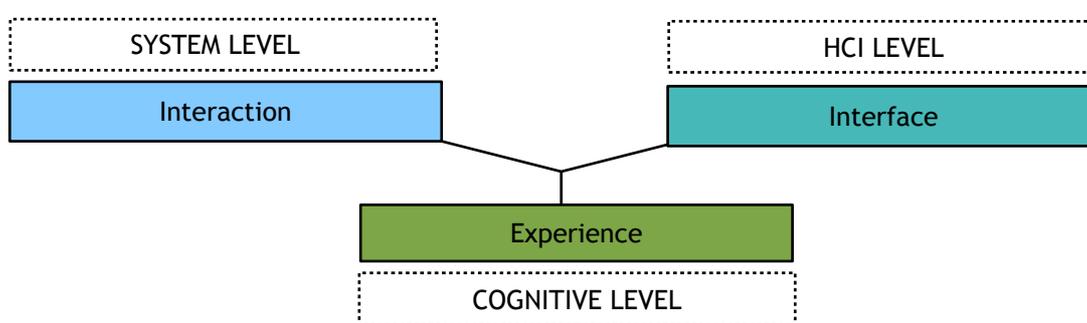


Figure 3: Some broad categories contemplated on the qualitative analysis.

The analysis also based on what Ryan (2004b) as the essential narrative features of digital texts. Though she does not mention the locative and mobile media narratives specifically as a genre, she schematized some important properties to be taken into consideration when referring or analyzing digital texts. The categories presented are in relation to: I) narrative modes (that can be a diegetic narration or enacted through performative statements, actions defined by the system); II) technic and resources (that include objects, displays, and navigable spaces); III) themes and structures (for instance,

<sup>33</sup>[http://cv.uoc.edu/annotation/8ebfc11d61d9fb2feed41b629265e634/463715/PID\\_00150738/modul\\_4.html#w26aac13b5](http://cv.uoc.edu/annotation/8ebfc11d61d9fb2feed41b629265e634/463715/PID_00150738/modul_4.html#w26aac13b5)

<sup>34</sup> Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez (2010, pp. 346-347) present a framework for the study, design, and implementation of electronic literature that has some similarities with this one. It bases on 3 levels, or as they name it 3-tiers that describes how a piece of electronic literature is stored, processed and presented. The three layers of an information system include: 1) the presentation, or the narrative rendering on the screen, which is the interface, 2) the process, or what they call the computational interactions, which represents the interaction, 3) the data or the textual content of the narrative application, what does not represent an individual level in the model developed by Parés & Parés (2002). Though believing that this framework is able to support the analysis of any piece of electronic literature, Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez (2010, p. 347) observe that the production and implementation is a totally different matter of the *readers* (manner they call those taking part on an electronic narrative) experience. Considering that, their model is suitable for analysing the production but not for the understanding of the cognitive experience and the process of reading a piece of electronic literature.

metafictional, or archival, or episodic narratives, Aristotelian plots); IV) modes of involvement (combinations between internal, external, ontological and exploratory modes); V) user role (such as voyeur, coauthor, character); VI) design problem; VII) prominence of narrative (central, instrumental, intermittent).

The qualitative analysis based also in the descriptive model proposed by Dovey & Fleuriot (2011), created to refine the language we use to describe and understand pervasive, mobile and located media applications. The model presents a "design taxonomy" that, rather than being built on theoretical ideas is based on real and existing applications that use the geographical/physical location of the user as the context to trigger the delivery of the media content. They generated the model and the taxonomy through five seminars that happened in 2004. Practitioners, theorists and expert users from an extensive set of disciplines – media and cultural studies, experience design, human-computer interaction, psychology, performance, computer science – got together to discuss *Mobile Bristol* projects, all funded by Hewlett Packard Laboratories in partnership with Bristol University. The projects are *Riot*, *Moulinex*, *A Description of This Place As If You Were Someone Else*, *CitiTag*, *Savannah* and *Node Boat*. They resulted from an investigation into how pervasive technology could help the enhancement of the experience and interaction among residents and visitors with the urban public spaces. Though the taxonomy created by the authors may not be representative of all kinds of mobile and locative narrative, it serves as a starting point in the conceptualization of what kinds of mobile media application have been produced, at the same time as it helps in a more precise definition of design proposals by authoring teams.

Dovey & Fleuriot (2011) identified a discursive vocabulary, keywords, terms and recurrent themes across different applications. Among the findings, they realized that the users experience descriptions tended to a more affective quality focusing on how they felt like and what kinds of pleasures they held rather than on the technological or media form. Comparing the descriptions they generated a basic template that describes what participants might want to know about an application. I have adopted this descriptive model and its following categories for my qualitative analysis. It contemplates: I) the activity (what does the body); II) the place (where it happens); III) equipment (devices and technologies); IV) content (what it is); V) media formats (audio, still and moving images, text); VI) genre (fiction, documentary); VII) effects

(how it intend to make users feel); VIII) sociability (if it's something you do by yourself or with others); IX) skills (if you need any special skills to do so).

The descriptive model and its categories serve to explore in detail characteristics taken as central to the mobile and locative narratives, in the technical and aesthetic level. Besides, it is was combined with some other descriptive dimensions pointed by Dovey & Fleuriot (2011) as the possibilities opened up by mobile and locative media applications.

Given that mobile media use is flexible, contingent and heterogeneous, the idea of a series of dimensional axes along which a team might 'place' its application may be a useful dynamic framework. In authoring mobile media applications teams could define their objectives asking where on the following different axes they wish to place the user experience. (Dovey & Fleuriot, 2011:101)

These dimensions can lead the design of applications, but I have used it here as a framework to analyze the already implemented mobile and locative narrative experiences comprised in the corpus of my research. The first dimension considered refers to control, a category that can assume different degrees. It can go from the complete freedom participants have to wander the data environment and create a unique experience, to a prescribed route or a specific guidance they have under their navigation. The control dimension also involves the analysis of the rule-sets of each project and the way it specify certain behaviors and encourage or not emergent ones. These decisions, according to Dovey and Fleuriot (2011), have to do with a classical interaction design problem: experiential learning, that comprises the didactic to make clear to participants their role in the experience.

The second dimension considered when analyzing the case study projects was the relations between space and place and the degrees of site-specificity of each narrative, what can be observed by their physical link or not with the landscapes pervaded. While no content is related to any specific location in an arbitrary mapping, in a meaningful mapping content is tied to specific locations establishing meaningful connections between data and particular places. Also related to the dimension of space there is the linear or non-linear way to place the story in the landscape, what directly affects the user navigation. Time is another aspect evaluated in the qualitative analysis. In this

case, the narrative experience can establish some time constraints or not, fixing a running time or letting it open, in the sense that users can take as long as they want in their experience interacting with the narrative or have a limited amount of time to be spent in their navigation. The last dimension analyzed was the one that refers to social or relational dimension, or, better explaining, if the narrative experience is private or public and either solitary, share or collaborative.

SYSTEM LEVEL	Interaction	Interaction (How participant act and the device react)	Sensing	implicit/ explicit
			Categories	explorative/ manipulative/ contributive
			Types	individual/collaborative/competitive
			Human Factors	expected abilities/use context/task
		Information Architecture (How is the organization of the content in the system)	Themes/ Genre	mystery/drama/documental
			Mode	telling/enactment exploratory/ontological
			Resources/ Data	text/audio/video/multimedia
			Structure/Protocol	linear/non-linear tree/flowchart/maze/braided/network
			User involvement	internal/external
			Prominence	central/instrumental/intermitent
HCI LEVEL	Interface	User Interface	Physical input	sensors/display
			Mapping	arbitrary/ meaningful - situated
			Output (content/media)	text/audio/video
COGNITIVE LEVEL	Experience	User Experience (How people «should» think and feel)	Satisfaction	Emotions/(dis)comfort/ pleasure
			Usability/ Performance	clear/unclear rules/interface
			Agency	sense of control
			Cognition	immersion/attention
			Individual and cultural differences	Age, gender, abilities, social settings

Figure 4: Template unifying the categories contemplated by the qualitative analysis.

Apart from helping in defining concepts and categories to guide the case study qualitative analysis directed in the second part of this doctoral research, this literature review also dedicated to contributing and enrich the understanding of the intersection

between narrative and mobile and locative technology. It included the revision of the writings about ubiquitous computing, trying to recognize how a post-desktop paradigm could have been contributing to innovate the narrative practice. From a previous research done when from the writing of the Ph.D. proposal came lots of argumentations about how the narrative universe has expanded its boundaries, exploring the advanced attributes of locative and mobile media. At that point of this present study, there was the understanding about how important it would be to avoid a technician approach, which could direct to an analysis only able to see the technological innovation as a motif of the change. Instead, the focus was to formal, conceptual, contextual and relational categories, in an analysis of the phenomenon from an aesthetic perspective.

Part of the theoretical review also dedicated to identifying other possible influences in this new stage of the narrative practice. How has art historically worked in the construction and reconstruction of the urban experience and the landscape of the cities? Why in particular moments the artistic vanguards took people out of the galleries to the city streets? Are there other cultural and ludic practices in which we could identify some of the considered pivotal aspects of the mobile and locative narrative experience? Some of these questions came when searching for references to support the subsequent qualitative analysis.

### 1.1.2 Close Observation of a Case Study

Investigating how ubiquitous computing has possibly influenced and changed narratives, the interest of this study was on pervasive and location-based projects that use mobile media in urban settings. The reference to *A Machine to See With*<sup>35</sup> appeared in this search for stories that engage audiences in interactive experiences across the city streets. The locative film, from the British artistic group *Blast Theory*, emerged as a potential case study in a heterogeneous corpus of analysis. Many other GPS films, locative narratives, mobile cinema, were also on my list. Common to all of them was the way they were bringing new dimensions to the understanding of what narrative could be in the ubiquitous era, regarding discourse strategies and audience participation.

The first attempt when mapping the contemporary projects that utilize pervasive and mobile technologies in public spaces was to bring different experiences together. That

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<sup>35</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/a-machine-to-see-with/>

would not just illustrate how heterogeneous could be the way artists were approaching new narrative genres by using these technologies. The option for a diverse case selection raised from a desire to create generalizations based on a significant corpus of analysis. Finding regularities among the diversity would allow the confirmation of what could be a new paradigm of the narrative theory and practice. The goal was so to identify Locative Art projects around the world: in Spain, United States, Germany, Singapur, France, Brazil.

Nevertheless, a concern raised when facing the diversity found: what is the line that can allow labeling so many different projects together? The question was also about the possibility of talking with the artists that created those pieces, or even about the chance of experimenting one of those artworks. The contemplation of so many projects from distinct groups could exclude the opportunity of deeply understanding each work, concerning the network and context involved in each case. The study did not concentrate on textual documentation considering the specificities of the medium. The idea was to see, talk and experience the phenomenon. Facing these challenges was that came the decision of concentrating the efforts on the artistic practice of *Blast Theory*: a group led by the artists Matt Adams, Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj, that uses interactive, pervasive and mobile media with an interdisciplinary research approach.

The next step was then to contact *Blast Theory* to inform the intention to use some of their works as case studies in this doctoral research. In addition to obtaining informed consent, another question was about the possibility of a site visit and in-person interviews with the team. The opportunity would allow a close observation of how they work. They gave the formal consent to use their projects as case studies. They also invited me to join their Volunteer Programme. Although I was aware that taking part in the program will mean break the necessary distance claimed to an objective observation, that was an opportunity to spend time with the group and to understand the company context, practice, and artistic methods.

I stayed in *Blast Theory* studios in Brighton – UK, a building at 20 Wellington Road, volunteering from 26<sup>th</sup> February until 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2014. The building where the group is was thought by them to act as a meeting point. There they aim to get together artists, scientists, and industry to collaborate, to research and to exchange knowledge. The artists' intention is to create a node within regional, national and international networks

of practitioners. The group would include people interested in fields such as games, locative media, mobile applications, experimental performance, interactive art and technological innovation. At the building, they host tests, works in progress, talks and seminars. *Act Otherwise*<sup>36</sup> is one of these events. The annual seminar brings together artists and researchers to discuss important issues of the moment. In my time volunteering in *Blast Theory* studios, I had the opportunity to attend their annual event, which brought together experts from across divergent fields, interested in profiling and personalization, to discuss the technical, social and creative issues raised by the surveillance. Using an open and informal format, *Blast Theory* invited artists, researchers, scholars and games designers to go to Brighton for two days of presentations, case studies and discussion groups.



Figure 5: Blast Theory studios, in Brighton.

I joined the “Volunteer Programme”<sup>37</sup> meant as an opportunity for those embarking on a career in Arts. It can be for many professionals a first-hand experience of working with an artistic company. The Volunteering covers an extensive range of activities including office administration, project management, database management, touring, archiving, marketing and publicity. During my period there, at times, I was also required to assist the artists in creative project development and realization. Volunteering with *Blast Theory*, I was able to get a privileged insight into the day to day workings of the studio.

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/the-invisible-hand-on-profiling-and-personalisation>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/volunteer-with-us/>

There was a busy touring program for them schedule until summer, what gave me the opportunity to see how they prepare themselves for touring, not just in technical terms but also adapting their pieces to different contexts. I became a deeply integrated member of the company, having easy access to the artists and considered part of the team, if not of the family, during my time working with them.

As stated in the Volunteer Agreement, I was working with *Blast Theory* full time with one day a week allocated to my Ph.D. studies. Once there, I had the opportunity to access their server, where they have archived expressive volume of data about their projects, going from production, manuals, technical aspects, marketing and publicity, audience feedback, to material generated specifically to each presentation done. *Blast Theory* also has a section on their website dedicated to research material, with papers written by them or about their work. *Blast Theory* also keeps physical archives in the studio. There is one with books containing material written by them or about them and another one with published news from all over the world regarding their work when touring. The most surprising physical archive, though, is an artistic one that documents all the creative process when developing a piece of work, including objects, drafts, drawings, references.

The time in *Blast Theory* studios allowed me to collect more data about their projects and practice than I would assume they had documented and archived. The volume of available material storage by them is huge. I gathered a variety of related texts from numerous sources. Apart from the information retrieved from *Blast Theory* website, from their archives and from observing the day to day in the studios, I also did separate interviews with Matt Adams, Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj<sup>38</sup>. My initial idea was to have a collective talk with the team, what would work more like a conversation and discussion about topics I will propose than a person to person interview. Doing the interviews individually showed its importance to me later. Talking to the artists one at the time allowed me to have individual perspectives and thoughts about specific issues related to their work.

The selection of *Blast Theory* as a potential case study for this research was due to many factors. They are representative in the matter investigated by this study. Rather

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<sup>38</sup> The transcriptions of the personal interviews with Matt Adams, Nick Tandavanitj and Ju Row Farr are respectively in Appendix 1, 2, and 3.

than thinking about achieve a possible statistical generalization through their illustrative significance, the main reason had to do with a logical consistency. With *Blast Theory*, the analysis would be able to contemplate and include their practice, their innovative and singular projects, their artistic trajectory, the scientific-artistic research model built by them over the years and incorporated as a core thread in their practice. *Blast Theory* is a consolidated group that has a long history experimenting and creating innovative projects. The multidisciplinary character came from its birth and is responsible for shaping the core concepts involved in the group's practice.

There were 80 people who came to the very first *Blast Theory* meeting and from the four people who were the core *Blast Theory* the first couple of years, Ju and I remain. Nick joined in 1994. So we built the language from the very beginning. There was different people bringing different skills. Finding structures and neighboring different possibilities to co-exist. On of the very first shows we ever did, we invited an artist to make an installation in the building, a band play, we had a club night and that was there for 4 months. We were all interested in the mixture of different elements. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>39</sup>

The group started in the 1990s was profoundly drew and inspired by a club culture. The technology was already present in the first pieces: multimedia performances based on interactive environments and projections with a live camera, set pads to trigger audio samples or to trigger video samples. Interaction sprung in their work with the audience having to move to watch things. Nick Tandavanitj remembered that, at that time, it felt really contemporary and able to make reference to the present culture as they which.

I suppose we were also referencing things like dance culture, live culture and projections in night clubs, and that sort of spaces where technology was being use in a much more kind of playful way, and not in the theater. It was pulling those kind of references and those kind of skill sets and those languages into the theater. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>40</sup>

Promenade based performances with multimedia as part of it characterized the beginning of their practice. Experimenting to find new languages for an audience to interact in real time, live performances was a way the artists encountered to make

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<sup>39</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

<sup>40</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

people feels as truly live and present in that particular moment as possible. How can art use technology to create new forms of interaction? As *Blast Theory* was exploring these possibilities, came to them the awareness of an era of massive technological change.

Still in the nineties, the artists witnessed the rise of the personal computer and the internet coming, though it was still a very utopian space of possibilities. Came the PC, then the Internet, then the mobile technology, the GPS technology, and other tools that became real in a rapid section. Matt Adams mentioned that the question was then how to engage with the significant social changes and political changes that these technologies were bringing. Among all these transformations catalyzed by the widespread of technology, there were also the ones regarding sociality. Many concerns raised in their practice and in what they were doing. They questioned themselves about what would be the main aspect to be explored in many of their following works:

How do we as artists deal with the fact that people are now interacting with strangers all over the world? What does that mean? What does that mean for community? What does that mean to social organization? What does that mean for political organizations? (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)

Since this beginning is notorious the *Blast Theory* interest in the audiences participation. Ju Row Fa pointed that, with *Something American*<sup>41</sup>, in 1996, came the desired to control the frame of the work. That was a moment to notice what was going on, notice how they compose images and stories. That was a time to understand what was going on between them and the audience.

We have always been deeply interested in the audience. I think we have always felt that we are not the experts. We are in a discussion. We are making propositions or structures. That are some of the intentions behind our work in the very start. We never had this sort of sense, that we are the authors and we have this great wisdom. We are not specially interested in mystifying the image of the artist. I think it is in fact the opposite. And I think that comes trough both in how we are and the work that we are trying to make. I think it is very important. It is political, a sort of way to operate in the world. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/something-american/>

<sup>42</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

Then, in 1998, there was *Kidnap*<sup>43</sup> a piece of work with major significance to *Blast Theory* practice. The group considered it as a turning point in many aspects. In *Kidnap* the audience became the central protagonist or performers. Kidnapping two members of the public as part of a lottery and streamed online the resulting event, gradually made *Blast Theory* artists realize what audience meant to them or with them.

They became layers, and layers of audiences which we consciously kind of played with. There were also some surprises in there. We hadn't realized first of all that we would be the first audience, we would be the primary audience. That brings what an audience is or could be, really kind of expanded within this quite complex piece of work. At the same time we were looking at the internet and how to investigate that and explore that. We had never use anything like that. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>44</sup>

*Kidnap* was their first piece of work that came out, onto the street. Though the artists use to explore unusual spaces, until that point they had done some projects that were all studio based or theater based.

Matt had an epiphany that we should just take it out of the theater and make it a kind of contract with an audience, that we had not make it yet. We will ask you to give up control to us. We will not gonna do it in context, in a tactical space, we will do it in the world. Can not think about space in that way. So essentially exploded space. That changed our understanding of what the space the performance was taking place. The landscape for where the work was taking place completely transformed and the landscape of the audience completely transformed. *Kidnap* sort of open the box of the space from the theatrical box. It also opened up that sort of way thinking about what media spaces where. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>45</sup>

*Kidnap* was also *Blast Theory* root into the internet. That was the first time they were using the World Wide Web in one of their works. The chose to do it having the internet as a window. The manner the artists utilize the online network in *Kidnap* demonstrated to them how people could be in a different place and still remotely experience the work. More than experience, they could also control what they were watching. The piece seemed to sharpness *Blast Theory* awareness regarding location based work, to what

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<sup>43</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/kidnap/>

<sup>44</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

<sup>45</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

was possible and achievable through technology and location. *Kidnap* is not exactly a locative project concerning technology, but it has exemplified to *Blast Theory* another important aspect they will explore in their next projects: they were able to distribute the location of the work to other people, by creating layers of space.

Maybe all of the complexity that we have been trying to hold in a promenade environment, like: this is happening here, this is happening here, and this is happening here, suddenly I think through that work, and through the technology, and through the thematic and through the relationship with the audience, all of those things kind of expanded in a different way through the space, through the technology. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>46</sup>

From their research and experimentation with layers of spaces, technology and audience culminated *Desert Rain*<sup>47</sup>, from 1999. In this game/performance using virtual reality came the first group's collaboration with the *Mixed Reality Lab*, at the *University of Nottingham*. The partnership extended for many years and symbolized a significant moment in their practice, helping the artists to develop their skills in some ways. The collaboration made them also think about research. Matt Adams highlighted<sup>48</sup> that the engagement with universities and the scientific practice showed how they could learn from the work, develop knowledge and share that knowledge with others. The art/research model adopted by them from that moment would benefit and inspire the practice of both teams.

Steve Bedford, that is the professor, is a remarkable man. He had the ability very early on to see why working with us would be a good idea. The University of Nottingham have a massive impact on our work in terms of accessing skills. We would never work with GPS, for example in 1999, if it was not for them saying 'there is this technology, and this is how it works, and this is how you can do it'. We would never make a work in virtual reality like *Desert Rain*. It is also been about resources, where we have access equipment and money. And through the partnerships with Nottingham to access other organizations, we would never work with Sony, or Nokia, or BBC if Nottingham had not brought those relationships. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/desert-rain/>

<sup>48</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

<sup>49</sup> *Idem*.

Many other notable works in the group career came from this partnership between the University and the artistic group. *Can You See Me Now?* (2001)<sup>50</sup>, *Uncle Roy All Around You* (2003)<sup>51</sup>, *I Like Frank* (2004)<sup>52</sup> are some of these projects. They became well known especially due to its innovative aspect. The artists consider the latter as the world's first mixed reality game for 3G phones. The former are also mixed reality games played online and on the streets. The group's collaboration with the University of Nottingham, grown over ten years, is considered by them as:

the longest and most productive partnership between a university and a group of artists anywhere in the world. It has yielded four BAFTA nominations, a Prix Ars Electronica and academic papers of international significance at world leading conferences in computer science, computer human interaction and ubiquitous computing. This dialogue between scientific and artistic research now forms a core thread of *Blast Theory's* practice.<sup>53</sup>

*Blast Theory* was a lead partner in two major research projects: a UK project exploring mobile devices that included the *BBC*, *British Telecom* and *Microsoft Research* and the *Integrated Project on Pervasive Gaming*, between 2004 and 2008, with the *Swedish Institute of Computer Science*, *Sony*, and *Nokia*. From the last project came *Rider Spoke* (2007), a participatory work for cyclists. The artists have won many important prizes in Interactive Art, Technological and Social Innovation, Game Development. They have a marked recognition for their thinking about performativity, presence and site specificity. Masterclasses, mentoring, internships, seminars and lectures are central to the group's dissemination of its ideas around the world. Matt Adams became a Visiting Professor at the *Central School of Speech and Drama* and an Honorary Fellow at the *University of Exeter*. The artist frequently mentors emerging professionals in the art field, games designers, and developers.

After more than 20 years of career, *Blast Theory* artists describe themselves nowadays as doing “collaborative, interdisciplinary work that is innovative in its process and execution”<sup>54</sup>. Or even as “one of the most adventurous artists' groups using interactive media, creating groundbreaking new forms of performance and interactive art that

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<sup>50</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/can-you-see-me-now/>

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/uncle-roy-all-around-you/>

<sup>52</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/i-like-frank/>

<sup>53</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/our-history-approach/>

<sup>54</sup> *Idem*

mixes audiences across the internet, live performance and digital broadcasting”<sup>55</sup>. If *Blast Theory*’s early work was in the field of live art, recently they have been increasingly widely acknowledged as innovators in games. Their practice goes from locative media, mobile applications, experimental performance, interactive art. The artists said fascinated with how technology, especially mobile devices, creates new cultural spaces. They explore the technology in its social and political aspects with the city and the urban landscape considered as a networked social space.



Figure 6: Nick Tandavanitj, Matt Adams and Ju Row Farr. Image by *Blast Theory*.

Matt Adams, Ju Row Far and Nick Tandavanitj have systematically investigated the role of the audience. They merge games strategies, live-performance and the real city to propose new positions for the audience. Moreover, participant can customize and personalize the narrative in some *Blast Theory* projects. As they observe, their pieces suggests: “important questions about the meaning of interaction and, especially, its limitations. Who is invited to speak, under what conditions and what that is truly meaningful can be said?”<sup>56</sup> Innovation and artistic risks figure as a central aspect of their practice, present in the manner they use technology, on their working methods, and

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<sup>55</sup> Idem.

<sup>56</sup> Idem.

even in their business model. *Blast Theory* has shown to be agile and highly responsive to new ideas and opportunities. To the artists, innovation is a factor intimately correlated to another one, that is being open to taking significant risks. All of those aspects when put together require from them extended periods of development that is followed by international showing. They have toured their work internationally.

Considering the long trajectory of *Blast Theory*, focus on their artworks as case study enable this study to reconstitute the conditions of the existence and emergence of their practice with locative media. The case studies would not just come to demonstrate and prove a hypothesis. They would be case histories. All these aspects were definitive in the decision to selected four of their projects, believed to be representative in the understanding of the phenomenon investigated by this research. Though they are somewhat similar in form, each one approaches narrative from a unique perspective.

*I Like Frank*<sup>57</sup> (2004) is the world's first 3G mixed reality game, as described by Blast Theory. Participants can join the game online or on the streets. The goal is to search for an elusive character called Frank. Players in the real city chat with players in the virtual city and swap information to find Frank. The piece was produced during Blast Theory's appointment as "Adelaide Thinkers in Residence" for 12 weeks, in Australia. *Blast Theory* and *Mixed Reality Lab*, at the *University of Nottingham* worked with local artists and scientists to create the game.

*Rider Spoke*<sup>58</sup> (2007) follows the fascination *Blast Theory* has with games and new communication technologies to invite people to co-authors the narrative. It is about new hybrid social spaces, which intertwine the private and the public. Participants join the work by cycling through the city streets. They receive a very personal an intimate question and have to search an appropriate and hiding place where they can record their answer. After recording, they have to speculate and look for the hiding places in which others have left their recordings. Participants take part equipped with a bike, headphones, and an N800 handheld computer. *Trek* sponsored the project. The development happened in collaboration with the *Mixed Reality Lab* at the *University of Nottingham*, *Sony Net Services* and the *Fraunhofer Institute* as part of the European research project IPerG (Integrated Project on Pervasive Gaming).

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<sup>57</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/i-like-frank/>

<sup>58</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/rider-spoke/>



Figure 7: *I Like Frank*. Image by *Blast Theory*.

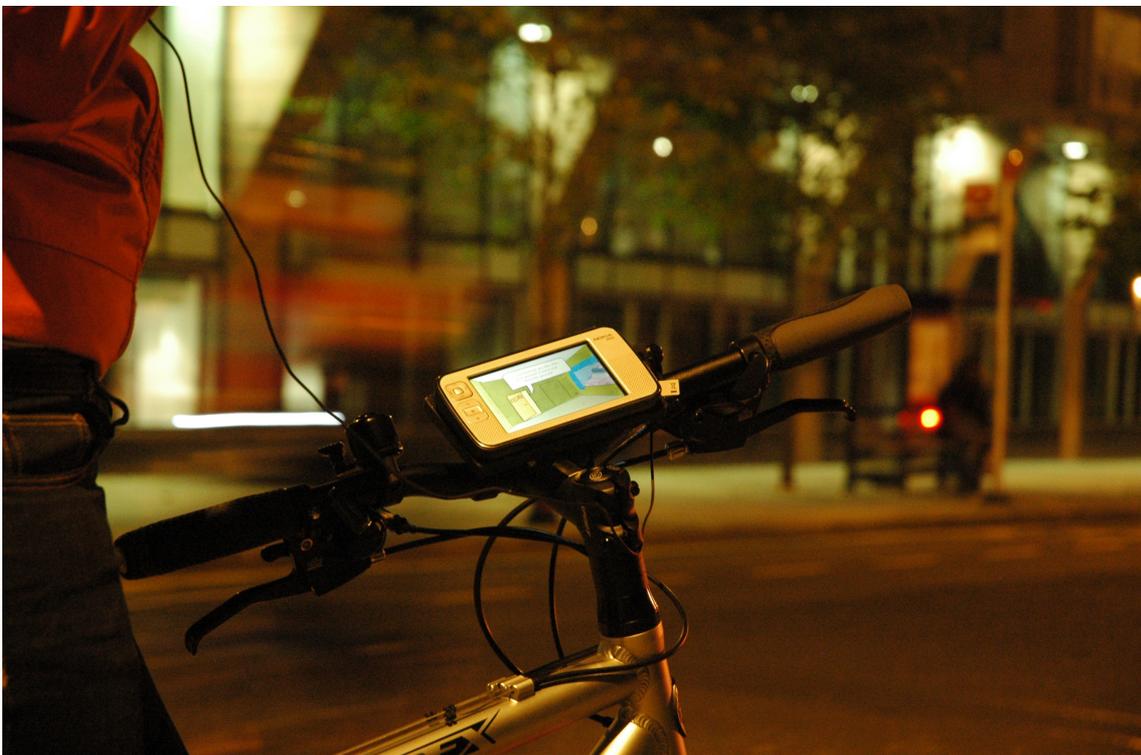
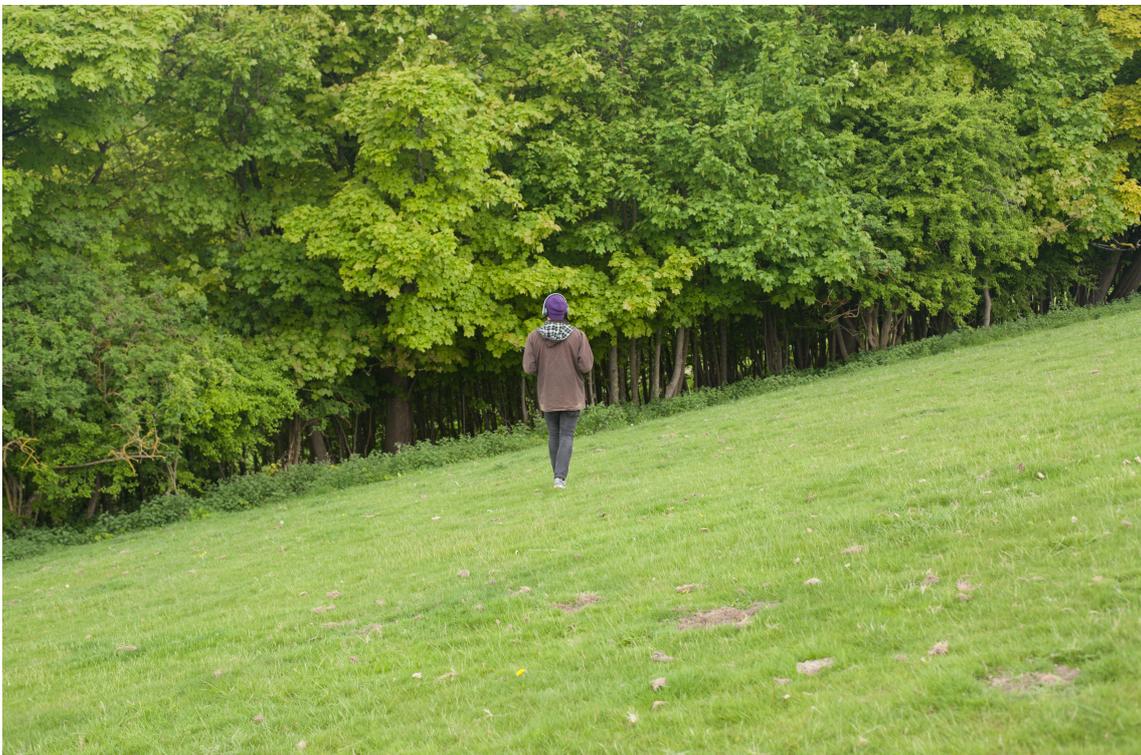


Figure 8: *Rider Spoke*. Image by *Blast Theory*.



*Figure 9: A Machine To See With. Image by Blast Theory.*



*Figure 10: Fixing Point. Image by Blast Theory.*

*A Machine to See With*<sup>59</sup> (2010) is a locative film where the participant plays the lead. The story is about the financial crisis. The narrative brings an attempted robbery of a bank with money as a recurrent part of the work. People have to sign up online handing over their mobile phone number. An automated call will give them the address where they need to go to start the film. After that, a series of phone calls will give instructions that lead the participant through the city in a bank robbery heist movie. The project uses the city in a cinematic way. The project won the “Locative Cinema Commission” from the *Sundance Film Festival*. It is about the tyranny of choice and consumerism. The work employs automation to create a personalized experience.

*Fixing Point*<sup>60</sup> (2011) is defined as an audio walk. The story is about Seamus Ruddy, killed in 1985 by members of the Irish National Liberation Army in Paris. The narrative anchors on an interview with his sister Seamus Ruddy. Seamus body has never been found but is believed to be in a forest in France. Participants have to walk to the wood and explore the space to find metal fixing points hidden in the place. Each fixing point reveals an audio recording about Seamus. Participants wear headphones connected to a smartphone, which screen shows a map of the area. The has collaboration of the electronic musician Clark.

This study proposed a qualitative analysis of these four projects able to contemplate the formal, conceptual, contextual, and relational aspects. What characterize these stories? Which principles are combined to create different proposals? On one side there was the inquiry about the relationship between form and content. It was crucial to recognize how each work functions, how the content adapts to the form or how an interactive form serves for specific content. In addition, there was the necessity to understand the social and historical scenario in which these pieces emerged. An in-depth examination would necessarily grant to this dimension the same value given to the interaction design. The analysis identified the ideas and concepts proposed by artists, the discursive techniques and the participation models adopted by the existing projects. By this evaluation, came the what would be the aesthetic foundations of the narratives that have the physical navigation and mobility as interactive premises. The knowledge generated in this phase of the study served as a framework for the subsequent practice-based stage of this doctoral research.

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<sup>59</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/a-machine-to-see-with/>

<sup>60</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/fixing-point/>

### 1.1.3 Applied Theory and Practice-based Research

The goal of this study included both, the analysis of the narrative content in locative media projects and the understanding of the users' interactive experience in this context. Nevertheless, the opportunity to talk with people who had participated in the *Blast Theory* projects analyzed in this research was not a guarantee. Only by speaking to them this thesis could compare their feedback according to different narrative configurations. To be able to do so, I've proposed to create my own designing of a locative narrative experience as part of this doctoral research. The practical dimension added to the doctoral proposal aimed to give the opportunity to take a holistic view of the relationship between the design of a locative narrative project, those exposed to it, and the social, cultural and business context in which it takes place.

The necessity of a practical experience followed the belief that the interrelation of narrative and locative media represent a fruitful territory to artistic experiments. Moreover, as Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez (2010) defend, the development of locative narrative forms, or as they say “the creation of literary spaces using geolocation technologies necessarily implies experimentation” (Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez, 2010, p. 338). Their findings on this terrain, for instance, anchor on practices conducted by the Hermeneia Research Group and the Centro Avanzado de Investigación en Inteligencia Artificial<sup>61</sup>.

Following this idea of experimentation within the field, the first proposal of this Ph.D. project was to develop an application prototype that could allow the implementation of different narrative strategies. Adaptations in the app would generate distinct storytellings. With that, there was the possibility to check how participants react in response to particular discourses configurations and participation modes. Aware of the demands that software development would generate, such as time, skills, equipment, I decided to articulate a network to this practical part of my project.

The Brazilian artist, Vj Pixel, was the first one I contacted. I had previously interviewed him in the first stage of my research when I was mapping the locative narrative projects

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<sup>61</sup> Both institutions proposed to the Spanish Department of Industry and Technology the creation of the “Global Poetic System”, combining literary information, social technologies and geographic positioning. They evidence how extensive are the opportunities within this field of locative narratives, when listing the many possibilities they envisioned to the literary information system they were creating (Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez, 2010, pp. 240-241).

recently developed. At that period, I came across with *Narrative Navigation*<sup>62</sup>, that was considered by me as a potential case study to include in the corpus of analysis of my thesis. *Narrative Navigation* is a mobile application produced during a residency project, in cooperation between the Brazilian organization, “Vivo ARTE.MOV” and the dutch institution “NIMK – Netherlands Media Art Institute”. The Dutch artist, Sander Veenhof, and the Brazilian artist, Vj Pixel, were chosen to work together for one month in The Netherlands and another month in Brazil. They joined to research and to explore the opportunities of Augmented Reality systems and content creation. From that experience came *Narrative Navigation*, an app in which the users can follow a story through the city streets, choosing paths that can change the direction and the genre of the story. Within the app, the users can also contribute creating new nodes for the story or even start new stories.

When I interviewed Vj Pixel about this project, he mentioned some aspects of *Narrative Navigation* that I kept in mind. First, I questioned him about the narrative. One of the first issues I identified in my preliminary research was that most of the mobile and locative projects did not have a consistent storytelling. They usually dedicate more efforts to the technical features, to a general artistic concept, to the interaction model or even to the gameplay. Vj Pixel exposed to me that in *Narrative Navigation* the content dimension followed the idea of “game books”. He explained that they had demanded consultancy of writers to create the story. It ended up being a challenging dimension and a not so explored part of the project. Another aspect I asked him during this interview was about the development of the software. I also perceived that most of the locative projects I had mapped, though they were recent, they had been presented just once and did not provide access anymore. Vj Pixel mentioned that the app they developed using free software was still available to download in *Layar* and the most important: we could implement the app in other cities across the world.

After some months, my research design decisions were done. One of them was to do not use *Narrative Navigation* in the corpus of analysis of my thesis. Instead, I decided to concentrate on *Blast Theory* projects and practice. Nevertheless, I had also proposed the practical stage for the research and an idea came into my mind. Why do not suggest Vj Pixel to implement and experiment *Narrative Navigation* in Barcelona? Using the structure of the app we could explore different narrative settings, observing and

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<sup>62</sup> <http://memelab.com.br/nn/>

analyzing participants' experience in response to it. I was interested in that, and so was Vj Pixel. We both could benefit from that. In my case, it would reduce many of the technical demands involved in my applied research, what would not be a problem once my interest was more in the narrative discourse and the participation modes than in the programming involved in such artistic processes. In the artist case, Vj Pixel had mentioned during the interview that he wants to give a step further exploring more the narrative dimension in such mobile projects. He wants to give continuity to the experience started with *Narrative Navigation*, designing a narrative with gameplay to be placed on the city streets.

I then contacted Vj Pixel to inform him that I would not use *Narrative Navigation* as a case study in my research, but that I was considering implement the project in Barcelona during my theory applied practice. That was when I formally invited Vj Pixel to collaborate in the second stage of my Ph.D. research. Unexpectedly, he proposed something even more challenging. He asked me: why we do not create something completely new? I was aware of how much effort that would require, specially because Pixel was based in Brazil and I was living in Barcelona. Despite all the concerns about what was proposed, I completely agreed and took the challenge of working with him remotely and articulate everything to make the development process possible. Instead of reducing the demands, many other requirements that I did not expected were created as the project was growing and gaining unimagined proportions.

Vj Pixel signed the artistic creation with me, but he would contributed not just with the experience acquired from the *Narrative Navigation* project and from his background – the artist has a long experience in the field of interactive media art and has been working with the topic of interactive theater with game dynamics. Vj Pixel directs a laboratory of interactive technologies, called *Memelab*<sup>63</sup>, in the development of artistic projects. That experience would also help me in the coordination and management of the project that we were to start.

I was still at the end of the first stage of my research when we both started to have frequent online meetings to discuss and shape what would be the project and its concept. *Chronica Mobilis*, as it was named, was then developed for artistic and research goals. We designed everything from scratch, considering my research and Vj

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<sup>63</sup> <http://memelab.com.br>

Pixel's artistic interests. The research question and its principal objective reflected and in some sense guided the work we were creating. The overall objective was to build a narrative experience with gameplay that uses the city as a diegetic space, the mobile and geospatial technology as a tool and the navigation as an interactive mode.

We designed the project with particular attention paid to participants' experience. That needed to include different levels of participation, among them the classic audience sited and “watching” the show was the main one. In the interactive system design, we tried to deal with the relationship between form, function and content, as well as with the dimensions of fun and playability. The development concern was the whole interaction, including how it looks and feels in aesthetic terms, how it will work, how the interaction will flow, how well the content will fit in. During the design, we were exploring and testing some ideas, always asking “what if?”. That was how we ended up deciding not to create an app. Instead, we would do it live. We would create an interactive performance with gameplay to be placed on the city streets and watch simultaneously online on the Internet and in an exhibition space.

During this time, I started to articulate resources for the development of the project. With the help and advice of my thesis Director, Roc Parés, I contacted Hangar, an artistic centre based in Barcelona.<sup>64</sup> *Pompeu Fabra University* and *Hangar* had a framework of cooperation, though that was not with the Doctoral Programme in Communication but with the Master in Digital Arts. In a meeting with Tere Badia, Hangar's Director, and Marta Garcia, Research Programmes Director, we discussed a possible institutional support to the project. They received the idea with enthusiasm. Marta Garcia made the suggestion of a possible dialogue with a group that was currently working in *Hangar*, called *Constelaciones*<sup>65</sup>, whose project was a visualization system of geolocated videos created through documentation derives in public space. In the future, *Constelaciones*” joined the network of crucial collaborations we established to *Chronica Mobilis* project.

Tere Badia considered opportune the collaboration and mentioned that would be interesting if this investigation and its scheduled activities do not happen as private and closed, instead work as a part of *Hangar* activities. It was important to her that the

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<sup>64</sup> <http://http://hangar.org/>

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.constelacionesonline.net/>

experience served as the basis for the continuity with the efforts to the formation of a research group on art and locative media theme. Tere Badia mentioned the project "MAL – Mobile Art Lab"<sup>66</sup> and the *Hangar* attempt to establish a working group on research and artistic creations using mobile devices as tools. My Ph.D project, in this sense, was something concrete to keep stimulating that dialogue between artists and students, between *Hangar* and *Pompeu Fabra University*. We visioned that we could start an interesting exchange between this group we will form in “Hangar” and the *Ecoarte*<sup>67</sup> group, directed by my thesis Co-director, Karla Brunet, in Federal University of Bahia, in Brazil. That would serve to share experiences and knowledge on the subject.

*Hangar* could not sponsor this project. However, they will give me all the support for an artistic residency with VJ Pixel to develop the work. *Hangar* would accommodate the Brazilian artist and provide us a work space for the activities performed throughout the period. *Hangar* has supported and encouraged the process from the beginning. In return, we would present the work that we were developing and realize some practices with people interested. *Chronica Mobilis* then affirmed itself as a project that integrates scientific research and artistic creation. Besides the presentation of an interactive performance with gameplay, we planned an artist residency and two-day activities, including discussion, practice and deconstruction of the work. All these, programmed to facilitate the exchange of knowledge on the subject between artists and researchers from Brazil and Spain.

Various artists and researchers joined the project over time, after two public open calls. We spread the calls in websites and discussion lists on the subject of art and technology. We were looking for people interested in the creative use of locative technology and the development of new narrative genres. The open calls was to those interested in contributing to the process, does not matter whether they were from or based in Brazil and Spain. In total, we were able to get together more than 20 people from different nationalities and backgrounds to work in the development of *Chronica Mobilis*. The knowledge and ideas from everyone who became part of the multidisciplinary team ended up influencing the artistic piece. It became a collaborative and collective project.

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<sup>66</sup> <http://mal.hangar.org/>

<sup>67</sup> <http://ecoarte.info/>

Most of the development activities happened remotely, as we gathered in the group professionals from around the world. The collaborative process for designing the performance culminates in a six-week artist residency in *Hangar*, Barcelona, from 6<sup>th</sup> of October to 18<sup>th</sup> November 2014. Major institutional collaborations to this residence also came from the Artistic and Cultural Mobility Programme from Bahia Government – Brazil, who sponsored Vj Pixel trip to Barcelona. The residence had an intensive and interdisciplinary program and covered technical activities and artistic creation. During this time, artists and researchers worked following an iterative methodology, testing usability, technical issues, gameplay dynamics and adjusting the software and the narrative that supported the performance. We presented *Chronica Mobilis* in Barcelona on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2014, in *Hangar*.

The performance created an environment with many layers of content and audiences. During its presentation, I observed the concrete audience experience when exposed to an artistic project like that, evaluating specific aspects related to the interactive experiences generated. The key issues examined were participation, control, and context concerning the physical, sensory, cognitive and emotional dimensions. For the evaluation of the participants experience, I also applied a questionnaire with open questions just after the performance. The descriptions aimed to identify how participants qualify their experience, observing essential aspects, effects and satisfaction regarding each level of participation. Different discursive techniques and participation modes generated distinct feedbacks. The data gathered served to classify the experience of the different modalities proposed to participants take part on the project.

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## NARRATIVE STRUCTURE IN THE DIGITAL MEDIA AGE

The development of a new medium has historically opened up room to both celebratory and apocalyptic positions formulate their impressions about the impact the emergent technology will have on society (Eco & Lumley, 1994). This Chapter presents not a utopian or imaginative prediction, but a carefully and solid observation of how digital technologies have affected narrative form. The practice of the artistic group *Blast Theory* serves to support the discussion and to elucidate the mentioned changes.

Together, Matt Adams, Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj has passed through a historical transformation wave, witnessing the radical changes that took place in the last decades. The artists had their creative process exposed, first to the introduction of computer-based systems, and after its invention to the advent of the Internet. In an innovative way, they have experimented with the many possibilities inaugurated by all those technologies. While exploring the novelties, they have also been contributing to model what is the current digital and interactive storytelling form.

*Blast Theory* gained international reputation exactly for creating sophisticated interactive experiences using the latest technology. This study concentrates on four projects of the British group – *I Like Frank*<sup>68</sup> (2004), *Rider Spoke*<sup>69</sup> (2007), *A Machine To See With*<sup>70</sup> (2010) and *Fixing Point*<sup>71</sup> (2011). These case studies give light to the diverse architectures digital narratives can adopt in the current scenario. This Chapter brings the qualitative analysis of each one, what reveals the design challenges in the creation of mobile and location-based stories.

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<sup>68</sup><http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/i-like-frank/>

<sup>69</sup><http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/rider-spoke/>

<sup>70</sup><http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/a-machine-to-see-with/>

<sup>71</sup><http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/fixing-point/>

## 2.1 Media as a Semiotic Channel Affecting Narratives

The idea that we were entering at an entirely different moment in History triggered by technological innovations was a discourse extremely pronounced to us before we have even actually felt in our everyday life the consequences of what society believed to be a new media paradigm. The promise was that the new age would promote notorious transformations able to reach the most diverse dimensions in society. Matt Adams, from *Blast Theory*, started his public lecture, in 2004, in the context of the “Adelaide Thinkers in Residence”<sup>72</sup>, remembering one of those celebratory predictions regarding technology. He told that a long time ago someone announced to him part of the shifts he would experiment just many years later. It happened when he was 14 years old, and a visionary visited his school declaring that there would be a significant transformation in television. According to that man, it would be the end of an era marked by the consuming of audiovisual narratives as so far people were used to. Instead of accepting the bland output from the existing networks, consumers would be able to take control themselves and become producers too. He predicted the unleash of a new wave of creativity. The curious is that the doctrinaire was not even talking to Matt and the other students about digital media. At that time, another pioneer and influential invention brandished by the man while he was talking was the responsible for the radical break. That was the VHS tape.

The logic that visionary exposed to the young Matt seemed to be impeccable, and the scenario described by him inevitable. Despite that, the artist did not see the predicted future takes place in the world he was growing up. With the time passing, his first fascination with the future described ended up converting into frustration. Matt Adams remembered in his talk that the VHS evangelist became to him not an idealist but an idiot, a misguided and over-confident person. What he did not expect was that the explosive hypothesis foreseen by that man would happen many years later when the internet became popular. I would also say that the visionary was not entirely wrong. The VHS technology had its impact concerning audiovisual production and consuming, though it was not in the dimension he imagined. The Video Home System did change the economics of the television and the movie businesses. Plus, it supported the expansion of many artistic manifestations, as the video art movement. New audiovisual narratives

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<sup>72</sup> During my period at *Blast Theory* studios, I had access to the transcription of Matt Adams Public Lecture in Adelaide, through a file archived on *Blast Theory* server. See its reproduction in Appendix 4.

and exhibition modes grew up and became possible thanks to the invention of the consumer video technology.

The case described above helps us to recognize how a celebratory discourse sometimes predicted an inevitable impact of many technological innovations throughout History. Only with the pass of the time is that society would attest the real effects of it on the cultural, social and economic domains. Scollari (2008) agrees that every era generates its communication technologies, which helps to define that historic moment. To him, these media transforms the world at the same time as it influences the perception we have of it because of their potential to engender particular aesthetics and subjectivities. Nevertheless, he also discusses the necessity of going beyond dualistic logics and deterministic statements, what is the same as to avoid discourses that point to the ability technology has to model us<sup>73</sup>. Our purpose in is not to assume a digitalist and dominant discourse that creates a myth around the idea that technology is responsible for an unequivocal and irreversible social change, offering a global future full of promises of progress (Almiron & Jarque, 2008). This study avoids an innocent enthusiasm with “the new”, recognizing the ideological idea under the modernist belief that “cutting edge” and “avant-garde” means better. Instead of promoting the notion that technology delivers social progress, this research evaluates the emergence of a particular communication medium considering it as an epoch-making phenomena part of a larger landscape (Dovey, 2009).

Regarding the storytelling art, this thesis investigates possible media influences rather than simplistically affirms that a determined system forged the phenomenon we see manifested. It focuses on observing how a medium can come either expanding or limiting the narrative expressive power, according to the affordances and constraints they impose. Decisive shifts in narrative form and structure succeeded almost at every invention of a new communication system, with adaptations occurring according to the diverse relations established with the supporting medium. The emergence of print is probably the most mentioned in reference to the effects it caused on narratives, a fact that Walter Ong, in *Literacy and Orality in Our Times*, clarifies with a detailed historical analysis.

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<sup>73</sup> To avoid these reasoning, Scollari (2008) suggests the adoption of the ecosystem metaphor, considering media as a lively system in transformation and evolution.

Comparing oral and literate cultures, Ong (1978) identifies the marked transformations and the vast differences that came to distinguish both storytelling modes. He remembers that narrative in oral cultures was mnemonic and essentially mediated by the physical presence of a narrator. In that circumstances, as he emphasizes, stories had to rely mainly on the narrator's memory and expressive power, with storytellers following a relatively free episodic structure, prosodic features, fixed formulas and standardized images. These were some of the resources they had to support their practice and to compensate the deviceless agent and recipient's constraints. In this case, the narrator's and the listeners' limitations. As Ong contrasts, the writing manuscripts came transforming what was an open epic improvisational structure into a tightly sequential organized dramatic plot. He believes that the controlled sequential ordering of events would not be possible in oral improvisation, what justifies the fact that the mnemonic features became obsolete with the invention of the print and the encouragement of silent reading. With the print, as he points, came the birth of the novel, a new narrative form that brought plot structure to unprecedented levels of elaboration.

With the emergence of computers, once more in History a new kind of textuality took form with distinctive features of this communication system opening up room to a new expressive terrain for narratives. Relevant semiotic possibilities became available to stories generated by the use of this communication systems, what added, even more, complexity to the way storytellers could organize their accounts. Innovative models situated in a postmodern culture gained form by contesting traditional patterns and the classic notions of storytelling authorship, authenticity, veracity, and authority. The impact in narrativity was so great that it demanded the development of new narratology analytic tools able to deal with the emergent forms. The transformations required a whole new chapter in the technological history of narratology, with hypertext, computer games and other narrative applications of digital encoding acting as protagonists. Rather than symbolizing the invention of a new transmissive channel, computers brought with them a particular language and some specificities that would affect the content they mediate. Modularity, variability, interactivity, customization and database form were some of the features that caused notable consequences on narratives, attesting digital media ability to influence the development of new storytelling forms (Manovich, 2001).

Transmedial studies have been pointing to the role that media plays in the narrative realm. Marie-Laure Ryan (2004b) stresses the fact that media are not just a mere

pipeline conducting information, but a semiotic channel able to affect stories form and structure. To her, a medium can influence the kind of stories evoked, how these stories are told and also experienced. In other words, a system can influence narratives on a semantic, syntax and pragmatic level. In *Will New Media Produce New Narratives*, Ryan clarifies how it can happen. In a semantic perspective, she attests that different media favors different variations of the basic cognitive template. As she exemplifies, film prefers dramatic narratives while computer games prefer quest ones. Both storytellings can have a structure based on one plot line, but the latter divided into several autonomous episodes corresponding to the stages players have to pass. Regarding syntax, Ryan observes that media can produce distinct manners to present stories. She notes for instance how comic strips break up the narrative into discrete frames, while an only image sequence can represent the same on films. On the pragmatic level, Ryan understands that each type of discourse formation will demand particular interpretative strategies on the part of who is experimenting it, as well as different media may offer distinct modes for participants interact and get involved in the story. She also recognizes that some media features such as the number of a semiotic and sensory channel it has, its spatiotemporal extension and its Kinect properties can affect the storytelling experience.

How stories generated or experienced through computers showcase new media specificity? Are there traditional narrative principles that remain applicable independent of the semiotic channel that mediates the storytelling act? This thesis answers these questions first recognizing the existence of basic principles governing narratives, to then analyzes the aesthetic possibilities brought by the own and unique resources of computer-based systems. This study investigates by which means the distinctive principles shaping the language of digital media characterizes the emergent storytelling forms as well as whether classic architectures still inform and serve as a model for computer-based accounts.

### 2.1.1 Assumptions of the Narrative Linear Organizing Principle

One of the earliest formulations of what would be the core principles governing narratives came in a quite accurate method of organizing material presented by Aristotle (1932) on the seminal *Poetics* book<sup>74</sup>, what later became the first theory of Western

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<sup>74</sup> Probably recorded between the years 335 to 323 BC, the writings publicized on the *Poetics* book were some schematic notes taken by the philosopher and intended to be orally developed by him in his lessons

Theatre and still echoes influencing art. On his notes, Aristotle brought the idea that texts should figure as a series of connected actions and not just as a set of material. The fundamental principle initially stated by him was that storytelling must assure what he called “unity of action”, or the needed for building a play around a single unbroken plot thread. To do so, Aristotle presented a formula indicating a required structure of composition and transformation able to create a coherent story.

The model inaugurated by the *Poetics* presumed a narrative with a distinct beginning, middle, and end connected through apparently motivated causes, in a time-bound sequence of actions. As Aristotle (1932) stated, a textual structure configured in terms of matched situations would present a “hero passing by a series of probable or necessary stages from misfortune to happiness, or from happiness to misfortune” (Aristotle, 1932, p. 13). He advocated for the necessity of a plot bring a complex structure of incidents, containing these reversals involving a protagonist's suffering due to a change of fortune, from good to bad or the opposite. Moreover, to him, a narrative should increase in intensity to the climax. Reached the peak, it should come gradually to an end in parallel and tone to its beginning. Narrative compositions on his perspective had to imply a symmetrical and carefully controlled rise and fall of tension, what he believed could cause fear and pity on the audience. The model encouraged by the *Poetics* had a fixed sequence to structure a plot in three acts – the beginning, middle and end; or the protasis, epitasis, and catastrophe.

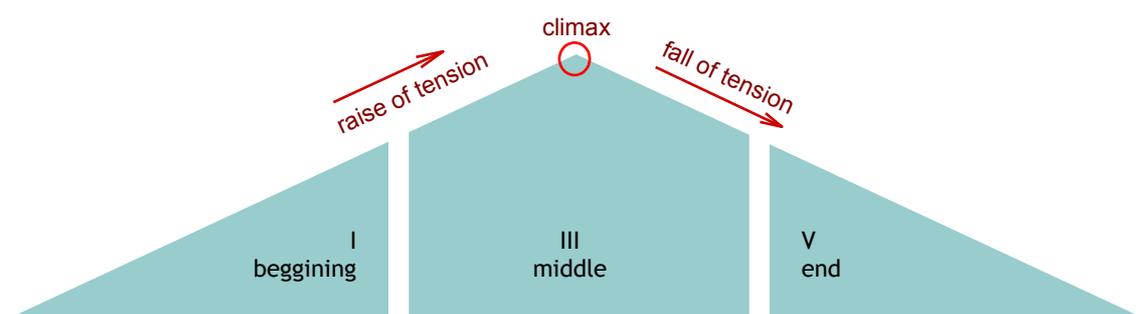


Figure 11: Aristotle's model for a structured drama plot in three acts.

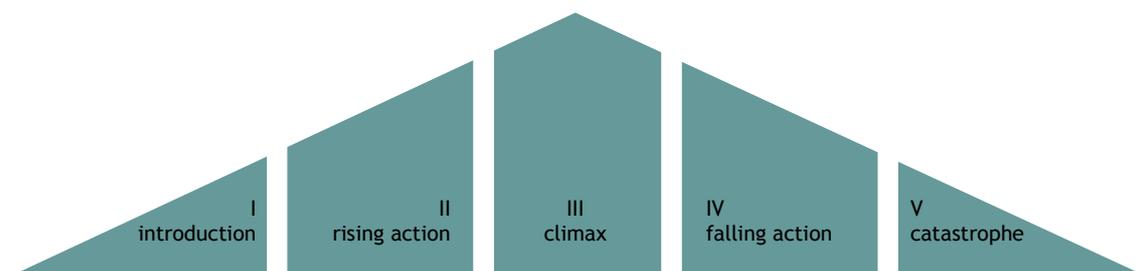
A broad spectrum of texts, from theater to narrative prose, have regularly applied the insights presented on the *Poetics*. The reinforcement of the model happened regardless the fact that the writings were primarily a commentary on the art of tragedy, taking

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of the Lyceum on the subject of poetry.

Homer's *Odyssey* as a reference. This organizing principle became through decades a standard from which other patterns derivated, actualizing and expanding the stages comprised in a structured drama. Tzvetan Todorov (1971), for instance, developed and listed what he considered being the five basic stages of a narrative. According to him, a story should start with a state of equilibrium at the outset. The initial phase would also be the one that introduces the story setting and its characters. After the stability represented at the beginning, there should be a disruption of such equilibrium with some action causing the disturbance in the fictional universe. The next step should be so the recognition of the conflict installed in the storyworld. The awareness that there has been a disruption was to him what triggers the following stage of the narrative, characterized by the attempt to repair the equilibrium. In the end, the solution to the conflict recover the initial stability in the outset. These were the five stages listed by Todorov (1971) on his narrative organizing principle that similarly to Aristotle's model presents a controlled rise and fall of tension.

The Freytag's pyramid is another reference to a narrative model comprised of five stages and derived from the assumptions present on the *Poetics*. Gustav Freytag (1896), who proposed such structure, explains that: “through the two halves of the action which come closely together at one point, the drama possesses – if one may symbolize its arrangement by lines – a pyramidal structure” (Freytag, 1896, p. 114). As shown in *Figure 7*, the triangular model comprises five dramatic parts, divided into (a) introduction, (b) rise, (c) climax, (d) return or fall, (e) catastrophe.



*Figure 12:* The Freytag's triangle symbolizing a narrative in five stages.

As Freytag (1896) describes, each of the five stages that constitute the structure has a particular function in the narrative. They are peculiar in purpose and construction. According to his explanation, the first part, or the exposition, is an introduction to relevant information regarding the story setting. It is a moment to background events

regarding the characters. After that, the rising action brings events defining the climax for the story. To him, this act is the one responsible for changing the destiny of the protagonist, from good to bad or from bad to good. In the sequence to this turning point, he points a falling action settling the conflict involving the main character. The following ending point is so the *dénouement*, the conflict resolution, what can be a revelation or a catastrophe. To the author, the final stage is also what brings the sense of catharsis with the release of the tension and anxiety comprised in the story. On his words, the structure:

rises from the *introduction* with the entrance of the exciting forces to the *climax*, and falls from here to the *catastrophe*. Between these three parts lie (the parts of) the *rise* and the *fall*. Each of these five parts may consist of a single scene, or a succession of connected scenes, but the climax is usually composed of one chief scene. (Freytag, 1896, pp. 114–115)

Freytag observes that there are significant scenic effects between the five narrative parts that compose the drama structure. In his understanding, these effects are what separates as well as bound together the narrative parts. As in Aristotle's model, the Freytag's triangle presents a textual structure configured in terms of matched situations.

By more than two centuries narratology actualized and reinforced Aristotle's propositions which encourage an eventual necessity to respect the plot *unity of action*. It became a standard of narrative composition and one of the most significant demands for storytellers. Regarding the revival of Aristotle's model in the late Renaissance, Altman (2008) recognizes how the narrative theory settled comfortably into a neo-Aristotelian tradition, by observing the manner such notion dominated the Western literary theory and the Anglo-American criticism during all the third quarter of the twentieth century. It was also from Aristotle's organizing principle that rose the first draw of a plot-based narrative definition. The problem in this case, as pointed by Altman, is that the theories had a limited corpus as a reference and took only one type of narrative as representative of the entire class. The restrictive tendency goes from: “Aristotle's dependence on the *Odyssey* and *Oedipus* to Lubbock's exclusive attention to the work of Henry James, Barthes's regular reference to Honoré Balzac, and other theorists' tendency to base their notions of narrative on the novel alone” (Altman, 2008, p. 9). Useful definitions or structural principles, as he defends, should anchor on a willfully diverse corpus, rather than on just one particular type of plot.

### a) Chronology Structuring the Linear Plot of *Fixing Point*

Even actualized in some aspects, the essential premises of Aristotle's organizing principle for building a structured drama still serves as a guide for modeling a story. When analyzing *Fixing Point*, an interactive artwork designed in 2011, this research identified the manner *Blast Theory* formulated a linear plot adopting a similar structure with clearly defined parts connected in a time-bound sequence of actions. The story follows a chain of events related by a trajectory of cause and effect.



Figure 13: *Fixing Point* image, publicizes by *Blast Theory*.

The protagonist of *Fixing Point*, Seamus Ruddy, went missing in France in 1985, when he was 32. Some facts created the evidence that members of the Irish National Liberation Army – INLA killed Seamus. Authorities did two searches in a forest at Point de l'Arche, near Rouen, but they did not find his body. His family plea for more information and they did not diminish the hope to find and recover Seamus' remains, even with the passing of time. The core of the story represented in *Fixing Point* is the general drama lived by relatives of disappeared victims of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Even today, eight families persist covered by a mixture of anxiety and hope, keeping an incessant search for news about their loved ones that are still missing. *Blast Theory* built the interactive work with extremely care and sensitivity in this context of what lies hidden and silent from that conflict. Their intent<sup>75</sup> was not just to raise public

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<sup>75</sup> Information collected from the archives about *Fixing Point*. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

awareness to the plight faced by the families of the disappeared of Northern Ireland but also to bring up the universal significance of loss and grief.

Discussing with *Blast Theory* artists their creative process regarding narratives, Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj revealed details about how it happened in *Fixing Point*<sup>76</sup>. Ju Row Farr mentioned the particular care they took to build the narrative for a documentary work draw on such a sensitive subject. The first challenge was gathering substantial and relevant information to frame the story. They conducted a talk with Seamus Rudy's sister to collect information for building a plot. Ju Row Farr was the artist chosen by the team for making the contact. The dialogue with Anne Morgan happened via email over the months the work was under development. *Blast Theory* team defined the topics that the interviews with the sister of the story's disappeared protagonist should cover. The artists raised what would be relevant information to structure the plot, taking elements from this conversation for creating *Fixing Point* story.

The essential need of *Blast Theory* was to have Anne Morgan remembering the unfolding sequence of events until her brother disappearance, commenting what she could tell about the circumstance of his death. The artists addressed questions to many perspectives involved in Seamus case and not only regarding his remains searching itself. Ju Row Farr also invited Anne Morgan to talk about biographical features of Seamus. The interest was even in Anne's feelings over the years, in how was the last time she saw her brother, what remains in her memory of him, and things that she found out about Seamus that she didn't know before. Among all of the aspects commented by her, a particular and delicate one was certainly about how she feels after waiting 26 years for news that never arrives<sup>77</sup>. The sister of Seamus Rudy answered all questions, accentuating why it is important to raise her brother's profile, and what are her hopes for finding out what happened to him.

After gathering some information for building *Fixing Point* story, *Blast Theory* created a linear plot organized by the temporal ordering of the events. The real trajectory of the protagonist was determinant to the linearity of time represented on it. The story

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<sup>76</sup> The transcriptions of the personal interviews with Nick Tandavanitj and Ju Row Farr are respectively in Appendix 2 and 3.

<sup>77</sup> Information collected from the archives about *Fixing Point*. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

meaningful structure is chronologic, following the course of Seamus life and reporting the incidents and drama that surrounded it. When analyzing *Fixing Point* considering its story level, it recalled the Aristotle's "unity of action" premise, on a single unbroken plot thread structure that does not include competing storylines. The account focuses on just one character and in one only perspective about the events, that is the one of Seamus' sister. Regarding the stages composing the story, *Blast Theory* clearly defined them going from exposition to complication and crisis.

The plot of *Fixing Point* has a section that introduces background information about the protagonist and provides the dramatic context for the story, with Anne's memories framing Seamus personality and life in Paris. It comes in passages such as:

We went up to Sacre Coeur Church and then I went and stayed with him in his flat. He was in great form and we chatted about home and the family. I was the youngest of a family of 8 while Seamus was the youngest boy. There was only 1 year and 6 months between us. He did not show any signs of stress. He was employed as an English teacher and was loving it. (*Blast Theory. Fixing Point. 2011*)<sup>78</sup>

The fragment of the plot expresses a notable equilibrium in the storyworld. Seamus had left the Irish Republican Party and went to Paris. There, it seems to his sister that he is having a quiet, happy and new moment in life. Following the assumptions of a linear narrative organizing principle, the next stage of the story should have a conflict coming at the outset to disrupt such stability represented by the passage above. The recognition that some event broke the equilibrium happens in *Fixing Point* plot with Seamus discovering that the party's Army was persecuting him in Paris, as attested in the following except:

Seamus was a member of the Irish Republican Socialist Party. Before he left Ireland in 1984 he resigned from the party. He went to Paris to start a new life without politics. He was followed to Paris by members of the Irish National Liberation Army. They were not happy that he had left the IRSP and they believed that he had some information which they needed concerning arms dumps. He did not have this information (*Blast Theory. Fixing Point. 2011*)<sup>79</sup>.

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<sup>78</sup> Information collected from the archives about *Fixing Point*. File reproduced in Appendix 5. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>79</sup> Idem.

There is a rise of tension with this turning point in the story. The tension increases in intensity until it reaches the climax, which in this unbroken chain of cause and effect is going to be Seamus disappearance. The story conflict is the protagonist vanishing, an event that symbolizes the blend of states in the account. As indicated in all the classic narrative models mentioned previously, a disruption in the storyworld should trigger an attempt to repair the equilibrium (Aristotle, 1932; Freytag, 1896; Todorov, 1971). In *Fixing Point* such attempt is the relentless family pursuit for Seamus' remains. The searching and all the aspects involved in it, from the pragmatic to the emotional ones, are the consequences caused by the related event.

Some reversals involving the protagonist with apparently motivated causes connect the beginning, middle, and end of *Fixing Point* story. The turnaround in the character's fate is responsible for bringing suffer. Seamus passes through a series of stages with changing of fortune from good to bad. The final does not restore the initial equilibrium. It does not bring the resolution of what caused the disruption in the outset. The dénouement of the plot, in this case, is similar to the art of tragedy. It is a catastrophe and not a resolution. The protagonist finishes the story worse off than he began: his body is still missing, and his family is still in a relentless searching for his remains. The respect to the documental character of the story seems to support the design decisions *Blast Theory* took to structure *Fixing Point* plot. The linear and chronologic organization of events reproduces what exactly happened in Seamus' life. The defined stages of the plot and the unfolding of events are the same ones that marked the real story.

#### b) Guidance Molding the Linearity of *A Machine To See With*

As a counterpoint, this study recognizes that a fictional story can also use the same classical organizing principle meant to structure linear plots. That is the case of *A Machine To See With*, another *Blast Theory* project with a story modeled following a similar linear structure that respects relations of cause and effect. I questioned such linearity employed by the artists when I had the opportunity to interview them during the period I spent in their studios in Brighton. Matt Adams and Nick Tandavanitj were the ones who presented to me<sup>80</sup> the reasons of each design decision they took in the creative process of this artwork. All the explanation started by the semantics of the

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<sup>80</sup> The transcriptions of the personal interviews with Matt Adams and Nick Tandavanitj are respectively in Appendix 1 and 2.

piece. According to them, *A Machine To See With* is a remark on the global financial crisis that was showing its first signs in 2008 and 2009. It expresses the urgency felt by *Blast Theory* in responding to the collapse and chaos in the global economies. The narrative is a commentary on the power exercised by the financial sector. The interactive film brings a direct critic to the economic scenario with money being a recurrent part of the story. Bringing the idea of justice, it starts by stating:

If the police are called they will not take any notice of your excuses. If you get caught you just deny that you knew you were breaking the law, just tell the authorities that redistributing capital from where it is not being used to where it will get used is a service. Get ready to think on your feet (*Blast Theory, A Machine To See With*, 2010)<sup>81</sup>.

*A Machine To See With* assumes the format of an audio guided urban walk with a mobile phone. Each participant taking part in the interactive experience became the protagonist character of a locative film that happens in the city streets. They walk alone, though they are not lonely at all. Every time the cell phone rings during their journey, they listen to an invisible voice guiding them. Participants receive a series of voice calls from an automated call center system<sup>82</sup> developed by *Blast Theory*. The orchestrated timed calls linearly construct the story, guiding participants' movement in space and placing them in the story's events with precise and detailed navigational instructions.

The linear narrative of *A Machine To See With* has well-defined parts, named according to the calling dynamics participants receive from the automated system. Each of these moments represents story acts, identified by the events expected to occur in it<sup>83</sup>. "Registering Call" is the first one. It is an introduction to the storyworld, and a moment to instruct participants about where they must go to initiate their interactive section. The second is the "Go Call", an occasion to confirm whether participants are in the place they should be and whether they are ready to start the locative film. On the phone, the voice keeps setting the ambiance and the tone to the fictional story:

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<sup>81</sup> Information collected from the archives about *A Machine To See With*, in Brighton. File reproduced in Appendix 6. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>82</sup> As described in the "Technical Manual of *A Machine To See With*": «the system uses open source call centre software to trigger automated calls and allow participants to choose options using their keypad. The platform is hosted offsite, on a cloud based application server administered by *Blast Theory* and uses a commercial VOIP provider to manage calls to and from participants' actual cell phones». Details about the Phone platform are in Appendix 7. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>83</sup> Information collected from the archives about *A Machine To See With*, in Banff. File with Summary Call reproduced in Appendix 8. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

You have just arrived. You are new here and you are alert to your new surroundings. You press the phone against your ear as the camera slides up your body in extreme close up to show your fingers. You are going on a robbery but your face shows no sign. To a bystander you could be anyone. You are just a person on a phone. (*Blast Theory. A Machine To See With*, 2010)<sup>84</sup>

The moments of action in this heist movie will start to increase in intensity in the next story stage located in a WC. Participants get instructions that guide them to a cubicle in which two events will succeed. On the “WC Call” act, they answer a personal test that measures their impedance to complete the mission designated to them. In the sequence, still hidden in the toilet, the voice on the phone request them to hide money on their body. The tension rises in the story from this point. On “Parter Call”, the voice on the phone direct participants to a car parking, In there, they will meet up a partner in crime and plan their mission setting up the bank robbery. At this stage is that they receive instructions to go to a bank where the subsequent events will happen. The named “Bank Call” part is the climax in the narrative of *A Machine To See With*.



Figure 14: The “Parter Call” act in *A Machine To See With*. Image by *Blast Theory*.

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<sup>84</sup> Information collected from the archives about *A Machine To See With*, in Brighton. File reproduced in Appendix 6. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

All the context pre-scripted by *Blast Theory* set the necessary thrill for the heist movie. The artists plan the story to reach its peak by placing adrenaline and tension on the experience of who is playing the lead. At this precise moment of the story, the voice on the phone presents participants the opportunity to revenge against the ones responsible for the financial crisis. A potential attempt to rob a bank conducted by them and moved by a pay back feeling characterizes this highest moment in the plot structure. This turning point scene of the linear plot requires participants to answer how far they will be willing to go on this mission. Two more acts are still to come after the story reaches the climax. The following part is the “Split Call” act. That presents a resolution to the bank robbery fiction. In the quite real fiction, the robber does not happen.

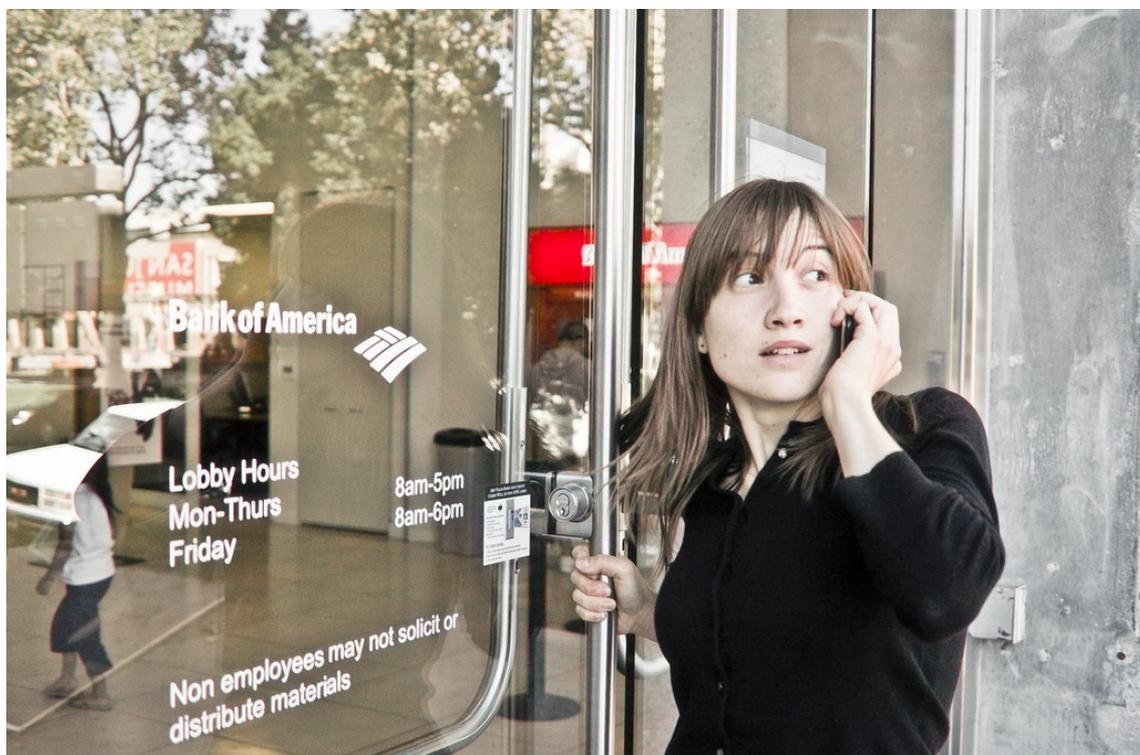


Figure 15: The attempt to rob a bank in *A Machine To See With*. Image by *Blast Theory*.

Participants receive instructions to approach the front door of the bank, stop and take their escape route. The tension starts to fall, and it initiates to restore the equilibrium in the storyworld. The questions made by the voice on the phone gain now a reflexive tone, inquiring participants about the election process and voting. After that, they receive instructions to find a place where they can be alone. Once there, they trigger the “End Call” act. As it says, the stage comes announcing the end of the film. The closure of the heist movie is a scene which participants have to create in that precisely moment.

*A Machine To See With* has a design that also suggests the respect to Aristotle's unity of action idea, with a linear plot that focuses on one character and expunges any other competing storylines from it. Thus, the structured rise and fall of tension exhibited in the story is familiar to a plot organized having as a reference the Aristotelian structuring model or any other pattern derived from it.

### 2.1.2 Fundamental Elements Governing Narratives

Regarding *Blast Theory* works analyzed here, at first sight, the plots of *A Machine To See With* and *Fixing Point* can easily lead to a conclusion which corroborates the hypothesis that Aristotle's model still serves as a reference in the designing of digital narratives. Whether it can be a surprise verifying that an organizing principle settled so much time ago keep guiding the narrative creation, the more curious, however, would be to attest the trend towards keep alive Aristotle's assumptions in some approaches to computer-based stories. Such reinforcement is exactly what Laurel (1999) does, using the ideas contemplated on the *Poetics* to formulate her view about the interaction with computers in theatrical terms. She applies elements of drama to enhance the understanding of interactivity in new media, incorporating the categories of Aristotle's model and their causal relations for creating a comparison between the disciplined design of a play and the human-computer activity.

From the qualitative analysis what this thesis can certainly affirm is that stories mediated through interactive systems does to not completely break with some traditional organizing principles. The two artworks created by *Blast Theory* reinforces this possibility of linear architectures coexists with new structuring models inaugurated in the context of digital media. The idea of concur comes because it is important to observe that not all narratives based on computer systems keep adopting the linear model as a standard design. Digital media supported the emergence of different manners to tell a story. That is also why maintaining a strict definition of plot tied to a particular type seems inadequate for the analysis and understanding of the diversity of forms witnessed today.

The narrative format based on a fixed beginning, middle and end connected by relations of cause and effect gives a great significance to the sequential ordering of events. Some artists working with interactive computer-based narratives contested the necessity to a

definite beginning and ending of a plot. They also revised other narrative parameters, the case of the premise concerning avoid competing storylines and expunge any material unrelated to the *unity of action*. Whether there were ruptures like these, some agreed statements about narrative fundamentals remained intact. Transmedial approaches to narratives defend the existence of a set of core properties that goes beyond media (Herman, 2004; Jannidis, 2003; Ryan, 2004a). These consent features would be not particular or specific to a type of plot, or to a determined medium.

Story-logic is one of those arrangements figuring on a list with other primordial elements taken as a crucial narrative condition independent of the system that gives it support. The belief that stories have and constitute a logic is an assumption shared by many transmedia theories in the narratology realm. Curious to note is that most of them keep correlating causal and chronological aspects with it. Jannidis (2003) is one that mentions such correlation:

the story is, as has been emphasized repeatedly, a meaningful structure. It gathers the totality of events, characters, and regions into an organized and meaningful whole. The most important components of this meaningful structure are chronology, causality, teleology, and intentionality. (p. 43)

Herman (2004) also treats story-logic as one of the fundamental principles governing narratives. He observes that storytelling is an essential strategy for structuring our experience in the world; therefore they must be a logical construction and make sense. To him, stories are more than just semiotic structures, and that is why they have to create meaning. On his reasoning, logic is such an important aspect that it permits precisely determine what is narrative from what is not. Herman shares the same idea that this principle comes from causal-chronological patterns. Despite his consideration of cause and effect relations as a seminal aspect of it, he argues that temporal succession does not necessarily have to link a sequence of events. He adverts that a narrative can implement the mentioned fundament in some manner or another. These differences appear when considering two storytellings focused on similar experiences and comparable content, with logic achieved through different parameters or bound by various constraints depending on the system that mediates it. That is why to him relevant is to identify which sort of limitations shape the communicative and representational properties of each storytelling medium. (Herman, 2004) believes that

this is what will enable the recognition of which principles are governing story-logic and what are the criteria for its use across media. The sets of coding strategies that any medium can utilize to structure a meaningful story are:

1. role assignments for participants or processes and participants;
2. blends of states, events, and actions;
3. temporal ordering of events;
4. the configuration of entities in space or spatial configuration;
5. the use of deictic expressions to anchor storyworlds in particular contexts of interpretation. (Herman, 2004)

Instead of using the term logic, Ryan (2004a) refers to coherence and intelligibility among a list of other requirements regarding the crucial conditions for structuring a story. The first narrative demand she enumerates is the necessity to bring a world to mind and populate it with agents and objects. That is the same as to create a setting with characters. Defined the storyworld, to her the narrative must then go through global changes of state. Nonhabitual physical events, either accidents or deliberate human actions involving the agents participation, can cause the mentioned shifts. According to her, these changes are what creates a temporal dimension to the account and place the narrative world in the flux of history. Finally, as she requires, the story must allow the reconstruction of an interpretative network around the narrated events: goals, plans, causal relations, psychological motivations. The interpretative reconstruction is what she considers as responsible for giving coherence and intelligibility to the events and to turn them into a plot. Considering these conditions, (Ryan, 2004a) affirms that independent of the communication system mediating a narrative; its structure should contain:

- ... characters and setting, conveys a sequence of events that are causally or chronologically linked, involves a degree of struggle (or agon), requires an implied author, and requires an act of mediation while not being specific to any one medium. (Ryan, 2004a, p. 8)

Following a transmedia approach, this thesis defends the necessity of a logic-semantic characterization of the narrative phenomenon, agreeing that this and other foundational elements remain applicable in the design of digital stories. That is the case of parameters such as time, space, characters and events. This study still recognize their presence and importance in digital accounts, but the difference resides mainly in the fact that these elements forming the narrative core may acquire new features and display

new behaviors when mediated by computer systems. Jennings (1996), for instance, observes how artists working with digital media have proposed innovative understandings of time – not necessarily defined in terms of linearity and truncation of thought – for stories experienced through computers.

In *Narrative Structures for New Media*, Jennings (1996) also discusses why Aristotle's *Poetics* is an inadequate narrative model for the creation of computer interactive art. Commenting Brenda Laurel neo-Aristotelian approach in *Computers as Theater*, she declares that we should look for non-Western cultures in the search for sophisticated structures. She criticizes saying that narratives have attested that they can be more than just comprised of a series of episodes put together in a focused chain. To her, computer-based stories have been thriving a more multiple and discontinuous manners to present stories when compared to the traditional cohesive and linear style. Instead of discarding nuance, for instance, they invest in multiple perspectives. As she recognizes, interaction, serialism, open structures and fuzzy logic are some of the organizing principles giving shape to it. To her, the digital medium revealed itself as a suitable system for those who want to challenge all the literary form based on the linearity of the plot. She argues that the technological context supported the formulation of distinct logics of temporality, causality, and spatiality. As we will confer in the next sections, *Blast Theory*, for instance, turned the chronologic and linear plot of *Fixing Point* into a fragmentary and exploratory discourse.

## 2.2 The Modular Design as a Narrative Structuring Model

The digital came reshaping and in some cases disrupting traditional patterns and notions concerning representational process and media creation. We will not put on the discussion here the magnitude of these shifts, or enumerate the contrasts and antagonisms between digital and analog media that can direct to the idea of progress or paradigm change. Instead, we will focus on some analysis of the phenomenon that can contribute to evidence the singular characteristics of computer-based systems influencing digital narratives.

In an attempt to define the language of the new media, Manovich (2001) evidences some pivotal features of digital objects. The first one is that it consists of independent

parts, each one containing smaller unities and that successively until it reaches the lowest level. Another aspect listed by him is the fact that digital objects have a numerical form, either when a computer serves to generate them from scratch or when they result from a conversion of analog media sources. As he analyses, computers inaugurated some specific representational strategies influenced by the type such digital systems use for encoding data, by its modular property or even by their interactive nature. He highlights how media became programmable and customized in the digital age, with the numerical coding nature and the modular structure-property enabling algorithmic manipulation of digital data. Such process is responsible for inaugurating an unparalleled fluidity of computer-based objects because the system can automatically assemble many and different versions from the same matrix through algorithm-driven operations. We can program them to combine small and modular units on various and potentially infinite versions.

Digital narratives incorporated the modularity design of computer-based systems to give form to fragmented, fluid and variable stories. Manovich (2001) believes that the modular strategy and the encyclopedic nature of computers supported by the database form had a great influence on digital stories architecture. Recalling Ervin Panofsky's analysis that the linear perspective was a symbolic form of modern age, he affirms that database is the new symbolic form in the computer age. The database model restored the method of representing some phenomenon or subject by storing large amounts of data in a structured collection of elements. On the other hand, the modular design revealed a whole new universe for stories supported by digital media. As he observes, with the modularity came the possibility of creating a narrative in an architecture that we can compare to a fractal. In this infinitely complex patterns, small unities form the totality, and each of the fragments on the geometry can figure independently or on a network.

Artists have embedded in its practice numerous of these capabilities creating innovative manners for storytelling that results from a productive experimentation with the foundational narrative elements and the resources brought by the emergent media. The assimilation of some digital conventions by computer-based narratives had a remarkable effect on the way we can structure and experience stories. By incorporating new media language and logic, artists generated a mechanism for organizing plot and discourse that differs significantly from the classic linear and fixed structure. Digital narratives

organized on a modular perspective, for instance, are in general fragmented with their parts being accessed on its own or combined to form large-scale compositions. Different combinations of these fragments result in distinct narrative formations. Plus, the small sequences still preserve their independence when assembled, as so they can be substituted from the arrangement without affecting the overall structure.

Interactive schemes based on architectures that allow choice transmuted the linearity and truncation encouraged by the classic structuring model into stories that can adjust its content according to voluntary or involuntary participant's input. The most referred aspect in the domain of digital narratives is probably the individual customization supported by computers, what confers a reactive and participatory trace to interactive stories. Interactive structuring models derived from the glorified principle of individual customization enable people to participate actively in the narrative authoring process. The participatory dimension, even implemented in different perspectives and levels became a crucial element, with digital narratives employing volatile signs and variable displays to invite participants to perform several operations on the story's database, such as view, navigate, select, choose. The storytelling gain form through the performance of these actions, or even by participants adding content to the database and contributing to coauthor the narrative. In some cases, participants gain the status of coauthors precisely because there is the belief that their mentioned actions can generate unique works. That is the kind of experience provided by such representational processes anchored on the resources of computer systems.

The modular design of digital stories differs significantly when compared to the classical structuring model, according to which a narrative must have an organization that respects a cause and effect trajectory of events. Such differences between the two strategies for composing a story is what fundamentals the inquiring about the existence of an anti-narrative logic residing on the database structure. Furthermore, it is what opens space to ground the idea presented by Manovich (2001) that narrative and database form are natural enemies, considering that the experience is “quite distinct from reading a narrative or watching a film or navigating an architectural site. Similarly, a literary or cinematic narrative, an architectural plan, and a database each present a different model of what the world is like” (Manovich, 2001, p. 218).

What the evidence of database mode in the current days does not necessarily mean is that a radical break with the past replaced the narrative phenomenon. Mapping the changes and switchings across the time, even Manovich (2001) refutes the existence of such sudden ruptures in the whole History of Culture. Furthermore, he indicates why the database structure is not even intrinsic correlated to modern storage media, being prior to the information technologies. The author brings the semiological theory of syntagm and paradigm to explain that not purely encyclopedic, some digital stories can redistribute weight between the articulation of both forms, resulting in a blending of narrative and database. Saussure was who originally formulated the theory of syntagm to describe natural languages. The linguistic categorized the elements of a system in two dimensions: the syntagmatic dimension, explicit and real; and the paradigmatic dimension, implicit and imagined. The former describes items in presence and the latter in absence. “In the case of a written sentence, the words that comprise it materially exist on a piece of paper, while the paradigmatic sets to which these words belong only exist in the writer's and reader's minds” (Manovich, 2001, pp. 230–231).

Following Saussure theory of syntagm and paradigm, Manovich (2001) considers that digital storytelling mimic the natural language system, following this relationship but reversing it: it attests material existence to the database, while lets the narrative dematerialised and virtual. On his analysis, the paradigm dimension prevaleces over the syntagm because participants do not have the presentation of an assembled narrative. Instead, they have some contents to choose and order during their interaction with the system. The construction of the explicit narrative, or the syntagm, comes from that paradigm represented by a database of choices. As he describes, participants have to build the story in a performative almost language-like sequencing by picking up the successive element from that collection of possible parts. He gives as an example of how the combination of both dimensions can form a digital story:

The narrative is constructed by linking elements of this database in a particular order, that is by designing a trajectory leading from one element to another. On the material level, a narrative is just a set of links; the elements themselves remain stored in the database. Thus the narrative is virtual while the database exists materially. (Manovich, 2001, p. 231)

The material database is an inviting to bring the “virtual” narrative into existence. The contents come in a structure that allows taking more than one path through it. When

engaging and navigating in such interactive storytellings, the participant is, as Manovich (2001, p. 231) describes: “selecting one trajectory from the paradigm of all paths that are defined”. Every selection made and followed by them is just one possible trajectory among many others. As hyper-narratives, they represent a sum of multiple courses possible to perform through the collection of elements. By these means, a narrative molded in a database structure can tell different stories every time participants access and interact with the system.

### 2.2.1 Interactive Architectures

Whether the narrative is virtual in digital systems, we can not assume that the act of choosing records in a particular order can automatically generate a storytelling. Participants can access different elements stored in the database of choices, one after another following a random sequence as they wish, and these items can not necessarily form a meaningful story. Ryan (2006) observes that the planning made by the storyteller was what granted the narrative meaning in traditional linear forms. As she defines, these are top-down strategies outlining a creative process centered on the role of the storyteller and giving him the power to determine the story itself, its course and logic. As we started to discuss previously, the digital media enabled the possibility of giving participants the ability to alter or to contribute to the narrative formation. The designing of such participatory accounts, on the other hand, required the adoption of *bottom-up* strategies centered on participants' role.

Storytellers devoted to digital media have shared the narrative authoring process with participants, but they still pursue the need of attending the story-logic principle. They frequently ensure this general criterion by predetermining connections that lead to a logical and sequential ordering of the content they let available in the database. Information architectures started to play this function, modeling the narrative in an attempt to control the logic under the access of the story fragments. These structures define a priori some possible links between the content, simulating ways that participants can transpose the records when interacting with the system. Information architectures make possible to predefine the order of access for at least some of the fragments stored in the database, serving to guide participants interaction and to control the semantics of the segments composing the narrative. They represent a mechanism to

control the composition of meaningful narratives, acting as an organizing principle of computer-based stories.

The rise of information architectures did confer to artists a more critical manner to approach the database logic, serving as an interactive model for structuring nonlinear or multilinear branching narratives. Despite the fact these schemes in some sense concur or even try to replace the traditional Aristotle's model, the result can mean an attempt to create linear sequences through the database of possibilities. It can happen when artists, for not losing the narrative coherence, ended up defining a strict control over the logical relations between the story fragments. Doing it, what they present to participants is the possibility of selecting and choosing between several linear and predetermined stories, attesting the idea that traditional linear narrative kept alive and became a particular choice within the hypertext (Manovich, 2001). The challenge to storytellers devoted to digital media turned into find a balance between *top-down* and *bottom-up* strategies. While they should avoid just to present a collection of elements as if it was a narrative, at the same time they should give participants the possibility of truly taking part in the authoring proceedings.

The cult of nonlinearity in the contemporary aesthetics directed narratives to the adoption of the most complex and different patterns. There is a range of interactive models that artists can combine generating uncountable distinct architectures for computer-based narratives. Network, Branching, Braided, Radiating, Maze – are some of the plot and discourse designs that Ryan (2006) comments evoking two-dimensional diagrams to illustrate how they work<sup>85</sup>. These interactive architectures employed to mold digital narratives, as she observes, result from this combination of *bottom-up* participants input with *top-down* design planning. She considers them as unique models involving interactive digital texts. The analysis of how *Blast Theory* organizes the content of the four projects framed by this study anchors in some of these models. The focus of this thesis is to analyze the manner artists can implement participants contribution in various degrees, rather than merely typify the artworks using such patterns molding digital stories. This is the first step in the attempt to recognize whether

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<sup>85</sup> Espen Aarseth, in *Nonlinearity and literary theory*, criticizes the fact that the hypertext theorists have frequently describe the possible relations between the textual fragments, or between what she calls links and textons, employing spatial imagery. To him, such maps is a rhetoric that fails because it contradicts and fail to express the discontinuity that is the nature of hypertext. Its essence, as he argues, is exactly the jump and sudden displacements of the position of who is reading such texts.

the location awareness of the computational processes narrows possible narrative structures, or even whether it adds complexity and potential diversity to these models.

When analyzing these interactive architectures operating on the discourse or the story level, the interest is to recognize the mode participants can give their creative input. Recurring to the metaphor of an onion, Ryan (2011) exemplifies how interactivity can affect narrative going from the outer to its inner core. Peeling what she sees as a narrative onion, on the first level we have the presentation of the story altered by participants. Taking out other of its peel and reaching the middle, we still find participants changing a predetermined plot but now as part of the story. When interactivity penetrates the core of the onion, participants are already affecting the story itself in a dynamical creative process between them and the authors.

The discursive strategies adopted by participative digital textuality require a significative effort from participants, who play an important function in the narrative formation together with the authors' role. They must participate actively not only with their interpretation but also with their intervention in the construction of the text. As Aarseth (1997, p. 2) observes when defining what he means by the concept of ergodic literature, a cybertext reader participate actively, what means more than “eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of pages”. According to him, this kind of literature demands readers to exert an active and nontrivial effort by putting some responsibility on them that go beyond the interpretative functions. They might have, for instance, the responsibility to explore and decide which path to take, or even to assume an strategic function of moving the story forward. Only by engaging at this level is that they can traverse the text. It differs, for instance, from what he calls nonergodic literature, where the effort to traverse the text is trivial such as the process of reading printed matter.

The tensions at work in a cybertext, while not incompatible with those of narrative desire, are also something more: a struggle not merely for interpretative insight but also for narrative control: “I want this text to tell my story; the story that could not be without me”. In some cases this is literally true. In other cases, perhaps most, the sense of individual outcome is illusory, but nevertheless the aspect of coercion and manipulation is real. (Aarseth, 1997, p. 4)

Participation undertaken in interactive systems is physical in the sense of acting and making choices to built customized narratives. They do not only choose among

predefined entries. They do have to order them to make meaning of the fragments in a logical perspective. To achieve the story-logic criteria, their act of uncovering the underlying logic of the story is also an important demand. The same occurs with classic readers of traditional linear narratives, but the difference is that in an interactive story, participants are also who built a coherent narrative, or a logical trajectory through the material stored in the database. They must make meaning of the story while and after proceeding through it. They will only achieve a structured and consistent storytelling result when acting to build it. Participants are responsible for bringing the narrative into being, even if in some cases they do it transversing the collection of elements stored on the system following links in a logical, sequential ordering of content that have been a priori established by the database's creator.

As Ryan (2006) remembers, “the postmodern tradition celebrates the indeterminate text as a liberation from the tyranny of the author and an affirmation of the reader's freedom of interpretation” (p. 295). In databases stories, for instance, what authors present is not an explicit and strict order for the fragments dictated by chronology or causality as it is in traditional linear narratives. In some cases, they do define a priori the links that will create possible trajectories in the database collection of story fragments. While authors structure the elements following different designs, participants are the ones responsible for attesting meaning to the content, reorganized according to individual and particular interactions with the system.

In digital narrative experiences, authors let available the pieces that participants will put together. There is a cooperative effort between them. As Ryan (2011) observes, “if the database is properly structured, and if its subject matter is appropriate, the free probes of the users and their always incomplete exploration will not prevent the retrieval of narrative meaning” (p. 40). When confronted with fragmented stories, participants can also mentally rearrange its pieces. Considering a plot that follows a chronological order of events but that the manner it is narrated no, every experience lead to the same story independent of the different paths participants can take through the content. Participants play the game of putting together the pieces that come to them in a variable order. Like playing with a jigsaw puzzle, they are the responsible for assembling a coherent story.

Coherence, in this case, is not only a chronological order or causal relation of the story events. In such aesthetics that “favors the serendipitous emergence of meaning over a

goal-oriented, deliberate retrieval of information” (Ryan, 2011, p.42), the meaning can also be analogical and lyrical. The designers' role in digital narratives goes beyond this mere assignment of links between content with the definition of possible logic trajectories through the database. The artistic vein of such projects demands designers to create interactive experiences in a meaningful and emotional way. Artists can, for instance, orchestrate the performative aspects of the interaction to be meaningful as well.

#### a) Collecting Fragments to Form *Fixing Point* Discourse

On Ryan's (2006) list of interactive structures also figures a scheme for a state-transition representation of events that serves to model linear stories. She includes it affirming that the difference can occur on the level of discourse. When a digitally mediated narrative adds an interactive perspective, what happens, according to her, is that the order of the events can differ with the narrative possibly beginning from the middle or returning many times to the same state. The plot of *Fixing Point* resembles this structure, being linear and limited to what actually happens in the storyworld. As we explained before, it anchors on the words used by Anne Morgan to describe the chain of events that took place before and after the disappearance of Seamus Rudy. The testimony she gave, and consequently the plot of *Fixing Point*, represents a long and chronologic trajectory in the life of the protagonist.

Nick Tandavanitj when detailed to me their creative process with this artwork<sup>86</sup>, commented how vast is the extent of time that the narrative ended up covering. The artist highlighted it, to posteriorly declare that, even tough the chronological chain characterizing the unfolding of events in the story, *Blast Theory* envisioned something contrary to have participants engaged in a linear experience. When I asked him about the design challenge of *Fixing Point* regarding the manner to present the story, the artist reiterates that their intention was to create something to be exploratory and fragmented.

She talks about her brother, from what they were like when they were kids to when they were very young and what he did for living. Through it, there are his parents, and what happens a long time to his parents, and then everything is gonna happen. So it is quite a big time frame that the interview kind of covers. I suppose it is intended to be something that is exploratory and fragmentary so you do not necessarily learn

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<sup>86</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

everything in a specific order. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>87</sup>

The first approach to *Fixing Point* presented in the previous section already discussed how a linear logic structures the story and its sequence of events. Going a bit deeper into the analysis, it surprisingly shows that the linearity of the plot does not necessarily mean that the discourse has to unfold in a chronological manner, assuming a traditional inert and preexistent structure. *Blast Theory* translated the rigid linearity of plot into a flexible and variable discourse by adopting a modular strategy that enables the digital story to have a fluid presentation order. In *Fixing Point* interactive section, the content comes in modules represented in small audio pieces recorded and interpreted in the artwork by the performer Amanda Jones. Fragmenting the narrative content, *Blast Theory* spread the story units throughout an area designing an exploratory piece in which participants interaction is responsible for triggering the unfolding of the discourse. Appropriating of the freedom given to them, participants do not necessary have to follow the linear order that structures the story events when accessing its parts.

Nick Tandavanitj described to me<sup>88</sup> how the interactive section happens. To start their experience, participants have to walk along a path. When walking into the woods, this path triggers a single piece of audio. Participants listen to: “You couldn’t say Seamus was one type of person. He was a different person to everyone who knew him. I only discovered that after his disappearance”<sup>89</sup>. The audio functions as a preparatory introduction to the story participants are embarking on. Once the introductory moment finishes, they get into the woods. There, they will find other 11 recorded audio fragments that form part of the narrative. As said, participants do not have to respect a definitive order for exploring the area and listening to the remain audio clips.

Each one of these unities composing *Fixing Point* plot can figure independently. They have a meaning on its own, what explains why participants do not necessarily need to experience it in the time-bound sequence of cause and effect that characterizes Seamus' trajectory. When combining the narrative fragments, they form a large-scale composition as in fractal geometries. Participants can associate one audio clip to

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<sup>87</sup> Idem.

<sup>88</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>89</sup> Information collected from the archives about *Fixing Point*. File reproduced in Appendix 5. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

another. The assembly configures a network of information because connecting these units each one will contribute to the understanding of the whole story. Analyzing *Fixing Point*, we can verify how *Blast Theory* managed to reach a result in which both, the plot and the discourse, manifest the relentless search and the discovering process involved in the real story of Seamus Rudy.



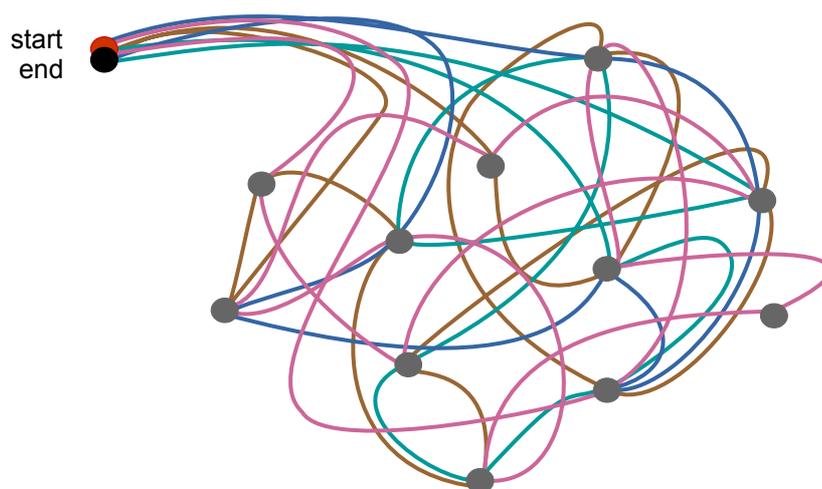
Figure 16: Interaction with *Fixing Point* application. Image by *Blast Theory*.

Who takes part in *Fixing Point* has 30 minutes to explore the area, find and listen to the narrative fragments. After that, when they come back from the wood walking along the same path, the starter piece of audio plays again. Now it serves as a closure for the narrative. There is a predetermined segment for initiating and ending the experience but the main part of it is open to participant's decisions. At this explorative moment of the experience, as Nick Tandavanitj observed<sup>90</sup>, those taking part face uncertainty on the narrative sequence due to its fragmented discourse. They can access the modules of the story in different sequences, what confers variability and fluidity to the storytelling. The presentation order of the content in *Fixing Point* is highly variable and defined by participants, but interactivity on this artwork operates affecting the discourse of a story content created and fully predetermined by *Blast Theory*.

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<sup>90</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

Ryan (2011) considers this kind of interactivity that works in the outer layers as the more applied in the narrative realm. Following a hypertext structure, the artists generated a database story divided into fragments with its various stages related in a modular structure as a puzzle participants have to solve. The network is the architecture that characterizes the explorative moment on the discourse level of *Fixing Point*, serving to configure the interconnection of the story pieces in a hypertextual scheme. According to Ryan (2006), such structure is one of the most popular configurations for linking contents of a database, formally characterized by the existence of loops offering several different ways to get to the same node. The network, as well as all the other architectures operating on the discourse level, has a design meant to present an infinite number of different paths possible to take through the fragments stored in the database. *Figure 17* exemplifies possible trajectories made by three participants, differentiated by colors, when exploring the database content of *Fixing Point*. As shown in the image, the artwork has a discourse structure with a predetermined starting and ending for all participants, plus 11 fragments that they can explore as they wish. This architecture recalls a network, generating a significative number of distinct stories that varies according to each interactive section. They are different considering that each navigation through the network can represent a particular sequence and assembly of the fragments. Participants start and finish the story by the same manner, but each one experiment a narrative with its events organized in different orders.



*Figure 17*: Diagram representing the discourse level of *Fixing Point*.

As Ryan (2006) comments, the network scheme is not suitable for designing the temporal succession of a plot, which can run into inconsistencies. Even though it is too densely connected to control participants' progression over significant stretches, to her, the model effectively serves to structure the temporal unfolding of discourse. As she explains, with the architecture serving for this purpose, participants' choices at every decision point will determine not what happens next in the storyworld but the events presentation order. She recognizes that not always it is easy to ensure that the temporal flow of the events will be the one selected among the options available to choose. In that case, she believes that participants can solve any apparent incoherence between the sequences accessed. They do it later, in their mind, rebuilding the fragments of the story putting it in a chrono-logic order as if they were solving a jigsaw puzzle. Participants of such interactive experiences can rearrange the narrative units, mentally assigning a final sequence in their reconstruction of the plot.

That is in part what happens in *Fixing Point*. The middle structure of the narrative is built in a way to let participants wander through the content. They are free to uncover the different parts of the story when they have already reached the woods. They can explore the area and choose what they want to access and in which order. They can listen to a determined content that tells about what the family faces in the searching for information able to lead to Seamus's remains. Subsequently, they can trigger an audio that goes back to a past event, whose content refers to something occurred when Seamus was still living in Paris. Despite the fragmentary character and the not linear manner for telling the narrative, participants reveal more and more about the story in each recording discovered. The puzzle they are solving regards the trajectory of events that surrounds the central character of the narrative. The experience of search and uncover someone's destiny is also what justify *Blast Theory's* choice to the particular quote that initiates and finishes participants' interaction. The starting and ending parts function as if we were opening and closing a loop. They serve to make reference to the possibility of rebuilt in many perspectives, who is the protagonist of the story. When the experience finishes, participants have to reconstruct mentally all the information discovered and listened during their exploratory journey. They have to assign meaning to what they had just unveiled.

## b) Co-authoring a Network of Stories in *Rider Spoke*

*Rider Spoke* is not a linear story organized by relations of cause and effect with events concerning just one main character. The most peculiar aspect of the artwork, though, resides on the freedom those interacting have to co-create the narrative content. As we commented before when analyzing *Fixing Point* example, participants can collaborate on the level of discourse affecting basically the presentation order of a story. They conduct and give form to distinct compositions through their interaction with the narrative pieces, but authors are still the ones who have control over the content as all the sequences let available on the database have been predefined a priori by them.

When invited to contribute and affect the narrative on the level of plot, as pointed by Ryan (2011), participants can alter and coauthor the story itself. According to her, the implementation of such possibilities require more flexible schemes that do not freeze the story content but let participants generate it on the flow of their experience. Models able to put it into effect generally enable the creation of a story in real-time. That is what we see in *Rider Spoke*: a performative storytelling composed of independent fragments authored by participants while cycling around the city.

In *Rider Spoke*, *Blast Theory* explicitly invites participants to co-create a database of content spread through the urban space and fulfilled with their intimate stories. Who takes part in the experience have to cycle through the city streets equipped with a microphone and headphones and a *Nokia N800* computer device mounted on the bike handlebars. Initiated the cycling, riders can take any direction they wish just wandering in the city. After they press the start button on the computer console, the system plays a melody. The sound creates the proper mood for the exploratory journey they will take. In the sequence, they listen to the voice of a woman. The voice over is from Ju Row Farr, who will virtually join the experience. She makes a brief introduction explaining how that mix of game and performance works and how participants are supposed to engage in the piece. This predefined audio sets the beginning of the narrative experience. All riders joining the interactive artwork listen to it<sup>91</sup>:

As you leave today, take your time and just ride for a while. Don't worry about the time I'll tell you when it's time to come back. I'll be asking you to record some things tonight and the more you answer the more you can hear. I hope that you take time in

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<sup>91</sup> Information collected from the archives about *Rider Spoke*. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

your head to go somewhere you would not readily go to. I promise to come with you and I bless the very air you move through this night. (*Blast Theory, Rider Spoke, 2007*)<sup>92</sup>

After the introduction, the voice over announces the first question participants will have to answer. She asks them to describe themselves. This initial protocol is the same for all the riders joining the experience. After answering that, they are in some sense free to explore and to co-create the rest of the narrative in an explorative and contributive interaction (Narcís; Parés & Parés, 2001). A new group goes on cycling at every 15 minutes. Despite the number of riders leaving constantly, each participant goes to a unique location because they have to look for unusual and secretive spots where no one has hidden a recording before. For each question they will answer, they have to search for a physical location that is specific and that has unique properties as required to them. In this hiding location, participants will record the audio fragment answering a definite question made to them. The recording message will stay linked to those coordinates.



Figure 18: Participant of *Rider Spoke* set off on a bike. Image by *Blast Theory*.

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<sup>92</sup> Information collected from the archives about *Rider Spoke*. File reproduced in Appendix 9. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

In *Rider Spoke*, participants are the protagonists of a network of stories generated by themselves revealing their intimate thoughts and memories, recorded and linked to specific locations they choose in the city. Their recordings go around the questions defined a priori by *Blast Theory*. These questions can vary for each rider, what contributes to the authoring of different stories. Everybody who takes part in the interactive experience has to answer the initial and the final ones, plus some others that can have variants or not<sup>1</sup>. Participants creates the content in response to these predetermined topics introduced to them by the voice over of Ju Row Farr. When she speaks, she is generally inviting participants to reflect, alone, in a place out of the way. At every question, she goes deeper and deeper into people's mind and feelings. Explaining to me the narrative of *Rider Spoke*, Nick Tandavanitj<sup>93</sup> defined it as being build based on layers.

I think there are tree layers. So ask your name is the first question and then you do a casual question that is chosen from a selection of two or tree, and then you do some slightly intimate question that is chosen from a selection of two or tree. You then are invited to answer that kind of intimate question from like four of five, and you can answer as many of those as you can at the time. Before you are asked the end question which is the one that have no answers. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>94</sup>

Finished the given time to the interactive section, all participants listen to the same closing audio. As the initial one, this story fragment has a fixed position in the interactive experience designed by *Blast Theory*. The content exposed by the voice over justifies why it must have an predefined order. The function exerts by the final audio is to give meaning to the performative cycling participants had just done. While riders start their experience having to describe themselves, the final stage is a recap of what have just happened. At the point when participants listen to this recording, they have embarked on an experience that is lasting more or less one hour. The voice over reminds them of that, also affirming her understanding of how it has demanded all an effort from participants, asking them to cycle and open their intimacy to coauthor the artwork.

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<sup>93</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

<sup>94</sup> Idem.

Recalling emotive memories is a constant thematic of *Rider Spoke*. To compose the narrative fragments, participants sometimes have to dig profoundly in their remembrances stimulated by open questions the voice over asks them. “What was the last time you held someone's hand in the street. Who was this person? How was the feeling?” - questions like these, when posed in a broad sense can reveal stories related to a friend, a lover, a strange or even memories from the childhood. Independent of who the account will be in reference to, the relevant for the narrative purposes seems to be having participants reliving the situation, the moment and the feelings it evokes. Whether the voice over requires them to expose their personal stories, the openness of the topics allow participants to select and filter which situations from the past they are going to tell. It happens, for instance, in an occasion in which they have to talk about regret, as well as when they have to recall a moment spent with their father. A quite general question does not define a context, or a setting, or a time for such memory. Wide, it let space for participants decide what to bring from the most diverse stories and feelings they have connected with their dad.

Please will you tell me about your father. You might want to pick a particular time in your father's life, or in your life. Freeze that moment, and tell me about your dad. What they look like, how they spoke, and what they meant to you. (*Blast Theory, Rider Spoke*, 2007)<sup>95</sup>

There is also a specific question in *Rider Spoke* regarding past experiences that argues about something participants might do, but they should not have done. It did not matter when it was. It could have been when they were a teenager or even later. It is not even necessary to be a dramatic situation. The most relevant is that it must have happened in a party that was important for some reason. Clearly, that is what will create the necessary conflict in the account. Defined the context, maybe none but probably many memories of such circumstance that almost everybody has lived once in the course of their lives, will come to participants' mind.

All the recordings in *Rider Spoke* supposedly contemplate the topics previously defined by the artists on a list of possible questions to ask participants. The fragmented narrative is an assembly of these modular stories with content partially framed by the queries. Together, they form a network in the urban space, as participants link each

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<sup>95</sup> Information collected from the archives about *Rider Spoke*. File reproduced in Appendix 9. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

recording they make to precise and different locations. While riders are exploring space, they are also navigating through this network of stories. As well as they tag content contributing to the formation of this database, they can also unexpectedly find hidden messages in secret places when cycling through the city streets.

Another significant dimension molding the interactive experience of *Rider Spoke* is precisely this fact that participants can not just contribute but explore, search and listen to the other's personal accounts. When passing by locations where other riders left their stories, the N800 device interface indicates it by displaying prefab houses. The handheld computer gives an alert for participants stop when they are close to one of these places. Once in the location, the system shows the question that the person answered and play the recording to the participant who found it. *Rider Spoke* follows this dynamics: as you revealed your secrets, others have done it too; whether you are listening to others' personal life and thoughts, they will also be able to listen to what you left linked in some spots of the city. It is a collaborative storytelling construction that other participants can experience later. Exploring and exposing intimacy, creating and navigating through a database of stories is part of the game.

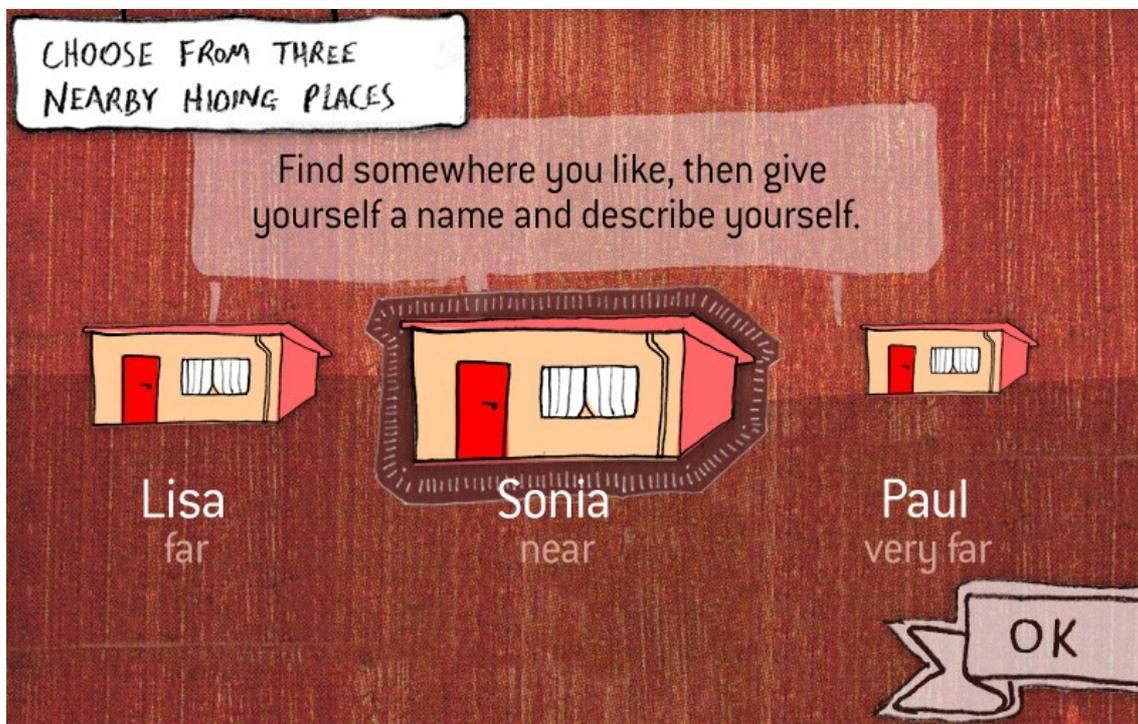


Figure 19: The interface of *Rider Spoke* application. Image by *Blast Theory*.

Following a database organizing principle, *Rider Spoke* presents not a story itself but a collection of fragments. Each recording made by participants should mean on its own because they have a miniature story arc. When united, they do not form a narrative in the conventional model, telling a story with a beginning, middle and end. In any sense, participants can connect these parts through relations of cause and effect, or by a temporal ordering. When they combine a recording of *Rider Spoke* with another one, the result is different perspectives about the urban subjectivity. The more recordings rides listen to, more immersed they find themselves in the feelings and thoughts of those living in big cities. The database of stories of *Rider Spoke* has three thematic sections. One brings the mentioned personal memories participants recover from their past experiences. The other two present: their intimate thoughts, and opinions regarding the urban life. In our analysis of the artwork, we identify *Blast Theory* inviting participants to coauthor what we could compare to a virtual urban encyclopedia that contains from personal opinions to past affective experiences.

The modular structure is what ensures coherency to the narrative experience. Each of its fragments can figure by themselves without the necessity to have another part to complement its meaning. Those who join *Rider Spoke* can listen to each of its recordings independently of the remains. They can also add new ones to the structure without altering it as a whole. This architecture can be a productive alternative to the challenge of designing truly interactive and meaningful stories. As commented before, the nonlinearity aspect of interactive narratives demands a certain modularity of the story segments for allowing participants to access the narrative pieces freely in the most diverse orders. Interactive architectures need a malleable structure to allow that, with each module functioning alone as well as in context with the other ones. All of this can permit the narrative to withstand the nonlinearity uncertainties.

*Figure 20* shows how would be the interaction of four riders, differentiated by colors, in this database of stories. The fragmented narrative has a design of a network, with many nodes created by participants and spread by them through the geography. As illustrated, each participant answers the same initial question and have the freedom to link their response wherever they want to tag it. They then proceed in their exploration of the space, creating some other story nodes by answering what the voice over asks them. While exploring, they also pass through and listen to other recordings present on this database. In *Figure 20*, for example, the blue trajectory symbolizes the experience of a

particular rider. The three nodes he created has the same color that characterizes him. Whether we follow his path, we will see him passing through other three nodes created by riders characterized with the green, pink and brown colors. As already mentioned, in *Rider Spoke* participants create at the same time as they access the content.

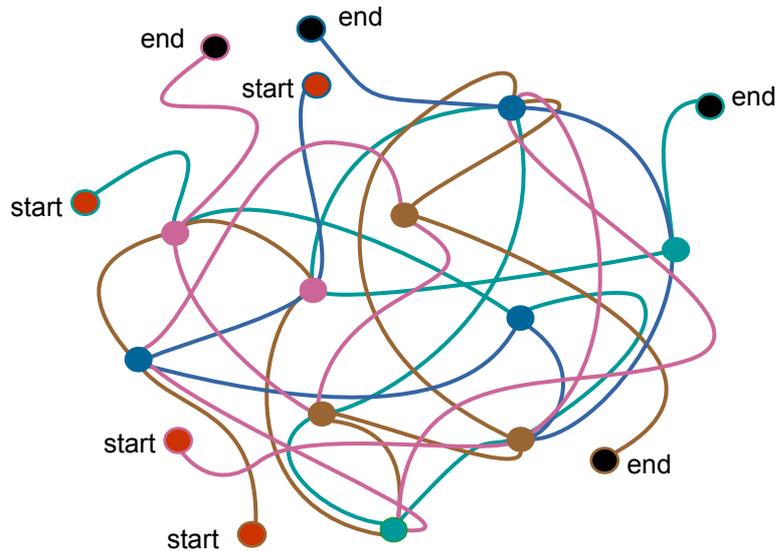


Figure 20: Network diagram representing the plot and discourse level of *Rider Spoke*.

Ryan (2011) observes that designing a system able to produce interactive and meaningful stories in real-time demands more complex structures that allow the authoring process to come, part from the system and part from participants. On her analysis, the emergent quality of such systems turns impossible to predict and anticipate all the stories that can come from it. To her, such engine needs to be robust to integrate participants input in the creative process of the narrative, designing every new interaction to result in a different story. It needs to be “sufficiently sophisticated to produce a wide variety of interesting stories out of data internal to the system” (Ryan, 2011, p. 48).

Regarding *Blast Theory* projects discussed here, *Rider Spoke* is the one that most approximates to a system with all the functions mentioned before. The story content, generated on the fly of the interactive experience, results from a dialogue established between the artists' pre-scripted questions and participants' responses to that. The collaborative content reflects the perspective of both. The narrative design adopts

strategies of a *top-down* system centered on the guidance of who creates it. *Rider Spoke* does present a collection of guidelines that functions as a syntactic structure set by the artists for guiding the content participants will generate. *Blast Theory* places riders in an almost gameworld with precise and predefined rules. This conduction however does not discard the possibility of the system reflect the perspective of participants. Those taking part in the interactive experience can actively define the content they will present in their stories, the way they will tell it, and also the location where they will link the recordings. A precise analysis would recognize that *Rider Spoke* also presents characteristics of a *bottom-up* system.

Whether we can consider or not participants of *Rider Spoke* as coauthors of the narrative content is a matter of discussion. When *bottom-up* strategies reach and affect narrative on its core, Ryan (2011) calls it meta-interactivity, affirming that who is interacting is not necessarily consuming but giving a significant contribution to generating and expanding the story. She argues that to be able to reach narratives in such level, participants have to act “designing a new level for computer game, creating new costumes for the avatar, introducing new objects, associating existent objects with new behaviors, and generally expanding the possibilities of action offered by the storyworld” (Ryan, 2011, p. 50). To her, only when performing such tasks is that we can consider participants coauthors of a narrative, otherwise it would be a mere “hyperbolic cliché”. Moreover, she defines this level of interaction as genuine whether participants interfere in the system by writing a code and patching up the sources. On her understanding, the simple use of internal tools designed by the system creator would not configure an act of meta-interactivity. She shows awareness that this demand can insinuate a technological value associated with the ability to affect the narrative core. What this requirement does not define, to her, is any aesthetic superiority:

The inner layers of the onion are much harder to conquer than the outer layers, but we should not confuse problem-solving difficulty with aesthetic value. There is a tendency in digital culture to evaluate a work as a feat of programing virtuosity. I call this the anti-WYSIWYG aesthetics, because you have to imagine the code that lies behind the screen to appreciate the text. By these standards, a work of level 4 is automatically superior to a work of level 1, regardless of its narrative quality, because it constitutes a much more impressive programing feat. (Ryan, 2011, p. 59)

In *Rider Spoke*, *Blast Theory* considers participants as coauthors of a collaborative narrative created on the fly of their interaction with the system. Nevertheless, riders employ predesigned tools authored by the artists and let available on the N8000 device system for recording and tagging the stories that compose the narrative. Whether they do not have to write code, they do contribute to generating and expanding the story. That is why we consider them coauthors.

### c) Decisions points in the linear trajectory of *A Machine to See With*

This thesis have already discussed how the linearity that characterizes the plot of *A Machine To See With* serves to guide participants navigation through the story events. Even though the crucial function it plays in the interactive experience, we can define but not reduce the artwork to its linear and carefully controlled script. Rather than to just recognize traditional patterns molding it, relevant to us is also to comprehend for which purposes do they serve. What aspects has *Blast Theory* considered when choosing the scheme for designing the narrative? From the answers Matt Adams and Nick Tandavanitj gave to my questions<sup>96</sup>, we started to identify in a previous section of this Chapter the semantic reasons that exist behind their choice for a narrative structure so marked by classic traces.

Important is also to say that *A Machine To See With* has a predetermined script, but those engaging in the interactive experience are still able to contribute and affect it on the discourse and plot level. To do so, *Blast Theory* followed a structure with variations in a predefined story, adopting an architecture similar to the one Ryan (2011) attributes to computer games. Such comparison happens essentially because participants interaction assumes a different perspective: it comes into play. Joining the interactive experience of *A Machine To See With* does not mean to be external to the story, only exploring and organizing its fragments. As in game architectures, it implies in an internal participation, what for Ryan is a crucial requirement to affect the plot.

The dominant narrative structure for the ontological participation is the archetypal story of the quest of the hero... In a quest narrative, the hero fulfills his mission by performing a series of tasks of increasing difficulty. The game determines the theme of the mission and the sequence of the tasks, but the player's performance creates

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<sup>96</sup> The transcriptions of the personal interviews with Matt Adams and Nick Tandavanitj are respectively in Appendix 1 and 2.

variations on this fixed frame. These variations differ from one another in how the avatar solves problems, in the success or failure of this quest, and in the case of failure, in the time and manner of his death. (Ryan, 2011, p. 45)

As Ryan (2011) recognizes, many computer games adopt structures similar to that. She observes that the pre-scripted plot can vary regarding the motifs the main character have to take for moving the story forwards. The differential among them, according to her analysis, is also what players can do within the diegetic space. Apart from that, she sees such narratives relying on the same structure, either requiring participants to solve a puzzle to keep going, or to collect objects to complete a task.

*A Machine To See With* exemplifies well such ontological type of participation, with participants playing the archetypal story of the quest of the hero. To take part, they must enter in the fictional universe characterized by noir references. They engage with it to be the leader of the heist movie. The linearly scripted plot present a precise and clear task to execute. Those taking part embody the role of the main character on a revenge mission. Progressing along a fixed storyline trajectory, it is all a matter of success or failure on the quest. *Blast Theory* scripts all the possible endings, but the play experience of participants is diverse. All of them experiment a story composed of the same elements and events, but each one has a unique performance through the planned narrative sequences. Each player implements the same narrative arc but differently. Even when the same player playing the game again, it is supposed to generate a distinct experience. There are many variables that can produce different outcomes depending on their play activity. It can vary according to their mood at the moment, whether they had already mastered some challenges posed by the gameplay, the way they respond to the game' stimulus and challenges. All these aspects are responsible for making their experience differ at every play section. The variations happen because the story of *A Machine To See With* is also the one lived by participants when interacting and activating the narrative events.

Matt Adams and Nick Tandavanitj also replied to my question<sup>97</sup> about the classic traces on the narrative emphasizing that the option they took relates to the own interaction model defined for the artwork, based on driving participants through the story events unfolded in the city. That explains the level of details and the instructions in an

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<sup>97</sup> Idem.

imperative tense presented on the plot. Both artists justified the linear design indicating their intention of making something that felt cinematic. In *A Machine To See With*, *Blast Theory* invites participants to step inside a film and become the story protagonist in the secret mission. Engaging with it, to the artists, means to act in an imagined heist movie as if your eyes were the camera lens and you the main character of the film<sup>98</sup>. All the narrative elements require participants to drive the story forwards building the necessary tension with moments of unscripted interaction. A voiceover dictates the narrative events and locations that the protagonist of the story have to be. The voice echoes on participants head guiding them during almost the whole experience.

Creating something able to build the protagonist character figured among the reasons Matt Adams and Nick Tandavanitj<sup>99</sup> gave to explain the linearity of the artwork. They pointed the performative nature of participant's interaction as what led the design they drawn for the locative film. Such submissive role of a participant-character that we see in *A Machine To See With* is unprecedented in films, but the performance of participants has a clear precedent in role-playing games (RPG). On this type of games, players act as a character in a fictional setting, taking responsibility for acting out the role given to them. They are responsible for a structured process of decision-making as well as for the development of the character in the narrative context<sup>100</sup>.

Despite the linearity and guidance of *A Machine To See With*, we can not neglect that its narrative architecture also comprises few interactive moments equally important. The plot follows a scripted and orchestrated rise and fall of tension, but *Blast Theory* also places decision points in strategic parts of it using a branch structure that ramifies in many directions similarly to a tree. When Ryan (2006) describes such architecture, she observes that each ramification can correlates to the different courses a story can take, or even to a different development of events regarding the same situation. As she examines, branching type of structures add complexity to storytelling by posing choosing points to participants. When they reach a particular moment in the narrative, they have some options presented to them and they have to choose one among the possible alternatives. Depending on the one chosen, they advance in the story along a

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<sup>98</sup> Information collected from the archives about *A Machine To See With*. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>99</sup> The transcriptions of the personal interviews with Matt Adams and Nick Tandavanitj are respectively in Appendix 1 and 2.

<sup>100</sup> See: Cover, J. G. (2010). *The creation of narrative in tabletop role-playing games*. McFarland.

particular branch of the tree, following the course that matches with the decision they made.

Ryan (2006) inspects how these patterns of choices can result in multiple variants. In structures that branch allowing and depending on participants choices, she recognizes that the decisions can occur through a fixed and predetermined story. In this case, participants are selecting predefined distinct sub-stories or different trajectories to reach a determined narrative point. In other cases, she compares, participants can do more than just alter the telling of the story. They can modify the story itself, for instance, making decisions for the characters' destiny at every choosing point presented in the narrative course.

In *A Machine to See With* architecture, *Blast Theory* pose some branching moments in the narrative by designing some occasions in which the story can ramify in different directions. The ending result is an unexpected combination of a traditional linear model for structuring the narrative with the interactive possibility of its individual customization. The customization can occur according to decisions made by participants and to decisions made by the artists. A concrete example of it is the fact that each 'screening' of *A Machine To See With* can initiate from different starting locations around the city. *Blast Theory* artists are who designate where each participant have to be at the beginning of their experience. When they sign in, they give their names and cell phone numbers. After that, they receive an automated call asking them to return it straight back. When they answer the calling, they listening to instructions and directions indicating where will be their starting point. Each participant has a different one, and at every 15 minutes, a new screening takes place with people initiating their experience from one of the starting points<sup>101</sup>.

When *Blast Theory* presented *A Machine To See With*, in Brighton, they set six different starting locations<sup>102</sup>: Toy Museum, Pavillion, Market Diner, Church Street, The Astoria, Thistle Hotel. As explained, participants received a call letting them know the one designated to them, as they had no opportunity to make any decisions at this initial narrative branching point. Each place selected by the artists led to a distinct unfolding of

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<sup>101</sup> Information collected from the archives about *A Machine To See With*. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>102</sup> Information collected from the archives about *A Machine To See With*, in Brighton. File reproduced in Appendix 6. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

the story. In the narrative architecture, it results in a structure composed of six different variants with each branch presenting a different content. What differs in each storyline is somehow the directions they given to participants, because the guidance has to be in agreement with the location from where they started their experience. Even though the narrative varies according to the geography, the core content of its initial part is mainly the same. The six branches in which the story ramifies in this initial part serve the same purpose of setting participants on the mood of the story. At a determined moment, all of them, independent from where they began their experience, listen to the same statements:

Everything around you is just pretend, it's all made up. This town is paper thin. A series of flats, a scattering of extras and: you. You will only do what you think is right. You won't do what you're told. (*Blast Theory, A Machine To See With*, 2010)<sup>103</sup>.

After this initial stage comprised on the “Go Call” act, the narrative converges into one storyline to latter ramifies once more. The new branching moment happens in the “WC Call” act. This thesis already mentioned that *Blast Theory* adopted a call center software to trigger the narrative calls that guide participants on journeys around the city, and also as a structure and an argument to the interactive story. The artists configured the system to make participants get through a psychological profiling test, interacting to choose between given options by means of their cell phone keypad.

The test happens in a moment in which participants are in the toilet. They went to that place answering a comand given by the voice on the phone, who required them to hide money somewhere on their body. It is also in this quiet space, “hidden in a cubicle, tightly framed” as the automated voice describes it, in which participants will go through this profiling questionnaire. The voice introduces participants to the moment by saying:

Let's learn something about you. Most psychologists now believe that the apparent complexity of human personality is just an illusion. In reality, people vary on just five fundamental dimensions. Understand these dimensions and we gain an important insight into your behaviour and thinking. (*Blast Theory, A Machine To See With*, 2010)<sup>104</sup>.

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<sup>103</sup> Idem.

<sup>104</sup> Idem.



Figure 21: “WC Call” act on *A Machine To See With*. Image publicized by *Blast Theory*

The five fundamental dimensions mentioned in the narrative are the ones set in the *59 seconds* book of the psychologist Richard Wiseman<sup>105</sup>. The big 5 – what genes and childhood would determine and remain largely unchanged – are related to openness,

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<sup>105</sup> Information collected from the archives about *A Machine To See With*. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

conscientiousness, need for stimulation, agreeableness, emotional stability. On *A Machine To See With*, *Blast Theory* analyzes participants' psyche through the inquiring of a series of 6 statements that they must give their opinion. The recording voice on the phone requests them not to think too much about it. As she says, they should be quick but honest on their response. For each statement, participants have to reply just declaring whether they agree or disagree, on a scale that goes from 1 to 3, in which 1 means accordance and three stands for discordance. All of the statements are in regards to politics and personal engagement. Their answers will supposedly reflect their personality and serve to identify some patterns of belief and behavior.

The profile test starts with the following assertion: “If there was an election tomorrow, I know which party I would vote for”. The next affirmation maintains the explicit political subject, saying: “I see myself as the life of the party”. The test then advances with statements that refer more to a possible personal engagement: “I see myself as feeling little concern for others”. The last two statements probe participants leadership: “I see myself taking the lead in a stressful situation”. Or even: “I see myself having excellent ideas”. Participants valorize what the recording voice on the phone said by pressing the numbers on the keyboard of their phone. After the test, the plot of *A Machine To See With* bifurcates once more in three storylines according to the answers and the result of the test made by each participant. The three ramifications are, in fact, psychological descriptions believed to correspond to each personality.

WC.71.1	WC.72.1	WC.73.1
<p>Thank you.</p> <p>Your answers indicate that you're someone who understands why this needs to happen. This bank is every bank. You understand who is responsible. You will be the brains in this operation, the one to make sure the outcome is a good one.</p>	<p>Thank you.</p> <p>Your answers indicate that you're someone who doesn't take things lying down. The banks have got away with things long enough. You will be the one to take set things right. Keep on your toes and be ready to to act quickly if things go wrong.</p>	<p>Thank you.</p> <p>Your answers indicate that you're someone who is logical and cautious. You're a team player but the question for you is who is on your team? Everyone is a potential obstacle or a potential accomplice. Keep your eyes peeled. You will be the one to decide who can be trusted.</p>

Figure 22: Three different options in which the narrative ramifies<sup>106</sup>.

<sup>106</sup> Information collected from the archives about *A Machine To See With*, in Brighton. File reproduced in Appendix 6. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

The following act is the “Partner Call”, in which participants need to go to a parking car to meet up a partner for the revenge mission. The plot of ramifies according to some variables that again are not participants who define. The ramifications are in reference to the locations where *Blast Theory* will send each participant. They set different car parks, so the instructions given by the voice on the phone corresponds to where each participant have to go to meet his partner. After that, the plot ramifies according to the situation encountered. Some of them can find nobody in the car, one person in the vehicle, or more than two persons. The artists script all these possibilities, and another one in a case of the participant not finding the car.

The plot also branches in the “Bank Call” act, with the ramifications depending on whether the participant arrived at the bank solo, or with one or more partners. The storytelling finishes in a difference place from the location it started, but *A Machine To See With* has the same final scene for all participants.

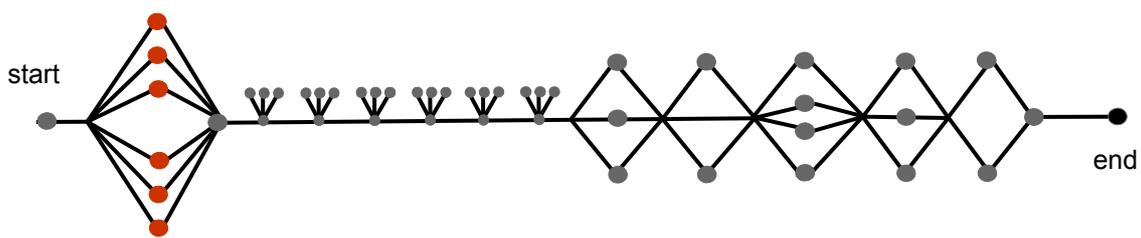


Figure 23: An approximated diagram for the plot of *A Machine To See With*.

When asked about the narrative design with few branching moments and in general very structured and linear, Nick Tandavanitj<sup>107</sup> justified it partially pointing out some technical constraints. The artist remembered that the challenge when designing the interactive structure of the *A Machine To See With* was how to branch telephone calls. The development of a branching system for a navigational narrative was not the deal. The difficult, according to him, was to manage content. In a tree architecture, as Ryan (2006) recognizes, participants' interaction regularly affects the configuration of links. Modifications to the system of connections are frequent and result from their choices. Decisions made through the narrative experience means changes in the temporally ordered narrative structure, with the creation of new links, or some becoming reachable

<sup>107</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

while others turning inaccessible. The more choosing points a branching structure have, she evaluates, more easily it can lead to an unmanageable complexity.

That probably explains why the mentioned architecture efficiently works for stories with long stretches of noninteractive narration as it is in *A Machine To See With*. Nick Tandavanitj also pointed to the linearity of the piece when explained to me<sup>108</sup> the freedom participants have to choose among options on the course of their journey. He affirmed that the artwork structure is essentially six lines through the city and participants do not deviate considerably from it because the narrative is very linear. Even when the story branches, it is an artistic and logistic decision rather a result of participants election.

#### d) *I Like Frank* narrative and its intricate gameplay

*I Like Frank* figure on the list of the most playful works from *Blast Theory*. It as a game but that differs substantially from the archetypal story of the quest of the hero. It combines two distinct categories of participants, each in one location and with a set of specific interfaces and technologies. Some people join the interactive artwork online and others in the city streets. Both kinds of players take part simultaneously during the hours defined by the artists for the playing activity. *I Like Frank* demanded from *Blast Theory* the formulation of strategies able to unify the very divergent sets of experiences resulted from the diverse modes participants can play it. Regarding its architecture, Matt Adams justified<sup>109</sup> the design decisions pointing a basic reason that reaffirms the necessity to bring together the two very distinct groups of players taking part from such totally different spaces.

People online have arrived through clicking a link. People on the street have made a physical journey. People online are playing for free. People on the street have bought a ticket. People online can leave in a second without anyone ever know. People on the street have often come with a friend, and they are now both committed together to do this thing. People online can be in any time zone on earth. People on the street we know exactly the time zone. We could go with this huge list of all these properties. People online are anonymous. People on the street are really not very anonymous, they are

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<sup>108</sup> Idem.

<sup>109</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

visible and can be identified. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>110</sup>

The design *Blast Theory* gave to *I Like Frank* tries to make the best strength out of those things, building a game that allows all people who are in totally different worlds to come together and share space. The artists considered the particular properties that characterize the two type of participants to create strategies to engaged them in the same storyworld. Regarding the game mechanics, *Blast Theory* combined competitive and collaborative elements, what ended up originating a too elaborate and complex rule-based structure. As we will attest in the following pages, the intricate gameplay does not exclude but contributes to the narrative formation. The complex mission players have to complete just gives more prominence to the dense story involved in the game.

The content of *I Like Frank* addresses participants attention to some recurrent thematics framed by *Blast Theory* on their artworks. Searching and absence is one of them, meet and trust in strangers is the other one. Since *Kidnap*, the artists keep inviting participants to commit and deal with strangers. It is a constant aspect framed by them. In *I Machine To See With*, participants have to partner a stranger and follow guidances of an invisible and unknown hand responsible for guiding them in a payback act. In *Rider Spoke*, they also have to answer questions made by an anonymous voice over, trusting on her to tell many secrets or things that maybe they have never talked about with their familiars or friends. Participants are also aware that others, they probably have never seen before, can find and listen to the confessional recordings they let in specific locations in the city. *Blast Theory* has a considerable interest in how the urban life has created new sociabilities in which our relations with strangers are one of the most curious and polemic aspects it brings<sup>111</sup>.

What would it takes for you to trust a stranger? *I Like Frank* is another work created under these terms, which core topic is to meet and to trust in someone you do not know. It is an adventure chasing game whose storytelling and goal run around the hunt for an elusive character called Frank. The search is what gives meaning to the play activity of the two groups – street and online players. It is also what makes them collaborate, as working together enhances the possibilities of completing the mission in the given time.

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<sup>110</sup> Idem.

<sup>111</sup> Information collected from *Blast Theory* archives. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

The narrative is a vital element functioning to involve and motivate player's action, as we can perceive on this message that welcome the online group:

I'm happy that you could make it. I want you to help me find Frank. He was here at one time, with me. I remember a fair amount about where we went and what we did. His face still seems clear at times, then ebbs away, half gone. He liked to drift away from the crowds into the shade, pausing on a step, under an awning and then striding on. He was erratic at that time, perfectly still then agitated and onward. (*Blast Theory, I Like Frank*, 2004)<sup>112</sup>

These few initial descriptions about Frank invites participants to imagine and formulate a mental idea of who is the missing character. Nevertheless, it does not let clear who is Frank and who is the personal talking about him. She was not his lover or friend, as the message declared it. Though they were not close enough, there is a reason that explains why she is searching him. Nostalgia does not drive the necessity of finding Frank. There is a more important aspect moving this chaise. As she says: “each person you know opens up a different part of your personality. When they are gone, a part of you goes too”<sup>113</sup>. Players could assume from those lines that finding Frank means finding a part of themselves that someone's presence can uncover. Frank helped the women who wrote the message to see an unexpected part of her personality. With him away, that was missing too. She could not keep a hole of what that was. By this manner, the message creates a mood for the game spreading lyricism and mystery. In addition to engaging participants in the story, its function is to give them a motif for playing.

And now you're here to help me and so are the others. I can tell you what I know but some of these memories are so old I can't even be sure they happened at all. All I know is that thinking of Frank makes me ache, like a hollow, aching hunger. And I want him back. And I need your help. (*Blast Theory, I Like Frank*, 2004, Adelaide)<sup>114</sup>

After this introduction, online participants can log in and start playing from their computers. They will navigate on a 3D virtual version of the city moving through it using the arrows on their keyboard. At that same time, another group of players is in the “real” city ready to join the search in the streets. They come equipped with 3G mobile

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<sup>112</sup> Information collected from the archives about *I Like Frank*. File reproduced in Appendix 10. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>113</sup> Information collected from the archives about *I Like Frank*. File reproduced in Appendix 10. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>114</sup> Idem.

phones connected to the Internet, which display a map with key locations. These participants have booked a ticket and also went through an introductory moment before they could initiate the game. Different from the message those playing online received, they watch a video of two minutes that presents the fictional universe of the game, where and how it is going to happen, and especially what are the goal and the rules to follow. During the briefing stage, participants at the city get to know that other players are online at that simultaneous time, trying to complete the same given mission<sup>115</sup>. An enlightening information they receive is that working together can enhance the possibilities of both succeed.

Participants must run against the clock as they have 60 minutes to complete the mission. The chasing starts with a message from Frank. To street players, it says: “Come and meet me. I've marked your map with the location. Click on the “I’m here” button to confirm you've arrived and I'll come to meet you”<sup>116</sup>. The game sends both categories of players on this same start mission. In the case of street players, they see on their map on the phone a blinking dot showing the meeting place and an “I’m here” button. When they arrive at the indicated spot and click on the button, their avatar appears for online participants. Inhabiting a virtual model of the same real city area, those playing from computers can now see the ones in the streets. They are visible in the 3D reproduction, at the exact and correspondent location in the city where they are. After this initial moment, the search starts. “Keep talking, keep your eyes bright, keep moving and help me find Frank”<sup>117</sup>, says the messages participants receive.

*I Like Frank*, with its too complex rule-based structure, has the title of the world's first mixed reality game for 3G phones. Before that, *Blast Theory* have made *Can You See me Now*<sup>118</sup> (2001) and *Uncle Roy All Around You*<sup>119</sup> (2003). Both mixed reality games have a similar design, apart from the fact that they were for handheld computers. The technical characteristics and the elaboration of a puzzling gameplay must have generated a considerable challenge for *Blast Theory* in the designing of the story embedded in *I Like Frank*.

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<sup>115</sup> Information collected from the archives about *I Like Frank*. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>116</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>117</sup> Information collected from the archives about *I Like Frank*. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>118</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/can-you-see-me-now/>

<sup>119</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/uncle-roy-all-around-you/>

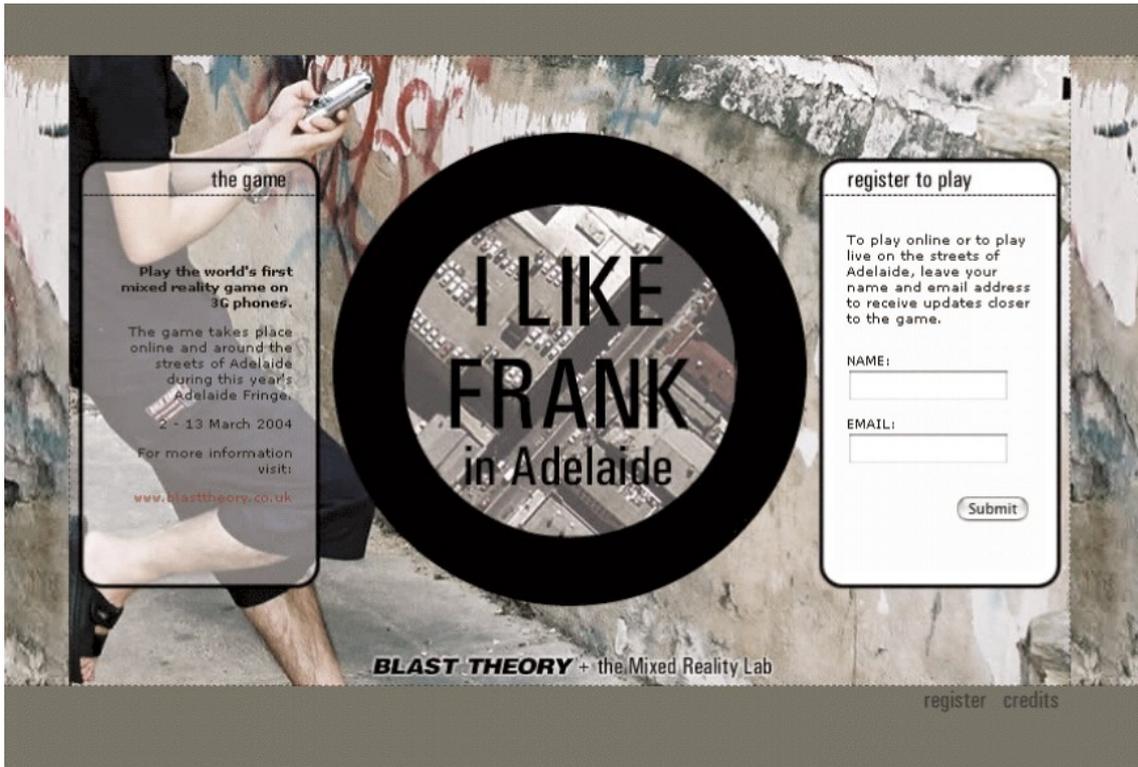


Figure 24: Web interface for online players of *I Like Frank*. Image by *Blast Theory*.

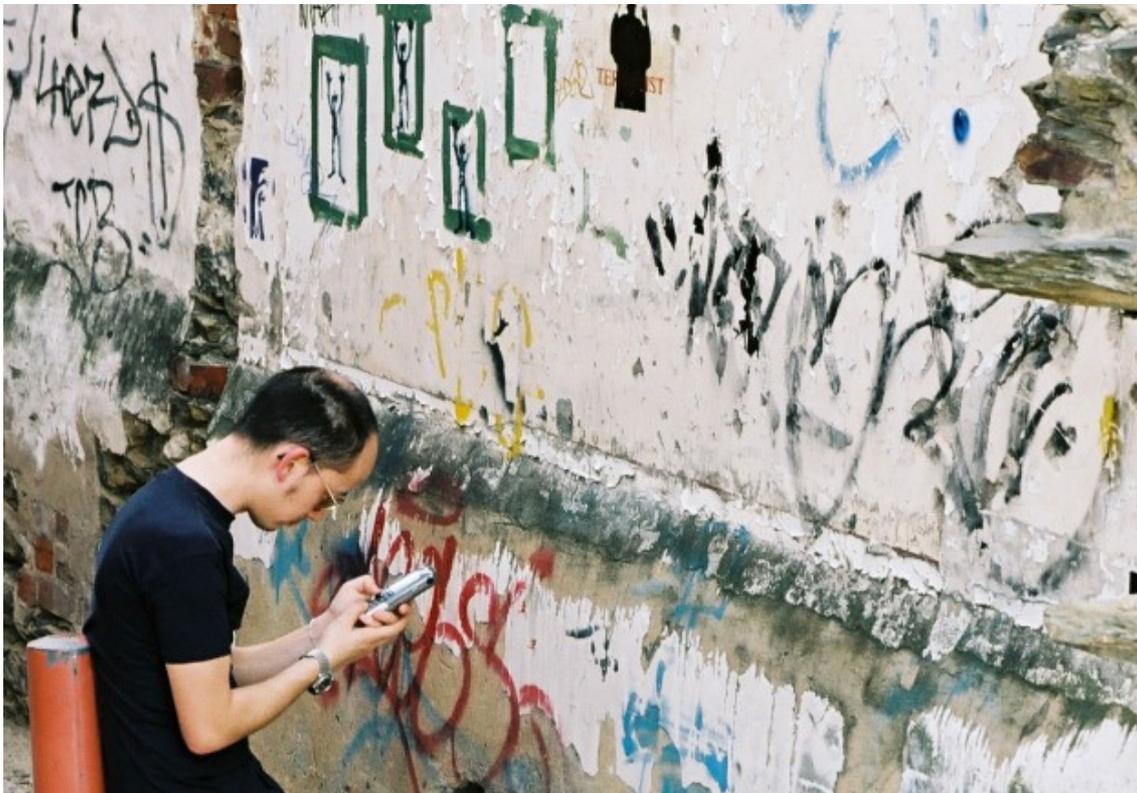


Figure 25: *I Like Frank* image publicized by *Blast Theory*.

The combination of narrative development and game is a defiant aspect. There are some standard approaches and overused methods adopted by game designers for building this relationship. As Perez Latore (2010) analyses, some strategies such as “cut-scenes” can implicitly serve to guide and model the interaction and the movement of players in videogames oriented to narrativity. Nevertheless, when designers adopt such mechanisms, they also have to account for planning how to tell a story without compromising the act of playing. Ryan (2011) criticizes the most common mechanism of fulfilling the play experience with noninteractive movie clips, the called “cut-scenes”. Her critics are to the fact that this technique can be frustrating as the story only moves forward during the cut-scenes when the fragments of the story appear as a reward. Players just watch them whether they get access to a new level. As she observes, first you need to complete some tasks to get more of the story, what turns the connection between the play and the narrative problematic. In one hand, on her analysis, it reduces the strategic significance of the actions players take within the gameworld, as they just have to complete the tasks to have more content. On the other hand, she contrasts, whether they are experiencing an exciting game, they will have to pause and watch some story before they can get back to the action. The other way around can also happen, forcing players very interested in the story to play the game and win a task to have access to what comes next in the tale.

Apart from the critics, Ryan (2011) discusses what can be a step forward in the challenge of achieving a designing structure that compromise neither the narrative nor the gameplay. Such “in-game” strategy consists of spread elements within the gameworld as a manner of adding information about past events in the story. Players have to search for them and pick them up, what she believes can be a mechanism to motivate an action that will lead to the narrative content. Designing a rich gameworld loaded with hidden story fragments is, to her, a promising variation on the idea of built-in narrativity.

In this architecture, every place would hold a story to be dug up, every object would offer opportunities for playful manipulation, and nonplaying characters would be full of witty gossip. The gameworld would tempt the user to pause, explore, visit roadside attractions, respond to affordances, gather stories, and set up his own goals, rather than being relentlessly driven forward by the desire to beat the game. By giving the user the option of freely exploring the virtual world and of deciding what tasks to perform. (Ryan, 2011, p. 47)

Some massively multiplayer online role-playing games (MMORPG) and even single-player games do it by creating an "open world" or "free roam"<sup>120</sup>. The terminology refers to what can also be called exploration games, where the player can move freely through unrestricted areas of the virtual world finding many ways to reach an objective. This nonlinear approach that does not force player's motion but let them explore vast worlds opposes to other video games that give a more linear structure to its gameplay with an environment typically full of invisible walls and smaller levels<sup>121</sup>.

The design of *I Like Frank* show how in-game strategies can be very efficient for merging narrative and gameplay. In our analyzing of the artwork, we identified how *Blast Theory* defined an interaction mode anchored on participants exploration of the diegetic world, that is the city itself and its 3D virtual representation. Such explorative activity happens during the play section. That is how participants contribute to the development of the story and its discourse formation. Rather than just direct them to go straight in their attempt to achieve the primary goal set for the game, *Blast Theory* makes players have first to gather clues about the character they are looking for. By this manner, they advance in the game, as well as get involved in narrative embedded on it.

After the first attempt to meet the missing character, for instance, street players get a message from Frank saying that there's something he wants them to do for him. They do not know what it is. He just indicates a direction that they should head into and affirms that he will contact them as they go. Every time participants on the streets click on the map on the 3G phone setting their location with an "I am here", they get clues. While it, on the 3D representation of the city, online players also receive text messages with clues. "I have chosen an important place for Frank and me. I have marked it with a photo", says one of the messages<sup>122</sup>. What both groups of players will discover is that there is a secret element hidden in the gameworld that they must find. They have to work out what and then where it is. The object they search is a postcard left in a significant spot for the narrative purpose.

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<sup>120</sup> See: Harris, John (September 26, 2007). "Game Design Essentials: 20 Open World Games". Gamasutra. Retrieved on 2016-05-25.

<sup>121</sup> See: Sefton, Jamie (July 11, 2007). The roots of open-world games. GamesRadar. Retrieved on 2016-05-25.

<sup>122</sup> Information collected from the archives about *I Like Frank*. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

When *Blast Theory* presented *I Like Frank* in Adelaide, they left postcards in four different locations in the real city, that also appeared on the 3D representation. The places were: the Ballroom, a bike rack in front of the post office, another bike rack at the Twin Street, and the Exeter Hotel<sup>123</sup>. The artists wrote clues for directing players to each one of these places. Those online received messages with tips and incentives: “Keep looking for the place I left the photo”<sup>124</sup>. Those chasing through the city streets, also get messages every 3 minutes asking: “Where Are You?”. When they declared their position by clicking on the map and hitting a button marked “I’m here”, they got clues with context specific directions, such as: “Look for a jewelers shop along the street you’re on and take the next road left”. After a limited time, these directions become less context specific and more direct: “The office is on Panton St.” The clues can go from “Find Frank”, to “Frank is near”, or even to “Frank is near Hindmarsh Sq”. It depended on the number of messages already given to that participant and how difficult it seems to him complete the game task<sup>125</sup>.

This mechanism adopted by *Blast Theory* seems reminiscent of *Geocaching*<sup>126</sup> and its strategy of seeking containers. The difference is that discover the location of the hidden object in *I Like Frank* is the same as discovering a bit more about who is Frank. Filling out this step mission is the same as moving the storytelling forwards. The plans players create serve for both, to get more of the story as well as to complete the game task. An example that illustrates it well is a message received by online players seeking for a foto hidden on a bike rack. It is not just a game clue, there is a story and a past context in there related to the elusive character: “Frank loved the cut throughs, the back alleys and the dead ends. I need you to do something for me. I've taken a photo that is just for you. When you find it I'll be in touch”<sup>127</sup>.

In the context of the game, participants playing on the 3D representation of the city receive clues that recommend them to work together with players on the street, asking them about directions. “I left the photo outside the post office. Ask a street player if they know the way”, says the message sent to those online who are searching for the

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<sup>123</sup> Information collected from the archives about *I Like Frank*. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>124</sup> Idem.

<sup>125</sup> Idem.

<sup>126</sup> "Geocaching is an outdoor adventure where players use our free mobile app or a GPS device to find cleverly hidden containers around the world. See: <<https://www.geocaching.com/press/faq.aspx>>

<sup>127</sup> Information collected from the archives about *I Like Frank*. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

picture hidden in the bike rack located in front a post office. On the virtual model, they can see other players online and in the city streets. Nevertheless, only those playing from computers can chat freely, in an open communication between them. They can just speak with street participants whether they get close enough to one another. Players in the city can record audio messages of 10 seconds maximum to reply the contact or they can just ignore the messages. Every audio recording sent last 20 seconds to be available and the most recent messages replace the previous ones.

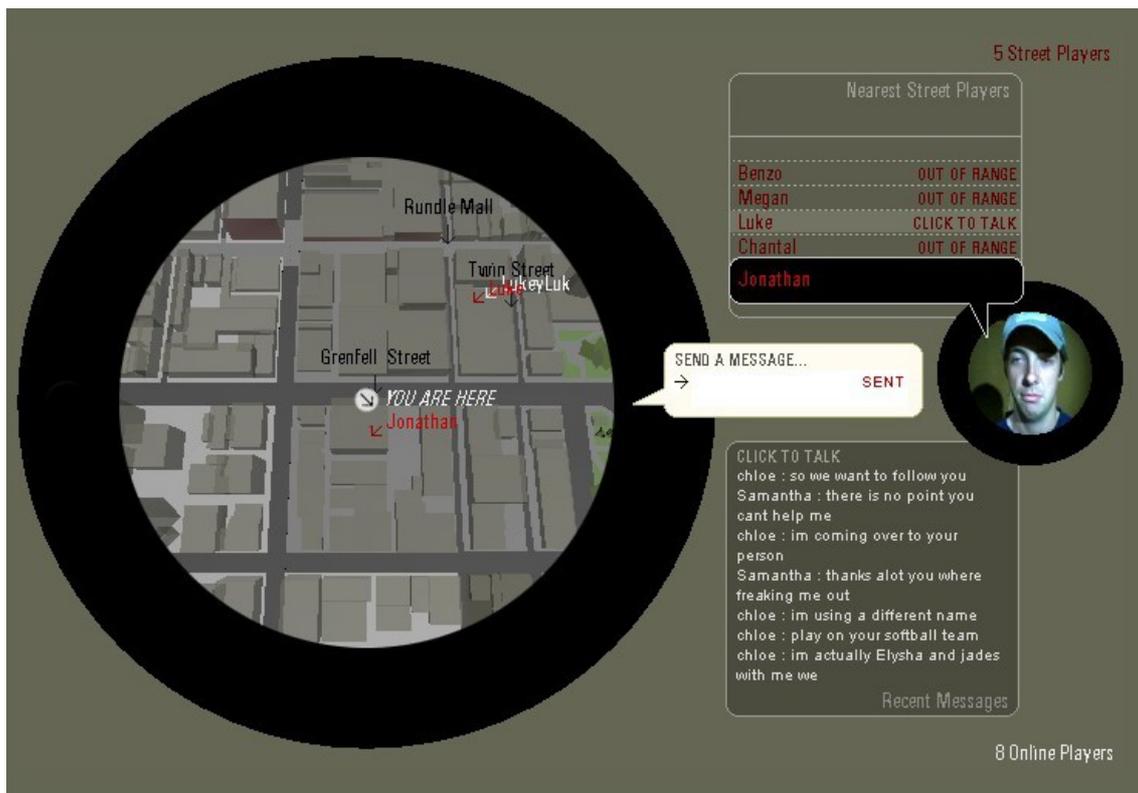


Figure 26: Web interface with online and a street player's chat. Image by *Blast Theory*

When online players find the mentioned photo hidden in the virtual city, the system informs them that there is also a postcard at this exact place in the real town. Online participants who found the photo in the Ballroom, for instance, receive a message saying: “Well done. You've found the photo. Bring a Street Player to this spot. There's something here for you. They must find a postcard I left for you here. When they find it, give that player your postal address”<sup>128</sup>. At this moment of the game, online participants get to know that they can only complete the next step mission whether they partner with a street player. From an option, the collaboration turns into a necessity. They must

<sup>128</sup> Idem.

contact, convince and guide a street player to the target spot. That is the only manner they have for retrieving the hidden object.



Figure 27: Web interface in the moment an online player found the photo in the Ballroom location. Image by Blast Theory

Collaboration is a requirement of the gameplay that clearly keep expressing it in all clues:

You are in Hindmarsh Square notice the bike on the second rack away from Pultney Street and in front of a post office. Find a Street Player and bring them back to this alleyway. At the end of this alley you will find a stair case, there is a sign that reads NO TRESPASSING, next to it you will find a bike with a bag attached. Inform the Street Player to reach into the bag to retrieve your item. (Blast Theory, *I Like Frank*, 2004)<sup>129</sup>.

This relationship players have to establish is a relevant aspect of *I Like Frank*. As said, the core thematic of the artwork regards whether you would trust a stranger. During the whole experience, online and street players are in an attempt to communicate and collaborate with each other. Such necessity of working together with someone you do not know serves to raise on them the meaning that the narrative intends to frame. *I Like*

<sup>129</sup> Information collected from the archives about *I Like Frank*. (Source: Blast Theory server)

*Frank* is not just a chasing game, but an investigation into the nature of electronic relationships. Participants see themselves forced to trust in a stranger to give continuity to the course of the story and to the game itself. Gameplay that presupposes the need for collaborative strategies such as *I Like Frank* makes the narrative also grow from the human relations between players. *Blast Theory* often invests in this network of human relationships, even in pieces like *A Machine To See With* in which participants enact the solitary quest of a hero but have to meet a partner in crime.

Ryan (2011) evaluates how such approaches focused on the collaborative relations established between players represent another effective strategy that can solve a possible lack of deep connection between gameplay and narrative. To her, the generation of narratives can be even more intricate and compelling when participants interact with human partners – as in multiplayer virtual worlds systems – because they have an imaginative and sophisticated behavior. As she predicts:

Games won't be worth playing for the sake of the story until they introduce possibilities for actions that engage the player in strategic relations with other characters and require a construction of their minds: actions such as asking for help, forming alliances, betraying, deceiving, pursuing, breaking up with, threatening, flattering, seeking revenge, making and breaking promises, violating interdictions, convincing or dissuading. (Ryan, 2011, p. 48)

*Blast Theory* built *I Like Frank* to allow every street player and every online player to be in contact. As explained, people online need to ask for the help of those playing in the streets to collect the postcard and players in the urban space cooperate because they can benefit with the guidance of who is online. Collaboration is crucial to a step mission that will lead them to the main goal of the game, that is to find Frank. Matt Adams made a comment to me<sup>130</sup> regarding the strategy they adopted to unify the divergent sets of participants present in *I Like Frank*. The artist said that, in practical terms, they saw the relationship between the two instances functioning in distinct manners. Online players could be helpful to the street participants but the opposite could also happen, that is having quite annoying or confusing online players because they are anonymous and they are online.

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<sup>130</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

They can bullshit, they can pretend, they do not have to be cool to account for their actions. So then what we were trying to do was making that part of the work, which is: “do you trust the online player to tell you where to go?” and to then bring the ideas of trust, very much in *I Like Frank* and *Can You See Me Now*. Both of those works are very much more about trust in strangers, online communities, and what that might mean and so on. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>131</sup>

The description of the discourse design of *I Like Frank* can frame on these two manners participants can engage with the work, getting as a reference a braided architecture with concurrent storylines running in parallel. As represented in *Figure 28*, the continuous lines stands for four streets players and the dashed ones for four participants playing online. These destiny lines are complementary and compose the whole narrative. The events comprised on the problem solving defined by the game is what move them forward and guide their trajectories.

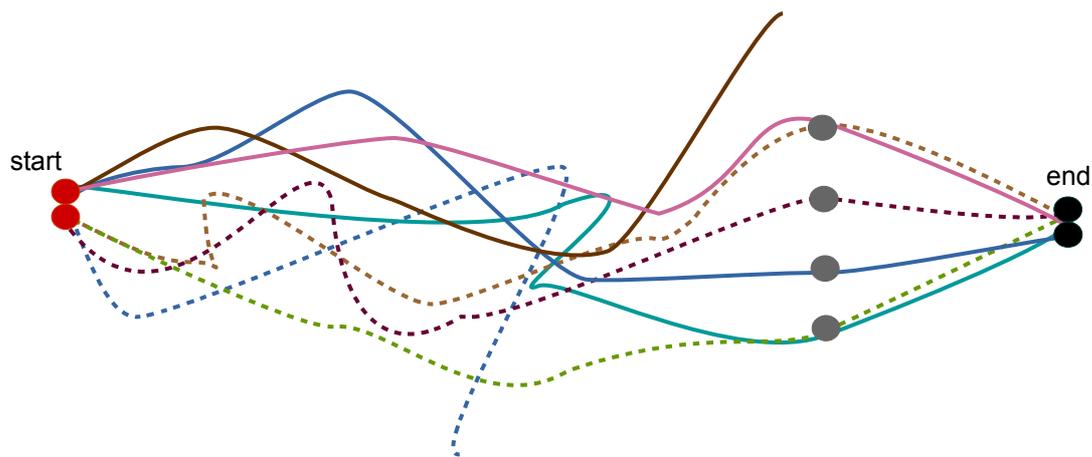


Figure 28: Diagram for *I Like Frank*.

The initial stage of the game and narrative is fundamentally the same to all players, consisting of an introduction to who is Frank, a call to action in the hunt for him, and a step mission that is the first attempt to meet the character. All participants start their experience from the same manner, being presented to the fictional universe and the complex set of rules. The only variance in this beginning is according to their category: whether they are online or in the streets.

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<sup>131</sup> Idem.

The next stage of the game comprises the exploration through the urban space in which participants are dealing with the second step mission that is to find the hidden object in the city. Each player can so implement the narrative and the game on different manners, according to their play activity. There are four nodes spread through the geography in which players will explore. They correspond to the locations where participants can collect a postcard. What differs between them regarding content are the clues participants receive, as they are in agreement with the place are trying to find.



Figure 29: Futurelands, in Adelaide, the location of the final act in *I Like Frank*. Image by Blast Theory

The final stage in *I Like Frank* narrative also differ a bit in correspondence to the success or not of each player in completing the given mission. As we see in *Figure 28*, some destiny lines reach the end dot and some not. On the context of the game, a phone call announces both finals to players at the streets. According to the script created by the artists, a performer executes the whole act. She is on the phone saying that Frank asked her for making this call. The actress informs that she is across the street and looking right at the player. “Can you see me?”, she inquires. Next, the performer will invite

them to follow her. In Adelaide, she guided participants to a courtyard and asked them to sit down on a bench<sup>132</sup>.

There, in a quiet and green place is where the game finishes to all participants that followed the story in the real city until that point. There is a motif of being in this location. It is special to her as the bench the player is invited to sit is where Frank and her sat the last time she saw him. As many of other *Blast Theory* works, the final is a wishful thinking moment. In the Futurelands, away from the city and surrounded by trees and birds, the artists invite players to think a bit about what they lived:

The air is warm today and gentle on your face. You remind me of someone, they used to stare intensely into my eyes. They would never look away but I would have to eventually because I couldn't keep looking. Like when a baby stares you out and it feels too strong. I sometimes think I see them on the street and today I thought you were them. (Blast Theory, *I Like Frank*, 2004)<sup>133</sup>.

All players listen to the final text, independent of how efficient they have been on their hunt. Nevertheless, before saying these words, the performer asks whether they have a postcard with them. In the case of a negative answer, it means that they have failed, and the game is over. The ones who completed the mission and found the postcard get a slightly different message. After the message above, they hear: "Now, please write your answer to the question on the postcard". The postcards participants got in the city can diverge. There are different versions, each one posing a distinct question to players think about it. *Blast Theory* reserves to this moment of *I Like Frank* experience, a nondigital contributive interaction for participants, that have to write down on the provided postcard.

*Blast Theory* also puts in the context of the final moment of the game that relationship players lived hunting for the elusive Frank. Players will firm the relationship they built throughout the game on the last task assigned for those who manage to complete the goal. The artists ask street players to make a commitment to a stranger, promising to be available for this person in case of a personal crisis. Whether they answer saying that they are willing to that, both parts do a 12 months commitment exchanging email addresses or phone numbers.

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<sup>132</sup> Information collected from the archives about *I Like Frank*. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>133</sup> Idem.

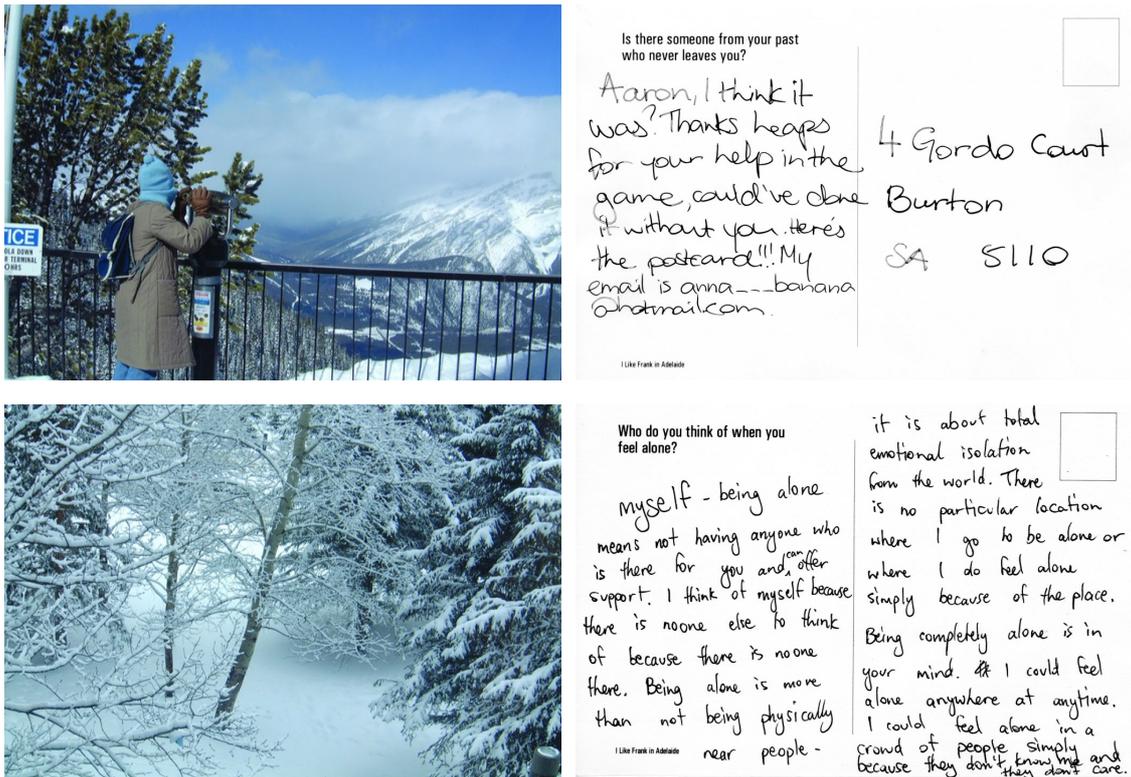


Figure 30: *I Like Frank* postcards written by street players. Image by *Blast Theory*.

## 2.2.2 Game Mechanics Subverting Linear Narrative Progression

From the analysis of the interactive architecture of the four projects commented before, we could attest how *Blast Theory* have been incorporating game elements in many of its artworks. In *I Like Frank*, for instance, the artists dig participants subjectivity adopting a game character able to create a playful and fun experience, what is an inherent aspect that defines this cultural form. Even so, we could ask ourselves why *Blast Theory* use games for it? The group had even asked themselves such a question<sup>134</sup>, remembering that this massive popular phenomenon is not generally worthy of serious comment or examination. Comparing it to the cinema in the early 20th century, they observed how games have currently be receive the designation of a downmarket, populist and shallow genre that appeals to the lowest common denominator. On the other hand, they also remembered the manner it has been growing and attracting increasing interest from serious thinkers and practitioners.

<sup>134</sup> Information collected from the archives about *I Like Frank*. File reproduced in Appendix 10. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

The more obvious answer *Blast Theory* could give to the adoption of such interactive model would be clearly the appeal games has on a wide audience. More reasons can justify it, though. The artists enumerated at least eight aspects on the document I accessed on their archives about *I Like Frank*<sup>135</sup>. On the top of them, the first one regards to structure. To them, all games, even the simplest ones as draughts or scissors/paper/stone, requires a robust and rigorous plan. It presents a scheme that is always dependent on a definitive outcome: in a game you win, or you lose. Nevertheless, it is also such design that often subverts linear narrative progression and other traditional forms of artistic structure.

The last half century has seen artists working in time based media trying many ways of escaping traditional structures (e.g. Philip Glass and systems music, Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty, Peter Greenaway and David Lynch) but often ending up in a cul de sac. The resulting structures have felt ‘experimental’, alien and limited. Game structures answer many of these problems while remaining easily understood<sup>136</sup>.

Moreover, according to their reasoning, game language has the potential to attract people and to involve them promptly. *Blast Theory* does use games because of their distinctive and compelling form of embodiment, what can enable powerful and unusual explorations. To the artists, embodying the main character or playing with an avatar, players ended up identifying and getting immersed rapidly on the motifs treated by the fictional universe. As *Blast Theory* believes, players get absorbed probably because the gameplay demands an active engagement on the part of who is interacting. Another reason they listed is the fact that interaction is intrinsic to games. This relation is what for the artists turns its structure and dynamics into a straightforward manner of unity interactivity onto an existing artform such as the art of telling stories. On their understanding, it can happen at least without raising many of the often and profound unanswered questions provoked when interactivity invades the realm of narratives.

Ju Row Farr talked about *Blast Theory* adoption of game elements<sup>137</sup>, mentioning what *Blast Theory* refers as “call to action”<sup>138</sup> in interactive experiences. By this term, what she meant is to act of letting those taking part in the game apparently know what it

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<sup>135</sup> Idem.

<sup>136</sup> Idem.

<sup>137</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

<sup>138</sup> In game design there is also the concept of mission.

expects and asks them to do. In an interactive narrative, participants have to get enough information when they initiate their interaction to engage and collaborate to move the storytelling forwards. In game design, this would be called the "intro", or a moment intended to present to players the clear set of rules. Ju Row Farr recognizes that most of their artworks define the ways of behaving, because it can be clear in the artists' mind but not necessarily on participants' mind. Such attempt explains why the interactive structures they design present enough information in the beginning of the narrative and set a predefined order of this content in the experience of all participants. By this way, they can let who is joining the artwork knows exactly what they need to do within that story universe they are entering. As we analyzed before, such introductory moment appears in all the four artworks created by *Blast Theory* and investigated in this study. That is the moment when it comes clear to participants what and how should be their behavior in the interactive experience. As Ju Ro Farr compares<sup>139</sup>, it is common in lots of games and also in lots of stories too.

I think it is important. You do not necessarily get the world set, but you get them operating in a certain frame. So there are clear rules, but they are perhaps more apparent or explicit. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>140</sup>

From perceiving that *Blast Theory* artworks have a strong presence of game elements, I asked Ju Row Farr<sup>141</sup> whether the strategy they adopted to design their interactive pieces was *content-driven* or *interaction-driven* (Narcís; Parés & Parés, 2001). I would like to recognize from which point the artists initiate the formulation of their projects, whether it was defining the interaction model and then thinking about its content or the opposite. Does the narrative play a significant part in your creative process? Is the narrative more directed to the gameplay syntax? These were the questions I did to Ju Row Farr in an attempt to understand their design mechanisms. The artist categorically affirmed to me that the thematic and the narrative has a crucial role on their projects. Nevertheless, she argued that it is very hard to separate whether the design of an artwork is from a narrative perspective, or from an interactive or game point of view.

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<sup>139</sup> Idem.

<sup>140</sup> Idem.

<sup>141</sup> Idem.

Each work obviously needs to address for what it is trying to do. Often that is thematic, very often that is the narrative. But the narrative would be written or considered in the same tone as the interaction. One does not come first and then the other. It is a very iterative stag process in sometimes. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>142</sup>

She gave me the example of *Rider Spoke* when explaining me how *Blast Theory* puts emphasis and experiment with both parameters, the interaction model and the narrative. This artwork creates a unique and distinctive interaction model, starting with the fact that participants have to do it on a bike. Innovation also comes from the storytelling design. The creation of the content in *Rider Spoke* happens in a collaborative way. The work has not exactly a narrative built in a classic manner, but a structure composed of artists' questions and participants' answers about the past and the future of their lives. Ju Row Farr exemplified the same balance between game strategy and storytelling techniques with comments about *A Machine to See With* and *Fixing Point*. Both introduce particular modes to participants interact using game elements at the same time as they give a substantial importance to the narrative and the thematic content.

## 2.3 Agency and Control in Interactive Systems

Interactivity became the more referred aspect concerning stories mediated by digital systems. It is an adjective extensively evoked to qualify contemporary accounts supported by computers, even though the term has a too broad meaning and appears in the description of the most diverse operations and systems. Thinking about an artform, for instance, it can be interactive on its production level but not on its reception mode, with the contrary also happening. It is not by chance that the concept is so controversial. A simplistic attempt to clarify what exactly the triad interaction, interactive and interactivity means, would end up recalling the act of choosing. Such assertion would come from the belief that an interactive application has the absolute attribute of giving and mandating choices. The ability to manipulate a system and to select an option among a lack of possibilities is the first idea the term brings to mind. Reasoning this manner is that Manovich (2001) considers the concept of interactivity a tautology when it refers to computer-based media. To him, computers are by nature interactive mainly

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<sup>142</sup> Idem.

because modern HCI allow the users to control the system in real-time, manipulating information displayed on the screen.

On our understanding, a system needs to rely more than just on choices for we qualify it as genuinely interactive. Lippman (1998) points what we consider as one of the essential requirements: the need of a mutual activity on the part of those involved in the interaction for generating a dialogue between these two instances. Ryan (2004b) also shares the same understanding that interaction presumes the necessary presence of a two-sided effort creating a feedback loop. She complements the idea by saying that even some traditional forms of expression can have an interactive nature, considering that the audience must interpret and reconstruct them in the process of apprehension. A fundamental difference on digital interactivity, to her, resides on the dialog quality enabled by the ability computer systems have to modify themselves dynamically.

Comprehending the concept in terms of reciprocal influence between humans and computers, Parés & Parés (2001) discerns the distinct manners interactivity can happen. They identify three levels: explorative, manipulative, contributive. Each one refers to a particular case regarding a certain degree of contribution participants can give. The categories presume that they can actuate on an interactive system by exploring a given content, manipulating its elements, and contributing by changing or adding more elements to it. In the analyses of the projects created by *Blast Theory*, we had the opportunity to perceive how participants can engage with the artworks on these three levels mentioned before. Moreover, what we saw was the interactive experience relying considerably on the effort those joining have to give for exploring, manipulating, and contributing to the narrative. On them, interaction means an explicit empowerment of participants.

Ritchie (2013) observes that the interactive character of digital media introduced with it the idea of agency, a term that refers to the possibility of participants take a meaningful action and be able to recognize what results their decisions and choices produces. He gives the example of participants' activity on a digital narrative, materializing the virtual story organized and stored in the database.

The audience essentially coauthors the *sjuzet* (i.e, the ordering of a story – or *fabula* – how each telling of that story is a different representation of that story) through

interaction with an interface that affords and constrains their behaviors (and is in turn molded by the possibilities afforded by the code of the work or the digi-fabula. Until the interaction with the interface, the particular instance of the story experienced doesn't exist – it is only a potential existing in code. (Ritchie, 2013, p. 53)

In an account told through the use of computer systems, participants interaction can dynamically alter the whole storyworld, especially when it happens in a contributive mode. Such possibility in a traditional narrative form was an almost rare circumstance. This thesis could mention few exceptions to it, as the practices of Augusto Boal in the “Theatre of the Oppressed”<sup>143</sup>, who made an analytical drama including nonactors in a meaningful way<sup>144</sup>. Most of the experiences we had in theater at that time were completely different from that. The story unusually would have its content, or its course affected simultaneously to its presentation. Murray (1997), for instance, observes that when it included audience members, they were mainly to personify a character or to serve as “the butt of a joke”. To her, when artists invited individual members of the public to take part in a play, it did not mean much for the story events itself. As she analyses, the narrative would unfold equally, with or without what participants had to do or to perform to join or to be part of the fun. When I asked Ju Row Farr<sup>145</sup> about the mechanisms to make people willing to interact with their projects, she answered my question exactly by criticizing this traditional forms of engaging people. To her, there is a difference that separates it from the manner *Blast Theory* approaches, communicates and invites people to interact in the artworks they create.

I think it is about intelligent moves on whatever you are trying to or asking me to do. Interactive theater when they jump and ask me to do something, I hate it! I feel like I am being used for the entertainment of the crowd. I do not feel like I am being considered as part. So I think there is not intelligent interaction on this like cheek lazy link interaction in whatever form it is. There is a hole dividing, between us. I think there are certain traditions, or traditional forms, or traditional contracts that you may expect with certain kind of works in certain places (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>146</sup>.

When specifying what is the sense of agency involved in computer-based systems, Murray (1997) included the feeling of being part as an important dimension of it. She

<sup>143</sup> See: Boal, A. (2014). *Teatro do Oprimido: e outras poéticas políticas*. Editora Cosac Naify.

<sup>144</sup> See: Boal, A. (1998). *Jogos para atores e não-atores*. Editora Record.

<sup>145</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

<sup>146</sup> Idem.

considers that the immersion in a digital environment is proportional to the desire of actuating within it, even though we can not misunderstand the pleasure of agency with the mere idea of being active. As she prevents, the agency does not refer to activity alone, or with the ability to press buttons or operate devices. The example she gives is a tabletop game of chance, in which “players may be kept very busy spinning dials, moving game pieces, and exchanging money, but they may not have any true agency” (Murray, 1997, p. 128). Despite the effect players' actions can have, they are not the ones who choose this outcomes. The results does not necessarily correspond to their intentions. Considering that, she believes that it would be a mistake to focus on the number of interactions per minute to affirm how much pleasure of agency an interactive system can generate on its participants. By the example she presented, we can attest that activity alone is a poor indicator of pleasure.

The chess is another case Murray (1997) gives to clarify the discussion of what is implicit in the concept's idea. The game, as she says, “can have relatively few or infrequent actions but a high degree of agency, since the actions are highly autonomous, selected from a large range of possible choices, and wholly determine the course of the game” (Murray, 1997, p. 128). Agency, to her, refers to this sense of delight that a digital environment can cause on participants when they realize that their acts can cause tangible results on their experience. On her words, the agency is so the “satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices” (Murray, 1997, p. 128). In a narrative application, for instance, it would derive from the possibility of being active, influence and alter the story itself or its progression. Furthermore, participants experiment the feeling of agency, according to her, when they can recognize the outcomes of their acts.

Traditional storytelling and other artforms do offer such sense of agency. Considering that most of them invite the audience to participate structuring and circumscribing their actions in a controlled way, what we could affirm is that they promote this feeling but in a limited degree. On the other hand, recognizing the interactive nature of computers, we could also declare that digital systems are more favorable platforms to create the feeling of agency on those interacting with it. The ability these systems have to modify themselves dynamically does not make easy the design of stories able to readjust in consequence of participants' decisions. This thesis assumes that the more freedom those joining the experience have to actuate, more will be their opportunity to affect the

system. In the case of interactive narratives, it can imply in an interference in the generation of the story and not just in its discursive order.

### 2.3.1 Open and Closed Structures

As we have been arguing in this Chapter, preserve the integrity of the narrative meaning is probably one of the most prominent concerns of storytellers working with digital media. While linear narratives guide the audience sequentially through its events, construct and preserve the story coherency in those accounts that adopt an architecture of choices becomes an important matter. How do not compromise the narrative logic and meaning when combining parameters such as structures of choice and participants involvement? How to respect the storylogic under the conditions interactivity brings? With the arguments introduced by Ryan (2006), we have previously identified what are the difficulties present in the combination of *top-down* guidance with *bottom-up* simulation. As she highlights, this is a question that remains in the interactive narratology realm, devoted to the study of hypertext fiction, interactive drama, and some categories of video games. On her examination of the matter regarding those variables, constrain participants choices appears as the first option to keep the storylogic criterium, because the control over the degree of participants interference on the narrative can avoid confusion with excessive fragmentation. The less open the story is for them to affect it, less chaotic it may turn into.

It would be of course easy to constrain the user's choices in such a way that they will always fit into a predefined narrative pattern; but the aesthetics of narrative demand a choice sufficiently broad to give the user a sense of freedom, and a narrative pattern sufficiently adaptable to those choices to give the impression of being generated on the fly. The ideal *top-down* design should disguise itself as an emergent story, giving users both confidence that their efforts will be rewarded by a coherent narrative and the feeling of acting of their own free will, rather than being the puppets of the designer. (Ryan, 2006, pp. 99–100)

Another challenge in the designing of digital narratives regards the conflict between some artists desire of guidance and the direct and crucial dimension associated with an interactive application, that is participants having control over their experience. As Ryan (2006) points, “the major obstacle to the development of truly interactive narratives is not technological but logical and artistic. How can the freedom of the user be reconciled with the need to produce a well-formed, aesthetically satisfactory story?”

(Ryan, 2006, pp. 99–100). She formulates such paradox in a perspective that accentuates the discrepancy between the goals of storytellers and the goals of people engaged with the narrative.

On Ryan's (2006) understanding, a “forward-looking perspective” is what moves participants when they play the role of characters in a fictional storyworld. As she analyses: the fictional universe presents a problem on its course, and the ontological participant faces this issue with the desire to resolve the situation in the quickest and efficient manner. They do it, according to her, because that is what they normally do in real life when an awkward situation appears in their trajectory. On her comparison, storytellers have a different and opposite approach, that is not motivated by this “efficient problem solving” but by plot developments. When they face the conflict, to her, they take a perspective directed to think in determined actions that would produce impressive narrative results. Based on these contradictions, what she affirms is that the desire of shaping a story in a logic structure that attend to some artistic and personal intentions seems to be what traditionally move storytellers. Part of their creative act focuses on determining the course that some fictional events will lead as imagined and expected on their minds.

Ryan (2006) perceive how many designers sustain the idea that digital systems would put an excessive burden on participants without *top-down* direction. To her, not many of us prefer writing plays and novels to watching and reading them. That is why she defends that interactive narratives should invite participants into a story, instead of making them create it from ground zero. By this way, those interacting should respond to affordances programmed and authored into the system, rather than being entirely responsible for the construction of the story. She points it as a possible solution to one the most complicated challenges designers have to deal with when defining the degree of freedom participants will have for affecting the narrative. To Ryan (2011), designers have to come up with stories that benefit from the active participation, as well as manage to keep both, the dramatic interest and the ability to tell the story. She believes that there is still a demand for a model capable of structuring a narrative in these parameters. “Aristotle wrote the rules for traditional drama in his *Poetics*, but there is to this day no poetics and no set of guidelines for interactive drama” (Ryan, 2011, p. 49).

Whether the level of control the system imposes seems to vary proportionally to the storylogic integrity, it seems to be also contrary proportional to the sense of agency the digital narrative can provide on who is experiencing it. An interactive system that gives autonomy to participants, does not necessary nullify the role of storytellers. The planning of the story events or the determination of its course can be a traditional authors' attribute. Important to note, however, is that contemporary artists have been transforming this old and simplifying idea of the author's role. They have responded to the new context assuming the role of an orchestrator and catalyst of a process in interactive systems. By this manner is that they build a balance between narrative integrity and participants control of it.

I asked all *Blast Theory* artists how much they let participants play an active role in the narrative structure, not just determining its progression but contributing with a creative input on its construction. Ju Row Farr quotes<sup>147</sup> clarify the team position regarding this challenge, or at least what she considers of great importance. Her answer was in defense of the relevance of the artists' guidance to build the logic and the meaning of participant's experience. Whether *Blast Theory* assigned this role entirely to participants, according to her, they might not get through the message they intended to express in each artwork.

We have talked about a lot in past. We are not interested in that, because we recognize our understand with a person making that frame making that experience and even within that. There is an interpretation that could be false. Things can go wildly wrong. We have talked about a lot, we would never go to that point to make it purely audience based choice. They are not making the frame, and if they were, I think for us it would be a totally different work. We are quite controlling it. We are controlling it. We have to be controlling it to try to get the original thematic or the intention through in some ways (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>148</sup>.

Ju Row Farr pointed closed structures enabling some degrees of control over the interaction as a mechanism to ensure the artistic purpose. She affirmed that arguing about the pleasure participants can also have in a linear and controlled narrative. The pleasure she mentioned comes with participants engaging in an artwork that they know

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<sup>147</sup> Idem.

<sup>148</sup> Idem.

what the subject is about, when they believe they know where they are going to end up, but the narrative or the game turns it in a different direction. The pleasure raises from the surprise with this sudden change. To her, from the way participants responds to it almost like a drama.

It might be: “now they want me to make a promise, and I would say it loud to the air”. It would be the moment when you think you know what you are doing and then it changes. In “I Like Frank” they will suddenly be recording, and it is suddenly like: “Oh my God, it is a sort of video recording now”. It is a kind of: “I did not expect that at all”. And then suddenly you are called into a different intimacy. In *Fixing Point* it is a moment where you realize you are in the wood, and the last place where he was seen was in the wood. Maybe it is not an “oh, my God” moment but it is that moment when things are hopefully aligned in the work. So I think that is very important (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>149</sup>.

Ju Row Farr observed that it can be a small thing and not necessarily a big moment. By this surprising event, that can varies from person to person, the artists try to create an effect on the story producing a sudden-turn on it. She believes that it is also what interests *Blast Theory*, as some of their best artworks have this unexpected or surprising element. Ju Row Farr was emphatic when advocated for such linear structures with turning points. This thesis can also compares this surprising moment placed in the course of participants experience that she mentioned, with the reversals of Aristotle's structuring model. Even whether it does not necessarily is a turning point in the narrative, it is almost a climax in the interactive experience.

On the personal interview with Matt Adams<sup>150</sup>, we talked about the same matter when I asked him how *Blast Theory* defines the degree of freedom participants have in each of the four artworks analyzed here. Instead of explicit or deny a possible tendency they have to exert control over the interactive experience, he preferred to affirm that it is an artistic and design decision. By explaining it, what he wanted to let clear is that each of their projects has its individual sweet spot. Regardless of emphasizing that *Blast Theory* follows no pattern, he also framed on his answer the importance of some sort of artists' guidance; otherwise many participants just can not follow the dynamics of their interactive artwork.

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<sup>149</sup> Idem

<sup>150</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

Clearly in *Rider Spoke* you can draw a 10 miles radius around the venue where *Rider Spoke* begins and you are aware that in that 10 miles circle the work can be happening, the people can be engaging. Then you get a work like *A Machine To See With*, where if you got a bit wrong you lost it, you are out. Some people give up because they get a bit confused, they do not like to redo it. People get 20 minutes through and they never go any further. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>151</sup>

Still trying to investigate participant's sense of agency in *Blast Theory* artworks, I asked Matt Adams<sup>152</sup> about how they define the level of creative input those interacting will have in the narrative construction. I mentioned the orchestration done by them to inquire him whether it functioned to control participants' behavior and whether that signaled an artistic option to closed structures in the design of the interaction. *Blast Theory* get fundamentals on to writings of Brenda Laurel in *Computers as Theatre*, to justify the behind-the-scenes activities in computer-mediated performances, for maintaining engagement and to orchestrate users' experiences. The orchestration serves to monitor events, intervene, and communicate, potentially including to it a set up with a dedicated management interface monitoring participants positions and people at the streets with walkie-talkie frequency for private communication with the control room<sup>153</sup>.

Answering my question about the orchestration, Matt Adams once more adverted me that there is no prescript or preferred formula guiding their creative process regarding this perspective. He affirmed again that each of their pieces has the design defined in accordance to what they intend to raise in participants' experience. The interactive architectures can so vary. He exemplified saying that those joining their artworks can, either play an active role determining narrative progression and content, as in *Rider Spoke*; or have a limit imposed by the artists that come orchestrating their behavior within the interactive experience, as it is in *A Machine to See With*.

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<sup>151</sup> Idem.

<sup>152</sup> Idem.

<sup>153</sup> This work behind-scenes done by Blast Theory comes detailed in the paper "Towards a Citywide Mixed Reality Performance"1, that has a section explaining how it functions. See: Benford, S., Anastasi, R., Flinham, M., Schnädelbach, H., Koleva, B., Izadi, S., ... & Row-Farr, J. *Towards a Citywide Mixed Reality Performance*. Retrieved at: <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/bt/documents/Twds%20a%20city%20Mixed%20Reality%20Game.pdf>

Whereas a work like *Fixing Point* is really quite tight to turn it. You walk in some woods, you listen to some recordings, you may get some and miss others. That is it. It is much much tighter. It is much more like watching a short film or something like that where it follow a certain track. Maybe a short film with the scenes in a random order or something like that. It is much less open to audience affect, to audience control. *Rider Spoke* is not linear, whereas *A Machine To See With* is linear. It says to walk up until the end of this street until the signal from you partner and then turn left. So it is absolutely constructed. I walk the route, and then I write it down and then I walked the route testing it. Two days late you come, and you walk the same way I walked. They are all different approaches. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>154</sup>

What would be the proper degree regarding the control dimension? The answer to this question varies as Matt Adams commented, but in general, it is probably a strategy that certifies participants meaningful experience as well as the one that would let them have agency and enjoy the rewards of their actions. This research have attested how differently *Blast Theory* design their artworks creating particular proposals to participants engage on it. This experimentation with distinct interactive architectures corroborates the artists' answers to my questions in the personal interviews I conducted with them. Despite of that, we could also affirm, supported by the analysis of the projects in case, that the group has regularly blend open and closed structures, creating a balance between having control over participants' interaction or letting them free to plan their actions. As Matt Adams reiterated, each artwork has its degree that varies and are in agreement with the purpose and thematic. Nevertheless, whether *Blast Theory* does not highly control participants' ability to create or to organize the story, they do set a pre-determined beginning and end for the interactive experience.

In all the four artworks we examined, the artists are the ones that predefine the content and the moment that initiates and closes the interactive experience. By observing this constance, we could say it is a mechanism to ensure that the participants will have a proper introduction to the narrative storyworld, as well as that they will not miss a closure moment at the end. Having control over participants interaction in the beginning and at the final of a fragmented storytelling do represent an artistic strategy to try to ensure a meaningful experiences for those taking part in the interactive artwork. Apart from the definition of fixed borders with predetermined contents, the middle of the experience are in general open for participants explore, manipulate and contribute. In

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<sup>154</sup> Idem.

*Fixing Point*, participants interact choosing which elements to display and which trajectory to follow through the content. In *I Like Frank*, they explore to find one of the four postcards spread in the city. In *Rider Spoke*, participants can go anywhere to record and tag their stories. In *A Machine To See With* they can choose among few given options.

### a) The Simulated Dialogue in *Rider Spoke*

This thesis takes *Rider Spoke* as an example to discuss interactivity as a dialogue established between two instances, and agency as the pleasure participants have when they can alter and recognize the outcomes of their acts in an interactive system. What makes us select *Rider Spoke* to illustrate these aspects is basically because *Blast Theory* puts lots of effort to create intimacy with those riders joining this artwork. They do it because, as we already explained, who embark on this interactive storytelling have to reveal their innermost feelings and secrets. By creating a level of complicity, the artwork intent to generate the sense of a confessional dialogue. The questions authored by *Blast Theory* and directed to participants bases on the design of the emotional experience of the interactive system, focusing on the feelings each moment can evoke with the purpose of engaging participants<sup>155</sup>.

*Blast Theory* employed many and different strategies for the interactive piece manage to achieve these feelings on participants. The first mechanism is the friendly tone of voice chosen for recording the questions participants have to answer, what personifies not only a teller but someone that is trying to introduce a dialogue. Ju Row Farr was the one elected for recording it. It is, with no doubt, one of the high aspects in *Rider Spoke*. The writing style and manner to present questions are also what stimulate such openness from participants.

I have read things people said about my voice. I think it is very purposeful. The voice, I suppose it comes back to some sort of interest in acting, in understanding, but that does a lot to evoke the right mood for people. We understand in a desperate way that the tone of voice can change the situation. So I think it gets people in the right frame of mind in *Rider Spoke* to do something in a way which is very simple. Actually, it could be quite challenging, in part it is challenging because you are cycling around. We thought this

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<sup>155</sup> See: Lim, Y. K., Donaldson, J., Jung, H., Kunz, B., Royer, D., Ramalingam, S., ... & Stolterman, E. (2008). Emotional experience and interaction design. In *Affect and Emotion in Human-Computer Interaction* (pp. 116-129). Springer Berlin Heidelberg.

very important to try to get people, not worrying about the questions that were coming out, but just to think. We are going to the subconscious space, even though you are in the city, and it is even more critical to trying to get in there because you are doing this, like worry about the traffic and everything. So it is really important, I think (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>156</sup>.

The content and the tone set by the audio apparently directed to the idea of having participants relaxed. Easy them already in the initial moment seems a way to create a perfect ambiance for riders to let their memories and feelings come when answering the questions. The content narrated by the voice over actively creates the belief that everything is and will be alright during the experience. The intent is to give confidence. When she asks them to describe themselves, for instance, it happens as if they had just met someone for the first time. To start the relationship, they introduce themselves. Even before the voice over poses such a demand, she says comprehending things about probable feelings participants might have at that moment. She describes some of the possible states they might be experiencing, but most of all: she let it clear that it is ok, independent of how strange it seems to them. At this point, it becomes transparent not just the attempt to make participants relax and feel confident but especially the effort to create a certain familiarity with them. You might not tell your thoughts and memories to a strange, as such things in general demands a minimal degree of intimacy. That first question appears at the beginning of the experience to prepare and create the mood for the dialogue participants are initiating. In the narrative structure of *Rider Spoke*, it is crucial that all participants do this first question:

This is one of those moments when you're on your own. You might feel a little odd at first, a bit self conscious or a bit awkward. But you're alright, and it's ok. You may feel invisible tonight, but as you ride this feeling will start to change. Relax, and find somewhere that you like. It might be a particular building, or a road junction. It might be a mark on the wall, or a reflection on a window. When you have found somewhere that you like, give yourself a name, and describe yourself. (*Blast Theory, Rider Spoke*, 2007)<sup>157</sup>

Another good example of the simulated dialogue built by the voice over in *Rider Spoke* is a moment when participants get a question that asks them about an occasion in which

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<sup>156</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

<sup>157</sup> Information collected from the archives about *Rider Spoke*. File reproduced in Appendix 9. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

they feel they wanted to leave and not return. Before inquiring whether one day they have felt like this, the voice over starts by telling a similar moment she had experienced in life. “There was a moment for me that someone just went, and I was told, they’re going away for a long time. But it was forever”<sup>158</sup>, she says. It works as if she was giving a bit of herself to get in exchange a bit of participants' intimacy: “I’ve thought about it a lot. Has there ever been a time that you felt like just going, and not coming back?”<sup>159</sup>, she then asks. Who take part in *Rider Spoke* should feel alright to expose themselves in the same way as this person they have never seen before is also doing. The sense is that this is not an inquiry but an exchange of experiences. She keeps saying:

When you were right on the edge of that decision, and staying where you were was no longer the option to take. Were you very scared? Maybe your mind went, but your body couldn’t leave. Find somewhere in the city for me where you feel brave or sure. When you get there, describe how it felt to go, or how it felt to stay. (*Blast Theory, Rider Spoke, 2007*)<sup>160</sup>

Questions profoundly explore participants intimacy in *Rider Spoke*. That is probably the reason why the attempt is to make it look like a conversation with a friendly person. Just for someone you trust, for instance, you would tell a secret or your most profound thoughts and memories. The artwork is extremely confessional, but *Blast Theory* artists do not want to be intrusive. They just want to chat. As Ju Row Far says in the recordings: “No one tells secrets. At least, not the interesting ones. Real secrets stay hidden, and so will yours”<sup>161</sup>. Instead of asking participants to tell their deepest and hidden stories, her interest is in comprehending the role it plays in peoples' lives.

What I would like you to do is think about your secrets. I want you to roll down the quieter streets, and turn some secrets over in your mind. Don’t waste time on the petty teenage misdemeanors, or the little lies. Use this moment to think about the others, the important ones. Take me to a doorway – when you get there, tell me how your life would be changed without your secret. (*Blast Theory, Rider Spoke, 2007*)<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Idem.

<sup>159</sup> Idem.

<sup>160</sup> Idem.

<sup>161</sup> Idem.

<sup>162</sup> Idem.

When the voice over comes at the end of the experience, it comes to evidence how she understands all the energy riders spent to interact with this artwork. She let it clear for participants, after remembering everything they shared and lived together during the interactive section. “You’ve been riding for a while now. You’ve answered some of the questions I’ve asked, and you’ve explored the city. Thank you”<sup>163</sup>, she kindly says. But that is not over. There is still time for one final demand, and then she completes: “I have one last thing to ask you, and when you’ve answered, please can you come back?”<sup>164</sup>. The difference now is that participants do not have to answer any question, or give their opinion about any statement. The last demand is a bit different because it is the ending of a relationship the woman of the voice over cultivated with participants. At this moment, it is believed that they already revealed some of their most profound matters defining their personality, desires, and fears. When she asks, “Will you make me a promise?”, it appears as if they had a level of friendship that allows her to require such a thing.

Apparently, the important aspect here is the act of finishing with a promise. It is a positive attitude in an experience possible surrounded by sad memories, hate, and regrets. It is a moment of reflection. It is an ending that goes through the prospection of the future, regardless of what participants will promise. It does not matter if it will be important or not. “It might be small – a promise about tomorrow, or a friend. It might be something more profound. But now, tonight, here, make a vow about your intentions”<sup>165</sup>, says the voice over. The place where participants have to hide the recording is not even crucial. Considering that the relevant is the attitude and the mood it can generate contributing for a final cathartic moment, we could say that *Blast Theory* emphasizes the designing of an emotionally and rewarding experiences. As the voice in *Rider Spoke* indicates, there is a proper way participants have to give their answer: “Think for a few minutes – go somewhere, stop your bike, and say your promise out loud, into the air”<sup>166</sup>. In the final audio, the voice over presents no more demands. What we listen to is just a kind of declaration of this stranger's voice with whom riders have shared their innermost feelings and thoughts:

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<sup>163</sup> Idem.

<sup>164</sup> Idem.

<sup>165</sup> Idem.

<sup>166</sup> Idem.

This is the kind of place where the city makes sense for me. As you come back now I wonder about where we are all heading and I want us all to go there together somehow. I almost felt close to you like the warmth you can feel from a strangers face. You are familiar and a million miles away all at the same time. Tonight I heard something in a fragment of silence you recorded but you soon spoke over it. We always do. (*Blast Theory, Rider Spoke, 2007*)<sup>167</sup>

Despite all the mechanisms *Blast Theory* employs to simulate a confessional and intimate conversation, in *Rider Spoke* there is no real dialogue between participants and the voice over. The interactive system developed by the artists and let available on the N800 handheld device does not modify according to the answers given by the riders. It mimics a two-side effort, but the real-time dialogue, in fact, does not exist. The system and its voice over do not respond or adapt itself according to what participants tell in their stories. What we see in *Rider Spoke* is the context-aware software implemented on the console giving the required feedback loop by using geospatial information to let content available or to allow participants to record their stories. The interface is what modifies, but responding to riders geographical position in space.

Regardless of these conditions that we identified in our analysis, we still categorize *Rider Spoke* as an artform that is interactive and simulate a dialog between two instances without the system necessarily respond in real-time to participants stimulus. It is also a relevant example to understands how interactivity can happen in the production and reception mode in the three levels identified by Parés & Parés (2001) – explorative, manipulative and contributive. Regarding production, the interaction of participants in *Rider Spoke* is explorative and contributive, considering that they are the ones who generates the narrative content navigating through space to find a proper location to hide their stories. Riders do define and alter the storyworld dynamically, interacting and co-creating it. In a reception mode, their interaction is both, explorative and manipulative. Cycling, exploring and wandering through the city, they can: find recordings left by others, choose which one they want to access, and listen to them. By these different levels is that participants interact with the storytelling engine in *Rider Spoke*.

This ability of who is experiencing to engage and to involve in the creative proceedings, the mentioned sense of agency, is also a direct characteristic presented by *Rider Spoke*.

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<sup>167</sup> Idem.

All this openness do blends with some control. *Blast Theory*' artists previously author a range of questions to ask participants, what defines their collaboration in the narrative creation. As Ju Row Farr explained to me<sup>168</sup>, in this artwork there is no orchestration and no GPS tracking of participants because, according to her, the work uses an old Nokia N800 wireless Internet appliance that has no GPS. Even though riders are free to cycle and to record the stories they choose, all the predefined questions guide the content and suggest the location for tagging it.



Figure 31: *Rider Spoke*'s interface showing available spots. Image by *Blast Theory*.

*Blast Theory* does expect that the narrative content co-authored by participants will be in accordance and close to the thematics proposed by the predefined questions the voice over make to them. Despite this guidance, the artists have no control over what participants are going to record. Some questions even pose different possibilities of answers letting the riders free to choose among the given options. The narrative content in this sense is not entirely but potentially determined by participants. Other aspects, such as the drama and the tone employed to tell the stories, are also particularly chosen by each rider as they want. Those joining the interactive experience can clearly perceive the outcomes of their acts.

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<sup>168</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

As we already remarked, in *Rider Spoke* there is a negotiation between the artists' proposed topics, and participants' answers. *Blast Theory* team is the one who stimulate the unveiling of people's deepest thoughts, memories, and feelings. They are also the ones who frame the places in the city where participants should link their stories. The interface of the N800 device mediating the interaction directs riders' behavior allowing and indicating afforded and available actions while it limits others. The interface shows, for instance, whether the spot they choose is a good one or whether they should keep searching for it. When I inquired Nick Tandavanitj<sup>169</sup> about the degree of freedom participants truly have to coauthor the narrative of *Rider Spoke*, he emphasized some of these important and determinant aspects regarding no control over the recordings made during the interactive experience.

I suppose it is the way you go and how you answer those questions. So we just give them some kind of guide. So these things like, find a place where you have a view of the sky, find a place where you might remember your father, find a place where you can see you through the window. So it is just kind of prompts that give to people a sense of the very concrete thing I am doing. But once you got a concrete task, that gives you license to think about the thing that is the actual question, I suppose. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>170</sup>

Among the four projects of *Blast Theory* group mentioned here, *Rider Spoke* is the one whose design follows a more open structure. Consequently, it is also the one that demands a greater collaboration from its participants. It gives a great request for those who wants to take part in this interactive experience. A crucial and first requirement is that participants must be willing to cycle. Thus, not willing for a normal cycling through the city, but one that happens at night, alone and during approximately one hour. Moreover, this artwork calls participants to integrate the piece in a very personal and intimate form of participation. When interviewing Matt Adams<sup>171</sup> and talking about *Rider Spoke*, the artist underlined that all the details designed by *Blast Theory* team are vital, but that the significant aspect which makes this a unique artwork is mainly the public acting as coauthor of the narrative. He considers the approach to the piece a "Publicly Created Contributions" rather than a "User Generated Content".

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<sup>169</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

<sup>170</sup> Idem.

<sup>171</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

Clearly the interface is really important, Ju's voice and the opening text that she wrote and recorded is fantastic important, the music is really important, but it is a work about the recordings that were made and left. The first 20 or 30 recordings really had a massive impact on everything that comes after because they set a certain tone. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>172</sup>

The narrative of *Rider Spoke* just comes into being through the performance of participants and their commitment to reveal some of their most profound feelings, memories and thoughts. As we commented before, the nonlinearity aspect of interactive narratives demands a certain modularity of the story segments. This intrinsic feature of digital systems is responsible for letting participants with a certain degree of freedom to access the narrative pieces in the most diverse orders. Artists have adopted malleable structures to allow that, but they still have to deal with the necessity of generating different and meaningful stories in every interaction with the system. In *Rider Spoke*, each module of its narrative can potentially function alone as well as in context with the other ones, what permit the story to withstand the nonlinearity uncertainties. Considering this features, we believe that the model used by *Blast Theory* in this artwork can potentially be an alternative to the challenge of designing truly interactive and meaningful stories.

#### b) The extremes regarding the level control in *A Machine To See With*

As we have discussed in the previous section of this Chapter, interactivity when applied to narratives results in that variety of structures to organize content that we recognized through the analysis of four projects created *Blast Theory*. The design of those architectures correlates to the degrees of freedom participants have for experiencing as well as for affecting the story in a semantic or syntax levels. As so, we can measure the impact interactivity has on narratives exactly by analyzing the new types of textual architecture that emerged after computers, shaped having in mind the modes of participants involvement in the narrative proceedings. The schemes molding the digital stories and the experience they generate apparently translates such impact in terms of participants' agency.

This thesis uses *A Machine To See With* as an example to discuss how the levels of control over participants' interaction can go from one extreme to the other one. The

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<sup>172</sup> Idem.

artwork in its subtle criticism portrayed by *Blast Theory* clearly illustrates two extreme positions participants can experiment with an interactive system. As we identified before, the agency and the control that people can have over their actions is a comment on the interactive work itself. The artists designed the story and interaction in order to contrast both opposite sides: being the leader and being impotent. In *A Machine To See With* we observe the agency the protagonist character has in the film context, essentially because who takes part on it becomes the leader in the fictional story. Playing the lead, participants need to carry out a secret mission, watching out for danger while they try to execute it. The piece explores the agency of the individual with an automated system. The voice on the phone gives participants power to walk through the city progressing towards an aim. The system let it clear right in the beginning of the interaction, saying that they are the protagonist. On the first audios participants listen to, it lets clear how important are their role and agency on the secret mission the work requires them to take part. The automated call alerts: “Things will NOT go as planned. This is just a recording. You’re going to have to use your initiative to get through this”<sup>173</sup>.

The adventure of acting it in the real world with actual risks participants can take is what contributes and drives their mind to the idea of agency in *A Machine To See With*. As a protagonist of the story, they are the ones who will need to deal with the bank robbery and its consequences. There is also a disclaimer on this initial part of the experience alerting participants that they have full responsibility for their safety and actions during the time they will join it. The control is on their hands. The lines used by *Blast Theory* make participants feel omnipotent. Matt Adams explained to me during a talk about guidance and control in *A Machine To See With*<sup>174</sup>, that these sentences were to situate participants and to make them feel as if they were having a kind of central role to play. All these mechanisms employed by the artists seems to work for creating on participants what Parés & Parés (2006) mentions as the virtual self.

*A Machine To See With* is all about you, what you are about to do in the next 45 minutes. You are not a member of a collective. You are a sole agent. The idea of building you up in this way is so that, when the bank robbery goes wrong, and you dump out of it, your impedance and your inability to carry out the bank robbery is really

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<sup>173</sup> Information collected from the archives about *A Machine To See With*. File reproduced in Appendix 7. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>174</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

more accentuated. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>175</sup>

In contraposition, *A Machine To See With* involves participants in a context marked by a core aspect related to the financial crisis the world was facing at that moment. The central thematic of the story represents the impotence of citizens confronted by the global capitalism. Nick Tandavanitj claimed my attention to this aspect when answering to me the same question about guidance and control present in this artwork<sup>176</sup>. To him, the strategy of conducting participants through the narrative events works perfectly with the idea of impotence framed by the content of *A Machine to See With*:

This sense of the typical Hollywood hero, that somehow are being in control of their destiny. So we kind of present it as if you were a hero, but actually you have no control over where you are going. So that was our intent, the whole piece is about a kind of lack of how is missing in face of the financial crisis. So that was very convenient. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>177</sup>

*A Machine To See With* combines open and closed narrative structures. Nevertheless, most of the artwork functions controlling participants interaction. When I mentioned to Nick Tandavanitj that the navigation in this artwork does not imply in wander but in being guided during the whole journey, he emphasized that it is a navigational rather than an interactive project<sup>178</sup>. How can you be called the leader whether an invisible hand is always guiding you? - I inquired him. The artist replied commenting that the artwork is not that interactive because the linear structure fits perfectly with the tyranny of choice matter they were trying to evoke with the piece. The very linear and controlled structure is intentional, as discussed before. Some premises justify the control it exerts over participants interaction, and it is not the artists' demand for ensuring a meaningful experience. Such design option is in accordance to the motif framed by the story and the own character of the work that is driving participants through the events unfolded in the city awakening their cinematic view through it. That explains the linearity of the plot as well as the level of details and instructions the narrative has on it.

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<sup>175</sup> Information collected from the archives about *A Machine To See With*. File reproduced in Appendix 7. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>176</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

<sup>177</sup> Idem.

<sup>178</sup> Idem.

What Nick Tandavanitj referred as the tyranny of choice is another foundational idea running through *A Machine To See With*. The artwork is also a note to consumerism. When discussing in this Chapter the branching architecture of its narrative, we mentioned that the artists use a call center software to employ automated calls. As marketers, *Blast Theory* make participants undertake a psychological profiling test utilizing this same system for it. They recognize and exploit people's profile to influence their behavior on the interactive experience. As analyzed by us, the system takes the collected database information to customize and deliver a personalized narrative. The references *Blast Theory* got for that came from different sources. On “Eight People Sipping Wine In Kettering”, a film from Adam Curtis, they saw highlighted the rise of focus groups and marketing based on desire rather than need. On Robert Reich’s book, “Locked In The Cabinet”, they got aware of the detailed process of Bill Clinton attempts to get re-elected in 1996 setting up a large call center to poll thousands of swing voters. *Blast Theory* strategically placed this personal test to come before participants have to show their impedance to rob a bank on a revenge attitude.

*A Machine To See With* narrative let almost none room for participants to choose their route or even the course of the story. Nevertheless, the piece dedicates a considerable effort to work with participants agency feelings. The whole experience lasts about one hour, but it is up to each participant how far into the protagonist role they will go and how they would like to end the film. Despite the fact that all of them follow six similar routes or storylines, their navigation and interaction with the real world elements and events are different. The journeys through assigned locations are distinct somehow, even with the itineraries being similar. The story bases on events that participants undertake as a protagonist in a series of actions, and that is what build their involvement and implicate them in the behavior of the character. The way each one personifies it and the variations it represents are a crucial part of the interactive work.

*A Machine To See With* is also about how you are going to end your film as the interactive story demand of who is taking part on it to position themselves. There are different final possibilities according to participants' willingness to go along with the bank robbery. The story itself is an act of compliance. Participants must do what the voice-over tells them to do. There is an invisible hand, as *Blast Theory* artists call it, guiding them and their acts through the city. “Do not draw attention to yourself”; “Keep walking”; “Take this road”; “Ignore the colourful panels”; “Go past the back”; “Follow

the sign”<sup>179</sup> - these are some of the guidance participants receive in the course of the story. As the narrative reaches its apex, the voice defiantly also forces them to make decisions. When it happens, they have to choose to go ahead or to step back in the attempt to rob a bank moved by revenge.

At the same time, the locative film is a performed act that participants may do it fully or not. It is their movie, and they define how it will be. *A Machine To See With* recalls a role-playing game in which you become someone slightly different but that still refers to you. Though guided, you are still self-conscious and aware of your acts. As the narrative let it clear in the beginning, you take full responsibility for all of your actions while you are out there. When participants stake out the bank and get ready to execute the robbery, their powerlessness then comes into vivid focus. Despite the sense of impotence, they might feel in the end, *A Machine To See With* narrative finishes giving emphasis to the agency character of the experience, the financial collapse, and the tyranny of choice:

Today has been all about you. This entire system has been personalised for you. We needed to know whether you are a person who can step through a door and become someone completely different. And now we know. Let’s not kid ourselves you’re no bank robber, it’s along time since the bankers were concerned with people like you. You are all alone, to a bystander you could be anyone. This is not a personality test. This is *A Machine To See With*. The ending is up to you. In 8 seconds I will hang up. You will not hear from me again. Goodbye. (*Blast Theory, A Machine To See With*, 2010)<sup>180</sup>

Matt Adams also commented participants' guidance in *A Machine To See With*, but he justified it using other arguments<sup>181</sup>. To him, we are a very solipsistic society. We are a society, according to him, that wants everything orchestrated around us. He argued that the same driven position evidence in this artwork is present in all modern devices. On these devices, as he observed, everything is within reach; everything is everywhere where we need them. He gave me the example of cell phones that have now all our needs orchestrated and personalized for each of us. He remembered me that each one has their apps and their messages on it. Matt Adams affirmed to me that *A Machine To*

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<sup>179</sup> Information collected from the archives about *A Machine To See With*. File reproduced in Appendix 7. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>180</sup> Idem.

<sup>181</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

See *With* is, in some ways, a comment to the idea that interactive artworks are, somehow, personalized zones of control.

And of course, this also works as a comment in interactive works themselves. We are very solipsistic society. We are a society that we want everything orchestrated around us. Everything is within reach; my buttons are everywhere where I need them. This phone is not the same. All my needs are orchestrated and personalized for me. I have my apps and my messages on it. So the works are in some way comments in this kind, the idea that interactive artworks are personalized zones of control somehow. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>182</sup>

The analysis made by the artist recalls the model of production on demand that Manovich (2001) sees characterizing our era when contrasting the standardization logic of industrial society with the customization of a post-industrial philosophy. Instead of reproducing identical copies, the programmability and procedural nature of digital media invite participants to create a customized version of a story in response to their inputs. Narratives designed in a database structure can allow who is interacting to take an infinite number of different paths through its contents, functions almost as a storytelling machine that can deliver a distinct version at every access. Moreover, the system creates each particular version of the narrative almost immediately. What Matt Adams meant when answering my question was exactly that not just narratives but interactive systems and applications, in general, have reached an incredible customization. Even though he criticizes such aspect, we can identify the group emphasizing positively, on their web page, the fact that *Blast Theory* creates customized and personalized experiences for each participant of *A Machine to See With*<sup>183</sup>.

### c) Watching Participants in *I Like Frank*

*Blast Theory* has a great work done behind the scenes that they call orchestration. It happens especially in projects such as *I Like Frank*. I inquired the artists about what is the function of all this effort they put in coordinating participants' interaction. My point was to understand whether the orchestration was a manner they use to modulate participant's response. I precisely asked each of the three artists whether the

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<sup>182</sup> Idem.

<sup>183</sup> As they say on the web page of the project: "The work uses an open source piece of call centre software called Asterisk and thus employs automation to create an ostensibly personalised experience". See: <<http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/a-machine-to-see-with/>>

orchestration is a mechanism that tries to bring participants behavior to the appropriate and expected responses.



Figure 32: Orchestration member in the streets in *I Like Frank*. Image by *Blast Theory*

Each artist answered my question highlighting some aspects related to *I Like Frank*. On her response, Ju Row Farr<sup>184</sup> rejected any surveillance character of it. Instead, she gave emphasis to the care they have with their audience.

Automating software in the background, watching where people are on the map, or seeing their phone calls going through, or somebody at the streets checking that person has got to that lamp post, or some kind of mixture that. It is us troubleshooting. It is us trying to take care of them and their experience. For a while, there is a real kind of cultural obsession, probably in Europe, about surveillance. For a while, some people were certainly saying that we are observing people or surveying people when they are in our work. I have always refuted that, it is actually a desire that varies from work to work. It is a care for them and their experience and not a need to watch and stalk. There

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<sup>184</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

is no a kind of malevolent intention in doing that. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>185</sup>

As Ju Row Farr mentioned, in some *Blast Theory* works there is a backstage team trying to orchestrate participants interactive performance in the streets. They operate for ensuring these people will not get lost, or for helping them in a case of technological problems. In *I Like Frank*, despite the orchestration, the story takes form in agreement with the actions performed by participants in each location they visit. The same game task motivates their exploration, but players can freely navigate the diegetic space set for the story and act on their own to get the mission done. The story lived during the attempt to achieve the goal diverge a bit from player to player. The reason for this does not resume to the fact that participants must visit or go to different sites that offer different challenges. The four missions and its locations are predefined, but the artists can not strictly predict their performance and behavior.

Distinct from *A Machine To See With*, here participants have a certain freedom to perform through the story events. They do receive guidance that comes with the clues, but to reach the location they can take a series of distinct itineraries each one representing a different adventure in the storyworld. They can become lost, and that actually can turn into an unexpected part of the narrative with the orchestration team having to improvise to get them back to the story setting. Even with *Blast Theory* controlling the frame of the work, the design of *I Like Frank* opens space to the emergence of unique play's stories that comes from the interaction within the fictional universe. Thus, the individual strategies and actions performed in this interactive piece involve a complex network of human relations that can go from collaborative to competitive conducts. On the interview<sup>186</sup>, Ju Row Farr celebrated the individual emotional behaviors that can raise from the interactive experience.

People will do things which are equally surprising, and there are emotional behaviors, things people will find themselves doing we did not expect, they did not expect. The most enjoyable moments in our work is when people do things we do not expect because we know we try to expect a lot of variety. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Idem.

<sup>186</sup> Idem.

<sup>187</sup> Idem.

Ju Row Farr celebrates these behaviors, despite the fact that before she expressed the necessity to avoid experiences that are purely audience based choice. She does believe in the importance of the artist's guidance because that is the mechanism they have to ensure they will get through the message they want to evoke with a certain piece of art. Whether *Blast Theory* quite controls the narrative development, they also enjoy the inherent surprises contained in the human behavior. For allowing participants to express this side, the artists have to give them some freedom so they can perform their chosen actions and recognizes the outcomes of it. When it happens in the interaction, participants can probably feel their agency.

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## WHEN NARRATIVES MEET LOCATIVE MEDIA

This Chapter discusses how location awareness has added even more complexity to the already intricate relation between narrative and interactivity. It investigates the manner locative media has enabled artists to establish meaningful dialogues between content and space, stimulating a more participative and embodied storytelling experience. Together with the possible benefits of a site-specific narrative, it treats one of the major concerns surrounding the use of geospatial data. How to deal with the surveillance implicit in these systems initially designed for military purposes? The Chapter considers all these aspects to present a critical position regarding the creative use of networked and location-aware mobile media.

A section dedicated to revisiting the Ubiquitous Computing Project introduces the discussion by commenting its goal to lead society to a paradigm change. Traced the context and the manner of thinking technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the thesis focus the debate on the Locative Arts movement, centering on *Blast Theory* as a case study. The Chapter retraces the trajectory of the British group in relation to their artistic experiments and research with pervasive technology. The four projects created by them and selected to this study support the understanding of the main aspects and challenges characterizing narratives based on mobile and locative media.

The literature that frames these new forms of telling stories presents diverse denominations to refer to the same phenomenon. Rather than to find taxonomies or precise terms, the decision is to unveil the process of authoring for these systems. The Chapter offers a better apprehension of the representational strengths and limitations, affordances and constraints of mobile and locative media that can affect the shaping of narratives. The next pages also dig possible artistic and cultural references of spatial experiences, going from explorative games to pilgrimage activity; from artistic vanguards to Situationism movement.

### 3.1 From Fixed to Mobile Communication Systems

Today, we see ourselves as part of a world in which people carry a variety of handheld devices enabled with sensors to collect implicit data, such as our geospatial position. Moreover, people have these handsets connected to the internet almost all the time and from almost everywhere, as they gained a design to fit the need of the situation allowing us computing while doing something else. Whether these type of media characterizes our communicative experiences nowadays, it is worth noting that fixed coordinate systems prevail until the turn of the millennium, as we can perceive in the official history of media<sup>188</sup>. When identifying such phenomenon, Huhtamo (2011) evidences a unifying trace that characterizes those media and that contrast them with the mobile communication systems we got used to: they are not intended to function in motion. For using these media, as he observes, we necessarily have to pose ourselves in front of it, independently of whether they situate in public or private spaces. It can be a film projection in a theater, or in a public square; a television placed in the living room or an office; a phone booth or a telephone place on the bedroom side table. In most of the cases, he comments, we also have to switch the device on and adjust its controls because only by making these operations we can start our experience that will last as long as we stay in the same location as the device. All these determinant features are what make he refers to them as location-fixed media. On his words: “signals penetrate walls, and broadcasting blankets huge virtual territories, but the material nodes of the network, the equipment used as transmitters and receivers, are found in fixed locations” (Huhtamo, 2011, p. 23).

These fixed communication systems present a stationary character that contrasts highly with the portable and wearable devices we have in the current days. Despite the difference, some parallels can exist between specific experiences that both media evoke. Huhtamo (2011) is confident, for instance, that mobility in media did not appear from nowhere. Motivated by this belief, he excavates, identifies and connects traces left behind, in an attempt to attest whether there are predecessors of a mobile culture in fixed coordinate systems.

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<sup>188</sup> See: Winston, B. (1998). *Media technology and society, A History: From the Telegraph to the Internet*. Psychology Press. Briggs, A., & Burke, P. (2010). *Social History of the Media: From Gutenberg to the Internet*. Polity. Mattelart, Armand (1996). *The invention of communication*, translated by Susan Emanuel, Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.

It is one of the premises of the media-archeological approach that culture does not merely progress along linear paths, but also constantly recycles its elements, sometimes over long stretches of time. As 'rupturist' and anti-passeist as it may seem; today's mobile media culture may nevertheless contain elements that have already been active within earlier cultural formations. Understanding such elements and the way they function within varying cultural fabrics can give us clues about the present condition, including its obsessions and excesses. (Huhtamo, 2011, p. 25)

In *Illusions in Motion*, Huhtamo (2013) remembers how 360-degree moving panoramas in the late eighteenth century used to simulate the transport of viewers to near and distant places. These huge circular stereoscopic images were static<sup>189</sup>, but they intended to create on people the feeling that they could travel without physically move, through technological modes of mediation. The same simulated ability keep present today in some computers applications. Jørgensen (2014), for instance, reaffirms the possibility of finding in digital media the similar spatial experience of mobility in a stationary condition. He examines how an armchair traveler can explore the world from the comforts of home with the new modes of storytelling and experience in digital representations of travel and movement through landscapes.

This thesis do not concentrate the attention on experiences of mobility in earlier cultural forms and its possible traces on the present media condition. Regardless of the potentialities a fixed coordinate system has to simulate the motion and the transportation of viewers to mediated realities, the media we focus our attention in this doctoral study are mobile and not stationary. This study recognizes, following Huhtamo (2011) categorization, at least three types of social communication systems that allow the mobility of its users. Their definition is in agreement with their strategies of usage. As he specifies, portable are the ones we can carry around. A transistor radio or a laptop computer fit into this category. These are devices that we commonly have to stop and place on a support surface for using them. They are different from the ones we can operate in motion. These, on his definition, are the wearables. Portable as well, they enable us to attach them to our bodies. Typical examples, in this case, are the Walkman and the iPod. The third category, or the vehicle-mounted devices, as he refers to them, are those built-in in the vehicle. Their use occurs regularly when the vehicle is in movement. When the owner steps out of the car, he can also remove the equipment. The

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<sup>189</sup> The 360-degree moving panoramas were a long painting unscrolling behind a window. They were exhibited in venues and accompanied by a lecture, music, sound and light effects.

same principle of mobility characterizes the three types of media mentioned above. Making a parallel between the communication experiences they evoke and the one stimulated by a fixed coordinate system, we will find remarkable contrasts that differentiate them.

They are media for the 'dromological' society (Paul Virilio) that is constantly on the move. Mobile media are linked with any imaginable forms of urban mobility from skateboards and private cars to taxis, subway trains and aeroplanes, not to forget the persisting 'proto-motion' of walking. Even if we did not count the futuristic ultra high-tech gadgets seen on the pages of *Wired* (but rarely elsewhere), the constant presence of more mundane mobile media – mobile phones, digital cameras, car radios, PDA's, pagers, Gameboys, iPods and iPhones – haunts us as we move through urban non-places [Augé 1995]. (Huhtamo, 2011, p. 24)

When a mobile phone had its first public demonstration in 1973, its inventor named on US Patent, Martin Cooper, presented it by saying: “people want to talk to other people – not in a house, or an office, or a car. Given a choice, people will demand the freedom to communicate wherever they are, unfettered by the infamous copper wire. It is that freedom we sought to vividly demonstrate”<sup>190</sup>. Even with a two kilo-weigh handset, as the one presented at that time, the cell phones brought to its users the freedom to explore the world while talking. As a portable apparatus, and different from landlines, people did not have to be confined in private spaces, such as their home or office, for making or answering a call. The first generation of analog handheld devices became commercially available in 1983, and the device was still thought only to make calls. Ten years later, came the second generation, or the digital cellular networks<sup>191</sup>. Only with the third generation, however, is that we would see the birth of the called smartphones. Combining communication and computing capabilities, it turned into a robust gadget that progressively gained new designs and service functions.

Mobile phones have evolved rapidly, acquiring key features that are unlike to any other media previous to them. Nowadays, the same device present to its users the possibility of producing and distributing multimedia content. With the access to the Internet, they also enable the merging of digital and physical worlds. They figure in those three categories of mobile systems listed by Huhtamo (2011). Portable, we can have them in

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<sup>190</sup> Donohoe, Alan. *The History & Future of the Mobile Phone*. In: "The Essential Mobile Phone Handbook". Retrieved from: <<http://www.mobilephonemuseum.ie/resources.html>>

<sup>191</sup> Idem.

our pockets. Wearable, we can keep them in our pockets and use it with a headset. Vehicle-mounted, we can connect them to our cars to replace or supports its fixed communication system. They are portable media and spatially flexible, letting their users move across space. In addition, 3G smartphones became a location aware and context-specific media, integrating positioning technologies on the networked devices.

With the mandatory regulations regarding mobile phone tracking<sup>192</sup>, we saw a prompt integration on the mass-market of GPS receivers built into the handsets<sup>193</sup>. While in the beginning cellular towers aid the track using the triangulation technique<sup>194</sup>, the fast evolved of wireless communication technology had a significant impact in making the tracking services more accurate and faster. Already in 2004, it was possible to locate the user's actual location by combining the cellular signal with the GPS module inside the phones. Currently, the majority of smart devices can determine location and calculate navigational routes using geospatial data. A market research from *Berg Insight* had estimated the sales of GPS-enabled handsets to reach about 960 million, or 60 percent of total handset shipments in 2014<sup>195</sup>. Even with the threat to privacy, the discourse that the implementation of GPS on mobile devices could help customers, made cell phones became, according to the report, the most pervasive consumer electronics devices globally.

Commercial interest in location-based approaches gained force with the widespread of 3G networks and the availability of robust devices with a GPS module integrated into it. Geospatial information is an ongoing interest and opportunity essentially for commercial businesses. Many online and offline applications that are not necessarily navigation assistants have been collecting and using location data retrieved from mobile phones. With the assignment of spatial coordinates, companies can give people the information or the products that they judge could be relevant according to where the users are. It is also easier to people select information while they are on the move, as

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<sup>192</sup> In 1994, the Federal Communications Commission – FCC, created the Enhanced 911 – E911 rule in the The United States. It obligated the wireless carriers to find manners to locate mobile 911 callers with more accuracy. Cellphone companies started to use their towers to attend this necessity, what ended up claiming the attention of entrepreneurs to the exploration of the potential integration of GPS on phones.

<sup>193</sup> Since the late 1990s, some mobile phones could work with a GPS receivers connected via Bluetooth.

<sup>194</sup> Telecommunication companies pinpoint the location of the devices by interpreting data logs received always an active radio signal transmission happened between the phone and the tower.

<sup>195</sup> <http://www.berginsight.com/ReportPDF/Summary/bi-gps4-sum.pdf>

soon as these devices started to infer the location of its users and possibly what they would like to know.

The location became a key aspect of mobile communication, bringing together relevant concerns regarding privacy and surveillance. Despite the risks, smartphones, tablet computers, and portable technology of all sort have invaded the streets with a vast percentage of citizens carrying these context-aware devices with them everywhere. The expansion of mobile media usage happened in a velocity that its diffusion has been considered the fastest of any technology in History (Townsend, 2002). In 2013, the worldwide mobile phone subscriptions had grown to over seven billion. The *International Telecommunications Union* came to predict that there would be more mobile phones than people on earth in 2014<sup>196</sup>. While the propagation of these handsets reached a truly massive dimension, the tendency and challenge are still to create new designs to facilitate even more the portability and increase the power of these gadgets. Devices decreasing in size while advancing in technological terms.

The desktop computer – a sensation novelty in the 1980s – has often been replaced by the laptop computer, which is constantly gaining power, while losing weight and shrinking in size. Yet often even the laptop is considered too bulky and uncomfortable. Many tiny devices that combine the functions of the telephone, the information terminal and the game machine have appeared on the market; and this is only the beginning. Unlike the media machines of the past, such devices fit into the pocket or the handbag. They go where their users go, unless they are dropped on the sidewalk, forgotten on the bar desk or left in the restroom of a high-speed train. (Huhtamo, 2011, p. 24)

After the widespread witnessed by us in the last decades, it is impossible to think in historians defining the current communication practices without paying attention to the considerable role that mobile and portable media have been playing on it. Paraphrasing Marshall McLuhan<sup>197</sup>, we could literally affirm, for instance, that cell phones became an extension of humans' body. We almost never see one separated from its owner. Whether they are not in use, they are probably in people's pocket or bag ready to use. They play from utilitarian to complex tasks, serving as a mobile personal computer. Cell phones have embraced and recombined many of the past media, functioning for making and receiving calls, but also and mainly for snapping pictures, recording videos, sending text

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<sup>196</sup> <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/332274/there-more-mobile-phones-people.html>

<sup>197</sup> McLuhan, M. (1994). *Understanding media: The extensions of man*. MIT press.

messages, checking emails, searching on the Internet, listening to music, playing a game. Powered by applications, it has a variety of communication capabilities and can simulate many other media and its functions.

The technological flexibility of mobile phones reflects, according to Jenkins (2006) the media convergence phenomenon of modern communication. As he analyses, they are a multimodal system in which we have different medium working together and creating new modalities of experience. Mobile phones exemplify the interconnectedness phenomenon that ties together different communication systems, producing a mutual effect on each of them. Although each medium became almost dissolved into this imbrication, they still keep their differences. As in a networked, one start to influence the other, what results in a mix of ideas and in a redefinition of the media itself. Similarly to an ecosystem, they interact as if they were elements and constituents of a wider cultural environment (Scolari, 2015). Each vehicle of representation and reproduction depend on and refers to each other. From the combination and the adaptation of each particular communicative strategy, comes a media that acts through several sensory modalities at one.

### 3.1.1 The Development of Ubiquitous and Pervasive Computing

Recalling the context before the widespread of mobile communication systems, we give light to the brief history of the ubiquitous computing project investigating the influence it had in the current scenario we live today. It was in 1991 when Mark Weiser publicized his vision regarding the emergence of a new exciting era with a significant impact on humans' experience. The head of the “Computer Science Laboratory” at the *Xerox Palo Alto Research Center* – PARC, saw computers spread into our everyday life. The phenomenon, however, was not just a matter of an increasing in the number of devices. The computer of the 21st Century, as he called it, had to be created. According to him, it had to fit the human environment and not the opposite, because its use should be “as refreshing as taking a walk in the woods” (Weiser, 1991, p. 8). On his vision, not just computers but all other devices connected by wires should turn so ubiquitous that we will not notice their presence. His ideas regarding what has come to be known as “ubiquitous computing” or “embodied virtuality”, had a definite goal of studying and designing ‘The Architecture of Information’ and ‘The Office of the Future’. A step

towards this objective was to augment people and environment with computational resources providing information and services when and where desired.

Also denominated pervasive, researchers at universities and corporate labs have worked in this “post-desktop” paradigm in human-computer interaction since the late 1980s, combining some mobile, networked and context-aware technologies. Mark Weiser led at PARC what he considered being the next revolution in computing. Taking a radical look at what computing and networking ought to be like, the team got inspired by social scientists, philosophers, anthropologists, and artists<sup>198</sup>. They attracted all sorts of talent into the corporate agenda effort to conquer the digital frontier, architecting and engineering the new economic scenario. In a neoliberal position or not, they were pioneers in investigating pervasive, wearable and augmented technologies. What they called ubiquitous computing, or Ubicomp, was then “a method of enhancing computer use by making many computers available throughout the physical environment, but making them effectively invisible to the user” (Weiser, 1993, p. 75).

As said, the primary goal of these ubiquitous applications run through the desire of integrating physical and digital interaction. For activating the world providing hundreds of wireless devices, Abowd et al. (2002) underline that the ubiquitous computing project required shifts in operating systems, user interfaces, networks, wireless, displays, and many other areas. On their analysis, the pervasive research has affected three main areas: “the definition of the appropriate physical interaction experience, the discovery of general application features and the evolution of theories for designing and evaluating the human experience” (Abowd et al., 2002, p. 48). They explain that scientists worked to define what would be the appropriate physical interaction experience between humans and computers following a postmodern approach, which inspired the development of applications that are “off desktop”. The goal was to enable an interactive model relying less on keyboard, mouse, and display. Instead, it should function more like humans interact with the physical world. Moreover, it should not interfere with our daily activities.

As Abowd et al. (2002) recognize, researchers found in a full-body sensing the solution to this user interface challenge that the Ubicomp was trying to solve. All the input and

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<sup>198</sup> At that time, Xerox PARC had an Artist in Residency Program – PAIR, directed by Rich Gold. See: <[http://isea-archives.org/?page\\_id=8593](http://isea-archives.org/?page_id=8593)[http://archives.isea-web.org/?page\\_id=8593](http://archives.isea-web.org/?page_id=8593)>

output channels of our bodies would serve to allow this “embodied virtuality”, and to push the devices to the background. On their analysis, the creation of perceptual interfaces that support implicit inputs allowed a more natural rather than an interventional form of human communication. That is why, for them, these systems gained the intelligent adjective. They are smart because they are meant to work by sensing its users – their location, the time, the feeling, the temperature, the light, the sound, the physical state, the weather. Ubiquitous applications should be capable of augmenting the physical environment by sensing the context in which its users are. Understanding the situation, they could provide content that is sensitive to the conditions in the moment of delivery.

A greater variety of technologies came to replace the explicit means of humans input based on pressing buttons. There are two familiar location-awareness technologies to detect the user context: the RFID<sup>199</sup> and the GPS<sup>200</sup>. Apart from them, the intelligent applications can also utilize other technologies for sensing, such as Bluetooth, compass, facial recognition, heart rate monitor, brain wave monitor, pressure sensor, microphone, video camera, galvanic response, accelerometer. The system computes the information provided by these sensors and respond according to the data gathered from them. Just walking into space, for instance, can be enough to announce people's presence and identity. This kind of information frequently serves for triggering an opening or closing door. This same data captured by the sensors could even be programmed to trigger a piece of media, a message, a phone call. Part of Ubicomp goal was embedded these computing functionalities in our surrounding environment as well as in the physical objects.

Invisibility of computing, from the human perspective, can start when we can determine an individual's identity, location, effect, or activity through his or her mere presence and natural interactions in an environment. The union of explicit and implicit input defines the context of interaction between the human and the environment. (Abowd et al., 2002, p. 50)

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<sup>199</sup> Radio-frequency identification (RFID), unlike a barcode, uses electromagnetic fields to automatically identify and track tags attached to objects. It uses radio signal to capture and share data between mobile and fixed computing devices, allowing automatic data capture and object identification.

<sup>200</sup> The Global Positioning System (GPS) is a space-based navigation system enabled by a network of 24 satellites placed into orbit by the U.S. Department of Defense. It pinpoint a three dimensional position (latitude, longitude and altitude), has about a meter of accuracy and provide nano-second precise time anywhere on Earth.

Today, 25 years later the preliminary applications for augmenting the world and offering different forms of interactive experience, we ask: what are the impacts of this paradigm shift? Did researchers accomplish their promises and visions of having people and environments augmented with computational resources? Do these applications assist us in our everyday life, providing information and services when and where desired? As Abowd et al. (2002) analyse, applications have shared three essential emergent features after the Ubicomp agenda. The first regards the context-aware computing, with applications implicitly sensing the physical and electronic environment and making use of this information to determine the system behavior. The second concerns the provision of intelligent and automated systems able to store memories of live experiences for later uses. The final trace refers to the continuous availability of services.

On a positive perspective, Rheingold (1993) sees on the Ubicomp project vestiges of a postmodern paradigm that aimed to honor the complexity of human relationships, understanding that we have bodies and that they are mobile. On Weiser's reasoning, for instance, the most profound technologies are the ones that disappear into the fabric of our everyday life. Consequently, on his discourse, a great tool would be an invisible one. By invisible, he meant no intrusion in our consciousness because we should be able to focus on the task and not in the tool. The ubiquitous applications should enhance invisibility and so enhance the world (Weiser, 1993). That is why the Ubicomp project put calmness as a challenge in the designing of all technology to come from that date to the next fifty years. By this manner, scientists' discourse was that they would bring the space and time of social interaction to the foreground, making technology look to users less overwhelming and annoying. Predicting the coming age of calm technology, Weiser and Bown (1996) observed that, when computers spread all around, we would feel the desire or the necessity of computing while doing something else. Considering that, to them, we would need more time to be more fully humans, and that is exactly why they pointed calmness as a key achievement when rethinking the goals and the context of all technologies crowding our lives.

Notwithstanding the discourse of a promisor future, what we can recognize when we investigate the effects of pervasive media is a myth behind the Ubicomp project, and an invisible ideological agenda included on it. Rieser (2005) evaluates how the same neo-liberal political and economic reasoning that led to the rise of personalised and peer-to-

peer media also conducted to a state of interpenetration between workspace and private space, between work and personal time. To him, the neo-liberal economics had the power to extend its controlling force into every facet of our lives, even with all the intentional and totalitarian control behind these technologies. He sees a voluntary technology adoption happening despite a cautionary warning.

In one of the discussions with my thesis supervisor, Dr. Roc Parés i Burguès, about the Ubicomp Project, he presented to me some of his arguments showing how these invisible systems turned into something that we can not critically question. He remembered that the success of transparency opened space for a generation of "zombie" users. To him, the few who dared challenging transparency were hackers and crackers. When they started doing that in the 1990s, as he remembered, they became socially perceived as outlaws with a destructive urge to violate security. Roc Parés i Burguès drew my attention to the fact that the social perception of hackers as conscious activists who ask legitimate questions about technology probably raise after the Pekka Himanen's book, *The Hacker Ethic and the Spirit of the Information Age*<sup>201</sup>. Important to observe here is that, when Himanen (2001) describes a new "ethic" legitimating their attitude, she expresses how hackers technical creation are an opposing ethos for the information age. She affirms it by contesting "The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism", some ideas presented on the book of the same name written by Max Weber.

Getting back to the discourse leading the Ubicomp agenda, we see them affirming that they wanted to liberate people from the constraints of desktop workstations and from isolating immersive and simulated virtual reality environments. Nevertheless, the logic under their project was not necessarily freeing people from their workplace. Instead, what we attest in our daily routine is that they were creating the technical infrastructure to the possibility of having people working everywhere. Despite the promising atmosphere created by these ideas of invisibility, the results we have from an illusionistic principle are "productive users" operating in transparent systems. Furthermore, the experience we live seems to be just the illusion of calmness, considering that the ubiquitous and pervasive media is everywhere and demanding us overtime. By using implicit mechanisms to sense the context, ubiquitous devices did not turn the interaction with services less distracting from our everyday activities, but the

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<sup>201</sup> Himanen accentuates the value present on the practice of these enthusiastic computer programmers, who share their work with others. That is what, to her, differentiates hackers from computer criminals.

interaction with mobile devices became the center of our daily routine. They are permanently saturating people's time and space with a considerable number of interactive products and services. With the support of these pervasive devices, people can buy and produce everywhere, at any time, in a practice that seems to evidence a totalitarian neoliberalism.

With pervasive media what we have got to experience is ubiquitous technology pressing us in a very great amount and sometimes being troublesome. Jarvenpaa & Lang (2004) analyze some contradictions on the conditions that mobile phones, for instance, have been exposing its users. They observe how these handsets do seem to empower people because they are smart and have an unprecedented capacity to connect users with huge databases and with other people around the world. Driven by the idea of an unparalleled knowledge access and connectivity, they notice that people are online and active every moment and everywhere. Moreover, they argue that the mobility brings with it the discourse of independence present not just on the freedom of choice, but mainly on the freedom to be connected everywhere, independent of space and time. Nevertheless, all these potentialities represent a contradictory condition. As they point, all this powerful connectivity and interaction with the device sometimes is an inconvenient, being most of the time what makes people neglect or interrupt social interaction within others around them. We see, for instance, people working before they arrive at the office or even when they have already left it. They just keep working from their connected devices during the time they have to spend, for example, with their family or friends.

Citing Heidegger, Jarvenpaa & Lang (2004) argues that, contradictorily, communication “technology destroyed distance by destroying closeness”. They complement their analysis also indicating that the same permanent connectivity power has created new forms of dependence. To them, the always being available status coexists nowadays with the enslavement condition. Those that get used to being always connected are the same ones that feel a great discomfort when they are disconnected, even whether it is needed or it is only temporary. Going back to Roc Parés i Burguès comments about the Ubicomp agenda, he categorically contested that technology stopped overwhelming and annoying us. What he sees we getting closer is to the society expressed by Aldous Huxley in *Brave New World*, in which SOMA calm all the citizens. Critically analyzing, the own words of Weiser and Bown (1996) explicit such intention:

The most potentially interesting, challenging, and profound change implied by the ubiquitous computing era is a focus on calm. If computers are everywhere they better stay out of the way, and that means designing them so that the people being shared by the computers remain serene and in control. (Weiser & Brown, 1996)

According to Mark Weiser (1991), the ubiquitous computing paradigm would dominate the coming century. The current scenario evidences how they are already dominating it, assisting us in our everyday life as well as overwhelming it. The epoch of mobile, pervasive and ubiquitous media is ongoing. Mobile systems emerged, as Sadie Plant (2001) observes, in this context characterized by a shifting in the information flow between people and in a reshaping of the way we communicate essentially within urban spaces. They came “in a time marked by increasing connectivity, unprecedented mobility, and the emergence of new cultures, communities and collectives, and is now helping to shape that new, emerging world” (Plant, 2001, p. 76).

Scolari (2008) evaluates the form the diffusion of mobile media in our everyday life is transforming our perceptions of time and space. As he discusses, these communication technologies give birth to a mobile temporality. To him, the increase in the number of messages but the decrease in their extension, as we see with SMS, tweets, posts, is, for instance, one the distinctive traces that can define the temporal dimension of the current days. Aligned to it, he analyses a completed different spatial experience we live nowadays with mobile media redefining concepts such as proximity, presence or mobility. He points how, when on a mobile phone, we almost never start our communication with others by saying “How are you?”. Instead, as he observes, the first question we usually do is “Where are you?”. By commenting these behaviors, he affirms that mobile media has also changed our way of relating with others. He adds to it a new temporal-spatial subjectivity that emerged from the always being available, anytime, anywhere status, what has altered the manner we manage our vital social cycle.

The widespread of mobile media in the networked city has also contributed to reshaping our experiences of public and private spaces. Regarding the blending of both domains, Scolari (2008) analyses that the borders separating the interior of home from the outside places are permeable. He remembers that with electronic broadcast technologies, the families had a system able to take something from abroad to households. That happened

first with the radio and then with the television. These media not just allowed the exchange between both spaces but also reduced people's need to leave the familiar world. He observes that, on the other hand, technologies like the telephone, an “irresistible intruder”<sup>202</sup>, introduced the bidirectional communication. They incorporate something from the outside world, at the same time as they get something out of the private sphere. The same two-way communication he sees present on networked media that superimposes public and private, individual and collective spaces.

Marzo (2003) also talks about the redefinition of the urban space and the notions regarding what is public and what is private, when investigating the relations between technology, mobility, and social life. He makes a correlation between the crisis in the model of family as the center of the contemporary consumption, the personal privatization process, and the diffusion of technologies that serve to interact with others. Analyzing the social backgrounds of who wants to spread an illusionist mobility discourse, he indicates it as an industrial strategy in the search for new markets. Mobility, to him, is a myth present on the corporate, politic, media and artistic language. On his perception, citizens live the illusion of being nomadic and sedentary. Away from home, they encounter a public space that in fact seems a mere space of services in which they will have to articulate the private and the public dimensions.

Cornelio & Ardevol (2011) observes how differently authors throughout History considered the influence of media technologies in our notions of space and place, and in social relations as individuals or as social beings. They mention, for instance, the manner Manuel Castells<sup>203</sup> presents a more abstract construction of space that contrasts with the previous paradigm in which the concept of “space” appears as opposed to the physical and concrete notion of “place”. Instead of the “space of places” idea corresponding to an industrial society, he introduces the “space of flows” concept, a spatial form that characterizes the current information and network society. Rather than focus on material processes, the theory emphasizes flows and the virtual potential. As Cornelio & Ardevol (2011) emphasizes, such idea does not necessarily mean that people are experiencing a loss of the sense of place. On the contrary, they observe geographical and phenomenological studies on mobile media practices pointing to a

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<sup>202</sup> Scollari (2008: p. 281) mention how Marshall McLuhan, still in the 1980's, was investigating the telephone as an intruder in time and space.

<sup>203</sup> Castells, M. (2002). *The Internet galaxy: Reflections on the Internet, business, and society*. Oxford University Press on Demand.

movement that claims the importance of place as a geo-imaginary and socio-cultural precept.

To Cornelio & Ardevol (2011), locative media performs a dialogue with the current relational conceptions of space and place in anthropology and geography. Place gain a new sense with new forms of appropriation, new processes of de-/re-territorialization and mobility, both physical and virtual. With that, they believe that the matter is not to question how these pervasive systems have affected the sense that people have regarding physical place. Instead, we should ask ourselves how this media has been contributing to the ongoing hybridization of physical and digital spaces. Or even, how people have experienced and engaged with place using different devices base in place-making processes.

While a new generation of media is reconfiguring geographic, cultural and perceptual spaces, they are also bringing to evidence new issues on a political, social and ethical perspectives that we should evaluate with more criterion. Context-aware computing applications track and correlate physical location and user identity, in a process that requires the acquisition of this data, its storage and delivery mechanisms. The method employed brings critical implications for privacy. As Galloway (2004) observes, these technologies can cross physical and social boundaries in a way that space and time can not contain this comprehensive monitoring and surveillance. The more critical aspect, as she points, is even where the data will be stored, who owns it or has access to it. She remembers that information infrastructure is shifting from periphery to center to respond to the actual context of use. Furthermore, all this infrastructure is proprietary.

When the ubiquitous computing project announced their idea of embedding computational capacities in the objects and environments that surround us, as Galloway (2008) remembers, there was an immediate and adverse reaction. The criticism they received directed mainly to the privacy concerns that would come with the penetration of technologies into our everyday life. In the place of an auspicious and utopian future envisioned by some, the critics foresee a world of absolute surveillance that blurs the line separating what is public from what is private. One of the ways we can measure part of the impact these pervasive media crowding into our lives have nowadays is precisely by observing how they have been affecting our intimacy, privacy, and emotions.

Organizations have incorporated context-aware data with a clear commercial purpose: they entertain the users while monitoring them. In addition to these conventional use of geospatial data through almost all apps for smartphones, we can also see more unconventional forms to incorporate this information into social and artistic goals. The creative possibilities of pervasive and ubiquitous media opened up a new horizon to a movement of artists and technologists interested in context-aware applications and location-based stories augmented by the physical surroundings. It was also in the 1990s that locative media stimulated an artistic movement devoted to combining computed code and psychogeographic urban exploration.

Ben Russell (1999), in his *Headmap Manifesto*, denotes how geography and the ability to shape and organize the physical space got interesting, with location-aware and networked mobile devices enabling digital and invisible notes to be attached to places. “Overlaying everything is a whole new invisible layer of annotation. Textual, visual and audible information is available as you get close, as context dictates, or when you ask” (Russell, 1999, p. 4).

Tuters & Varnelis (2006) affirm that, when cell phones became internet enabled and location-aware, everything in the real world started to get tracked, tagged, barcoded and mapped. Locative Art movement followed this wave and ended up accused of uncritically use these pervasive media. The implications of context-aware computing are a significant concern. From that emerged many critics regarding different aspects of the practice, as Tuters & Varnelis documented in *Beyond locative media: Giving shape to the internet of things*. They remember how Andrea Broeckman, director of the *Transmediale Festival*, criticized the artistic movement exactly by affirming that it represents “the avant-garde of the 'society of control'”, referring to Gilles Deleuze’s description of the contemporary regime of power. To him, these artists working with locative media were not making people more aware of the risks implied by these technologies. Instead, they were advertising and promoting its commercial use. The central controversy presented by the criticisms is the fact that locative media fundamentally bases on the appropriation of technologies of surveillance and control. Tuters & Varnelis also recall Broeckmann's argument, for whom practitioners have a duty to address this fact in their work.

Brian Holmes (2004) joined the team of critics, questioning any political position present on this artistic practice by claiming attention to the fact that U.S. Army is who controls the GPS satellites. The North American Department of Defense inaugurated the planetary mapping program in 1984, but, since 2000, the infrastructure has functioned as a global public service available and open to the use of anyone. The system keeps using fixed data from the World Geodetic System to allow anyone to track their own nomadic trajectory on a three-dimensional Cartesian grid. By using the GPS technology, he considers that what the artists do is to allow the global military infrastructure to target ourselves.

All too often in contemporary society, aesthetics is politics as décor... the aesthetic form of the *dérive* is everywhere. But so is the hyper-rationalist grid of Imperial infrastructure. And the questions of social subversion and psychic deconditioning are wide open, unanswered, seemingly lost to our minds, in an era when civil society has been integrated to the military architecture of digital media. (Holmes, 2004, p. 2)

Artists working with locative media started to produce their own cartographic information using receivers of global positioning satellites. Tuters & Varnelis (2006) highlight how the government surveillance and their ownership of virtually all geographic data encouraged a free wireless network movement. “In suggesting that ubiquitous Internet access would change our relationship with place by overlaying a second virtual world over the physical one, the free wireless movement was a seminal source for locative media’s ambitions” (Tuters & Varnelis, 2006). The movement emerged from the do-it-yourself punk culture in an attempt to provide free connectivity. They make information freely accessible at the same time as instigate more alternative mapping-based practices. By using tactics like this one, artists and citizens have attempted to respond to a world controlled by context-aware technologies.

Southern (2016) analyses how the applications built by those artists working in these early days of locative media pointed to the nature of public spaces as well as to the surveillance capacity of this media. He also mentions sociologist writings that suggest the impact these artists had in the development of locative mobile social networks (LMSN), as well as in expanding the discussion to broader issues of mobility. He observes that over the past decades an interdisciplinary research area developed a social sciences paradigm in mobilities, and immobilities, that comes defining features of social life. To him, this study involves and influences the current artistic practice in Locative

Art. It concentrates in six aspects of “location awareness” outlined by him, that when combined generates new approaches to location:

the way that the world is experienced through the senses and in situated action; mobile awareness, experienced through movement; a relational awareness of place brought about by social and participatory interactions that are performed and through which location is enacted; an awareness of networks that are connected to presence in space and that extend that presence; an experimental awareness, the process through which actions test, explore, observe and critique in location; and an awareness of the multiplicity of perspectives that we inhabit (Southern, 20016, p. 181).

More than ten years after the emergence of a Locative Media movement, the ultimate goal now is to stress and legitimate the aesthetic merit of an artistic practice that uses location and spatial context to create a new sense of sociopolitical consciousness and activism. Defending the increased importance of a spatially contextualized art, Aceti (2016) mentions that Location Art redefines its vision coming now as a response to the current developments in technology and its capacity to erode the public boundaries for a privacy invasion. With that, he also identifies that corporate, state and military regimes use the discourse of democracy and social well-being to extend dictatorial forms of control and surveillance to bodies, identities, and speech. As he analyses, in a scenario in which the state kind of possesses a digital panopticon, the concealing of location information becomes and insurrectional and revolutionary act.

It is the progressively politicized nature of space and location, as well as the act of locating, that makes locative media art political, politicized, and politicizable. Hence, locative media art must be placed in the context of the political stances and struggles, or lack thereof, that will define its aesthetic, or lack of aesthetic (Aceti, 2006, p.12).

To Aceti (2016) Locative Art can now respond to the governmental intimidation, to their pinpoint and identification of citizens, to their oppression and control. They can do it, for instance, by adding a layer with contextual information over controversial spaces, what artists started to explore still a decade ago in their first approaches to pervasive media. On the other hand, Locative Art can also operate in a renewed transformative potential of artistic practices conceived as process-based. Socially engaged, they can enable open procedures for participants to engage, construct and reconstruct space and situations as autonomous agents. It corresponds to McGarrigle'S (2010) idea of locative

artworks that defines an open model to giving participants a set of procedures or a toolkit to create and live their own situations independent of the artist. These are some of the sociopolitical possibilities presented by a renewed Locative Art.

### 3.2 Narratives based on Mobile and Pervasive Media

Artists and technical innovators have been exploring new ways of seeing, sensing and representing the world, by pushing to the limits the intrinsic and unique forms of expression inaugurated by mobile and pervasive media. With a focus on *Blast Theory* practice, we investigate these communication systems affordances and constraints that come influencing and expanding the possibilities for creating and experiencing stories. As stressed in Chapter 2, the unique capabilities of a medium can, by some degrees, affect the content of the story and the experience it evokes (Ryan, 2004b). When analyzing this hypothesis, we could perceive, for instance, how narratives in a postmodern scenario put in question some classic principles showing its potential to respond and to adapt to the stimulus coming from the context in which it inserts. Recognized the influence of digital media on the narrative practice, the next step we trace in this research is to evaluate the impact of mobile communication systems in the art of telling stories.

As we already identified, mobile devices empowered by GPS and wireless network can provide location, spatial and contextual awareness information. These are some of the capabilities that artists have been using when composing their narratives. This data serve for the most diverse purposes, but the direct function is to let the creators estimate where participants are, what is around them and what they are possibly doing. On other words, when authoring for mobile devices, artists can know when and where they will deliver their messages and in which context. By creatively using this information, artists can, for instance, associate story sections to specific locations in the city, connecting its fragments and integrating them into the urban space. Narratives based on mobile devices emerged by establishing this connection between digital content and the physical world. Artists assign spatial coordinates to data in a way that those interacting with the system can access the information nodes only from the locations associated with them.

Context-awareness is probably one of the specificities and functionalities provided by pervasive media that most characterize mobile-based narratives. Despite the existence of this and other unifying traces, there is still a barrier regarding these new storytelling forms that has to do with the difficulty to reach an agreement on how to call it. This research came across the most different designations: Mobile Storytelling, Ambient Storytelling, Geostories, Locative Narrative, GPS Film, Spatialized Narrative. Facing so many and diverse labels, Farman (2013) questions how can we still do not have a consistent terminology to treat this phenomenon of storytelling with mobile systems. It has been more than a decade of exposure to these media and the narrative forms mediated by it, and, as he observes, even with the time running, we are still not sure on the concept. Regardless of the necessity and some researchers dedicated to putting an effort on the matter, the aim of this study is not to find a solution to this impasse. Rather than focusing on terminologies or taxonomies, the goal here is to unveil the design process and some of the core aspects that can come to characterize what we refer to as mobile-based narratives<sup>204</sup>.

Sheller & Iverson (2016), for instance, when talking about mobile art, stress fundamental aspects related to it that has also to do with the media that gives it support.

Mobile art is socially networked and participatory, often involving the creative collaboration between artists, participants and the broader public, and what the implications of this are; second, the crucial ways in which mobile art engages with location, augmented physical presence, and sensory perceptions of place, eliciting new experiences of “hybrid space” as both a bodily and more-than-bodily experience; and third, the political possibilities for mobile locative media to add new dimensionality to public space, and thereby push the boundaries of civic engagement and politics in mobile network culture beyond its current limits. (Sheller & Iverson, 2016, p.15)

Apart from location-awareness, mobile and pervasive media have other specific attributes that offer an unprecedented potential to artists challenge the old methods of telling, distributing and experiencing stories. Cell phones, for instance, have already proved to be a suitable platform for the contemporary narrative practices. Some projects use to run on PDAs, but nowadays most of them work with smartphones. This thesis

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<sup>204</sup> Mobile-based narratives, location-aware and interactive, explores the specific properties of mobile devices. The operate in a similar approach that Net.art did with browsers in 1990s. On the other hand mobile-distributed narratives uses mobile systems as a mere device for downloading, storing and accessing mainstream and traditional artforms. An example could be the use of smartphones for download, store and read a book that also exists in a printed version.

verifies it by taking *Blast Theory* projects as an example. From the four artworks analyzed in this study, only in *Rider Spoke* the group adopted a handheld computer, which is the *Nokia N800*<sup>205</sup>. The other three pieces, *I Like Frank*, *A Machine To See With* and *Fixing Point*, has cell phones supporting participant's experience.

Cell phones show itself as a proper device for this artistic practices, even when partially deviated from its original and daily functions. In a creative misuse, they usually integrate the mobile-based narratives serving for unconventional utilities in the context of the artworks. Farman (2013) observes how artists and designers tend to defamiliarize participants, not just with the technology but also with software and places, by proposing different manners of interaction that are not the ones they are intended for. As he evaluates, regularly artists working with locative media ask participants to rethink the places and also the technology itself. According to him, these new uses that an artwork proposes are what force participants to reimagine their relationship with the media and location.

To Ruston & Stein (2005), the cinematic history of the telephone facilitates a seamless blend of interactivity and immersion present on these narratives based on mobile media. On their understanding, it function as a narrative control device, or a mechanism for narration that works as a conduit triggering the story fragments.

Mobile phones offers us access to other spaces and times. Coupled with the near-ubiquity of the mobile phone, this capability of the phone as a conduit for multiple connections and perspectives in any given space positions it as a catalyst or potential vehicle for simultaneously interactive and immersive media experience. And the mobile experience, one that capitalizes on the locative and interactive and immersive qualities of the medium, operates as a narrative. (Ruston & Stein, 2005:2).

Farman (2013) evidences how elements and stories implicitly embedded in the landscape can now become explicit in these experiences enabled by mobile phones. He believes that we experience now mediated by these technologies, what we could not experience before. He gives as an example the urban environment, which can acquire new layers of meaning. In a composition, locative storytellers can add multiple and

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<sup>205</sup> On a personal interview I conducted with Matt Adams, he affirmed that the choice mainly happened because *Nokia* was a partner in the project. The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

heterogeneous layers of content to a single space, combining different media types, such as text, audio, video, graphics. Moreover, they can also bring a range of perspectives from complementary to conflicting points of view and interpretations about the same topic or about what a place means. Each one of this countless stories can even come represented in a distinct narrative genre. With a mobile phone, people can navigate among this mass of information formed by interconnected stories, exploring the space, choosing and accessing the narrative parts according to individual preferences.

In addition to the affordances, there are also a set of constraints poses by these media to the authoring of navigable stories, that which comes limiting its potential as a storytelling tool. Most of the restrictions faced by artists relate to technical issues that appear when running large-scale data applications on these mobile systems. Farman (2013) considers the lack of protocols standardization as one of the challenges faced when programming mobile interfaces. Batteries is another issue listed by him. Although it has improved a lot since the beginnings, smartphones still have a restrict energy capacity. In concrete terms, as he observes, it limits the length of the narrative experience\_artists can propose. Whether they neglect it, they become vulnerable to a situation in which devices can take participants by surprise in the middle of their navigation through the story space because they are running out of charge. He remembers that in everyday situations in which it happens, users instantly transforms themselves into helpless people after losing all the power that the magical equipment had given to them. With a phone without charge, he compares, they seem “as Superman holding Kryptonite” (Farman, 2013, p. 24).

There are also other restrictions regarding the use of mobile phones to support digital storytelling. They generally have small amounts of memory and limited space to store data on it. The low bandwidth can retard downloads and causes lag when the application demands higher-speed transfer rates. Constraints like these, which sometimes leave developers and designers frustrated, would not be a problem with a technical improvement. Nevertheless, in the case of mobile networks, as Hemment (2004a) criticizes, it is proprietary and centralized, what has limited any possible innovation from movements of “Do It Yourself”, that empowers people to leak bandwidth and to amplify an independent and free community infrastructure.

Apart from the technical issues, the interface and the interaction design are certainly two other relevant domains that can affect and restrict the artistic practice supported by mobile media. The small screen of cell phones represent a disadvantage for participant's experience. Nevertheless, what a significative limitation is the fact that these ubiquitous tools did not effectively achieve the invisibility or calmness visioned by the Ubicomp project (Weiser, 1991, 1993). As Hemment (2004a) evaluates, “we have not yet reached the point at which technology disappears – all too often the tendency is to focus on the technology and tools rather than the art or content”. The direct consequence of it is the device screen grabbing participants attention, rather than letting them engage in the space and story. Once they have to focus their attention on the display, its small size does represent a problem.

Visuals compete, and if the information is primarily text on the device it becomes separated from the physical world and secondary; this is crucial as it can have the effect of making place and data of place two things independent of each other and not integrated into juxtaposition and comparison in the same way. (Hight, 2005, p. 8)

Artists work trying to overcome all these cell phones' constraints. Regarding the last one we mentioned, designers authoring for mobile devices generally make a creative effort to formulate interfaces that use implicit input channels. By using this strategy, they can turn the interaction with the story content less distracting and intrusive in participants' consciousness. This thesis considers that the more they push the technology to the background, more they will be able to engage and immerse participants in the story, instead of having the device distracting and overwhelming them. The audio channel has represented an alternative for artists designing locative experiences for mobile devices. By privileging this type of content, for instance, they can have participants experiencing the audio while engaging with the experience of exploring the physical place.

### 3.2.1 *Blast Theory's* Artistic and Research Inquiry

Mobile and locative media are central to the definition of the work *Blast Theory* has been making. In the talk I had with Nick Tandavanitj<sup>206</sup>, he described to me how their interest in these technologies grown up. The artist remembered that it happened particularly in the late 1990s, when everyone started to talk about these new possibilities. He told me that it was a time marked by people's interest in experiences of

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<sup>206</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

mobility and technology-based art, with important festivals running around it, and many artists looking differently at electronic devices or electronic spaces enabled by mobile systems or by ubiquitous computing. Whether there was an interest on the part of some artists, the idea that art could exist on a phone was also quite unusual at the turn of the millennium. Matt Adams emphasized this fact, on the personal interview I conducted with him<sup>207</sup>, when recollecting the context in which *Blast Theory* developed some of their experimental projects with these media. He mentioned that, as it is still today, at that time Net.art was a radical subset of the ongoing artistic practice. According to him, it was fashionable and discussed in a small community, with visual artists, or having no idea about what it was, or knowing it and having no interest in it at all. Matt Adams gave me these references of the context to explain that the same happened to them in that period. As he said, most people just did not understand “why on earth” *Blast Theory* was talking about making art to experience on handheld devices.

In the theater world, when we first started working online in 1997/98/99, people who work even in performance or live art, even in the more experimental way, they just did not even register what we were doing. We really felt out of all discussions with theaters practitioners, performers, live art practitioners, in 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003. They had no real connections to that world, or whatsoever, because none of them registered what we were doing, in my view. I am maybe overstating it, but that is the way I felt it. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>208</sup>

In that period, *Blast Theory* and the *Mixed Reality Lab*, at the *University of Nottingham* was already having what would be a long-term partnership. To Nick Tandavanitj<sup>209</sup>, this proximity had been something positive, representing a significative opportunity. The relationship with the Laboratory, as he evaluates, allowed *Blast Theory* to witness from close the expansion of the technological cult happened in the last twenty years. Giving me a concrete picture of that, Nick Tandavanitj mentioned a five-years European Research Project that *Blast Theory* and the *Mixed Reality Lab* worked together. It was in 2000, and, according to him, they were an invited consultant in a phase dedicated to studying the correlations between technology and the cities. The British group committed to looking at telepresence and all kind of metaphors. As part of their research, they started playing with wireless technology, investigating what that could mean, and what kind of social impacts it would have regarding surveillance and

<sup>207</sup> Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014.

<sup>208</sup> Idem.

<sup>209</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

paranoia. To Nick Tandavanitj, all this context was responsible for setting a mood for their artwork, tracing a line in their artistic trajectory.

Marked projects centered on the experimentation with mobile networks came from *Blast Theory* partnership with the *Mixed Reality Lab*, such as *I Like Frank* and *Rider Spoke*. It is the case of *I Like Frank*, Nick Tandavanitj exposed to me his belief that they would have created a project like this one even without the contribution of the Lab. Clearly, to him, it would have a different conception because they would not have the skillset regarding programming language for mobile devices. Whether they would not have enough of the expertise required in *I Like Frank*, he supposes that they would probably be aware of cell phones at that stage, and they might have used it in different terms.

With the *Mixed Reality Lab*, *Blast Theory* established not only a long-term but a strong relationship. As Nick Tandavanitj detailed to me, the process initiated with the scientists presenting to the artists a particular technology or a software explaining what they had done with that. The next step was to ask whether it could interest *Blast Theory* team enough for creating a game using that. The artists then had the opportunity to present their concerns. They could explain, for instance, why they thought mobile phones were interesting, or what they worried about it, or even what they thought was going to happen with mobile communication.

When working with the Lab, *Blast Theory* got involved in quite large research projects which happened over three or four years. Within that, there were small goals that the team has to pursue in the length of one year. When I asked Nick Tandavanitj whether the research agenda ended up dictating their creative practice, he admitted to me that there were ambitions regarding what they were going to deliver in that time. Even though there was a research agenda to follow, all the *Blast Theory* artists affirmed to me that it did never compromise their work. When talking about this partnership, Matt Adams<sup>210</sup> defined it to me as a collaboration between an artistic inquiry and a research inquiry, between the technical possibility and the creatively desirable. To him, as *Blast Theory* become to work more and more deeply with the *Mixed Reality Lab*, they started to understand more clearly their research interests and engage with them on their own

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<sup>210</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

artistic turn. To Nick Tandavanitj<sup>211</sup>, on the other hand, one of the amazing things about working with the researchers has to do with how open they were for making a project in public. Before they started their partnership with *Blast Theory*, they have never done experiments in urban spaces.

It is like testing in the real world. Steve Bedford, who is ahead of the Lab, was like completely up for it. That for him was the most interesting. To make technology, do not worry. It is not interesting at all. To make technology and then to put it in the hands of like 50 sort of teenagers walking around in the middle of Nottingham is far interesting. So I think in some understanding it kind of temper relationships in terms of the process. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>212</sup>

*Blast Theory* decided to integrate mobile and pervasive technologies in their artistic practice to investigate the possible experiences these media could evoke. When I asked Matt Adams the role technology plays in their artwork<sup>213</sup>, he answered me by saying that it represents to him a set of tools that they can bring to bear their artistic projects. To him, it serves as a mechanism for thinking about the kind of relationships the artists can create between them and their audience. According to Matt Adams, *Blast Theory* has been since the beginning interested in exploring those type of things. He also adverted that often he thinks about it as platforms rather than technologies. The mobile phone and the Internet, for instance, mean to him new cultural spaces where artists can do their work.

When answering me the same question about the place these media occupied in their practice, Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj expressed this general concern in emphasizing that their artworks do not resume to the use of communication technologies. *Blast Theory* creative conversations are nearly always around some ideas rather than about some tools. That was what Nick Tandavanitj declared to me on the talk we had<sup>214</sup>. Furthermore, he affirmed that they incorporated mobile media on their practice not motivated by a technical reason, but moved by their fascination with the ways these media are transforming our social relationships. He emphasized that the group usually leave more space to discuss, question and evaluate the impetus for the

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<sup>211</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

<sup>212</sup> Idem.

<sup>213</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

<sup>214</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

work, rather than the content or the technology that will support it. Nick Tandavanitj confirm that by explaining that their starting point to develop something can be their sense of a particular physical, social, political, cultural and even technological context. Whether there is a constant inquiry, he said, it is why they are doing that, in that place and at that time.

Nick Tandavanitj also affirmed that *Blast Theory* does think about technology. According to him, it is a constant awareness and conversation, but their discussions are like surfing through what is out there in the streets. As he exemplified, they can talk about an app they have put on their phone, or about things that happened on the interactive tv, or in tv formats. Their dialogue devotes much more space to the cultural forms and not to the technical properties of a device or tool. As Nick Tandavanitj tried to clarify, their conversations about media have more to do with our relationships and things we experience in our daily routine living in society.

I do not see ourselves being technology lead. I still have that sense that technology is facilitating. It is feeding us because it drive us for experiences in our everyday life. Like so many of the experiences that we have are determined by whatever, now it is happening on things that are on your mobile device or on how are you watching tele. At the same time, I do not feel we are exploring technology at all. We are mixing things together. We like something novel and unusual that is really rare. Then we will do that with technology. We are much more kind of thinking about: 'Oh, these are the kind of things that we are thinking about in terms of our relationships. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>215</sup>

After saying that, the artist also admitted that technology sometimes come as a facilitator or a trigger point, essentially in artworks that they developed as part of a research project, the case of *I Like Frank* and *Rider Spoke*. As he explained to me, in those cases some partners brought a bit of technology and told them to play with that, or to think about that. That fact and dynamics ended up fostering their creation. Matt Adams<sup>216</sup> also let some evidence on his answer to my question, that the technology is not the core but can be the trigger point on their creative process. He, for instance, remembered when *Blast Theory* went to Australian specifically invited to make a piece of work for a 3G test pad. The artist recognized how they became fascinated by the idea

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<sup>215</sup> Idem.

<sup>216</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

because Adelaide was one of the first places in the world where they had 3G technology working. The media, in this sense, represented an inspiration that directed them to think about what they could do with that. Matt Adams also mentioned that technology played a similar function in the artistic process of *Rider Spoke*:

*Rider Spoke* has a long genesis. Originally it was commissioned for Los Angeles, to be done in cars. Then that fell through, and we went back to the UK. We were like: “Wow, work in cars in the UK means something very different from a work in cars in Los Angeles”. So we decided we wanted to make a piece of work for cyclists. We were thinking about what it means to move through space, what it means to make a recording here as opposed to make a recording there. Why would I be here, or why would I be there? Why would I be sit in a gallery, or in a museum or a theater? Why are you making me move around to make a recording? We were trying to think about the particularity of the city. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>217</sup>

The challenge to discover how they could do location without GPS, as he pointed to me, was influential in the creation of this artwork. At that time, Matt Adams observed, there was a keen interest in location-based works. Despite the enthusiasm for the technology, the GPS was something very rare. It was still not available in phones or even on game consoles, such as the Wii handheld or the *PlayStation Portable*<sup>218</sup>. The artists started to look at how to use Wifi to work with location. The demand ended up leading them to think and research about the system of Wifi fingerprinting. As Matt Adams admitted, that had a significant influence on how they thought about *Rider Spoke*.

In a presentation and panel discussion at *Central School of Speech and Drama*<sup>219</sup>, Matt Adams highlighted the scientific and artistic sides of this artwork. According to him, the group ended up looking at two particular issues: the Wi-Fi positioning, and the graphing and modeling issue. The use of Wi-Fi hotspots to geolocate participants in the city, according to him, was something not usual and very little understood at that time. Aligned to that challenge, the group also had to research how to generate their own map of the city in real time. In *Rider Spoke*, map takes form through the data participants collect during their interactive section by tagging recordings across the city. The

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<sup>217</sup> Idem.

<sup>218</sup> Consumers of *PlayStation Portable* had the option to use an GPS receiver, connecting it via USB 2.0. Nevertheless, but it wasn't incorporated from factory like it happened later with *PlayStation Vita*.

<sup>219</sup> Adams, Matt (2007). "Rider Spoke and new frontiers in performance." Retrieved at: <http://crco.cssd.ac.uk/7/1/CENblastPanel.pdf>.

research about how to graph it was a challenge placed by the artistic and scientific desire of creating a map of contiguity and of connections between places rather than a geographical one that models to the city. All these two aspects that, later contributed to the store of scientific knowledge, had a great influence on their artistic process.

### a) Dealing with the Affordances and Constraints of the Medium

The hypothesis when analyzing *Blast Theory* projects was that the medium giving support to the telling of a story can affect the form it takes. Trying to understand how these communication systems have influenced and shaped the artworks *Blast Theory* has been making, I asked Matt Adams whether all the four projects selected as case studies could have happened without the support of locative and mobile media. With his answer to my question, I expected to investigate in which terms they exploited or dealt with the affordances and constraints of these communication technologies. How the intrinsic characteristic of these ubiquitous and mobile media have affected or not the form?

Matt Adams answered me by affirming that they could certainly have made locative artwork without any of this communication technologies<sup>220</sup>. Nevertheless, to him, all these projects would be very different. The artist's response came to corroborate our idea that the affordances and constraints of these media influence the outcome they get from their artistic process. He complemented his answer by using *Rider Spoke* as an example. He observed, for instance, that they could have done the same artwork with people writing the messages instead of recording it on the N800 device. Regardless of the similarities, to him, with no doubt, it would become a distinct piece. The differences, as he emphasized, refers to the particularities each platform has.

The analog contributive experience of writing down your thoughts is distinct from the digital act of recording it. The contrasts are not just regarding the type of data each form generates, but the content can also vary. I would say, for instance, that when we have to write our thoughts, we think before we put it on the paper. After we write, we might also strike some words or entire phrases we wrote. Moreover, we have a determined and delimited space for exposing our ideas. Even the manner we do it has its particularities. When we write, we are usually in silence only “listening” to a voice in our head.

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<sup>220</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

Equally, the act of recording has also its peculiarities. First of all, you listen yourself when exposing your ideas because you have to say it aloud. Added to it, the fact that there is no way of going back in what you have said, deleting phrases or words already recorded. The most important to me, however, is that when you speak knowing that a device is recording you, you might also personify a different self.

The act of writing something down is very different from the act of speaking something aloud, for example. The time change. One of the things I think we focus on very carefully is the particular aesthetic properties a technology, of a device. The very specific thing. What would you write in a text message that is different from what you would write in an email? It is very different. But, what? What is it about text message that is so specific? (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>221</sup>

Matt Adams confirmed in his response to my question that when *Blast Theory* is creating a piece of work, they attempt to make use of all those particular elements that each platform has. In *Rider Spoke*, for instance, he believes that there would be a significant contrast whether they switch it to an iPhone instead of using the *Nokia N800* handheld computer. Interesting to note that these differences would happen even considering that both are mobile devices. One of the primary distinction, to him, is that nowadays everyone possibly knows what an iPhone does. Participants might know, for instance, that whether they hold that specific button down it will quit the application. People might know how to operate the volume and many other functions of the handset. This knowledge they might have about mobile phones is what Matt Adams pointed as a factor that potentially can differentiate the experience of the same artwork supported by distinct devices.

The media literacy is an important aspect in these type of interactive experiences, and *Blast Theory* seems to pay particular attention to it when defining the medium to support the project they are creating. Nick Tandavanitj explained to me<sup>222</sup> that the key aspect to some selections they have made is accessibility, as one of the motives of their artistic practice the audience. When talking about accessibility, what he meant was access but not the physical one. It has to do with a concern regarding the creation of accessible cultural experiences.

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<sup>221</sup> Idem.

<sup>222</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

I suppose the dangerous for us is making work that causes people block, and that is intimidating. I think *A Machine To See With* actually was quite difficult in that aspect because is a quite high decision to take part because you do not know what it is. People do not really understand what it is. Like, *Rider Spoke* was easy enough to explain as a sort of cycle tour city around the city, even if people hook they were going in a big group. There is modeless to what that might be. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>223</sup>

To Nick Tandavanitj, *Blast Theory* gives a step to achieve such accessible cultural experiences that do not block participants by using communication technologies people are familiar with. Nevertheless, he also revealed that it does not always work. He gave the example of *A Machine To See With*, designed to use cellphones for receiving calls. To him, even demanding participants to operate the most basic functionality of the device, the project is still quite difficult to those engaging because this familiarity with the system can also represent a problem. It happens when participants come with an idea formed about that technology, and presenting a behavior molded by the usual experiences they have with these specific devices. The critical point is that artists generally integrate these media in their interactive artworks in another context and serving to other purposes. Switch it on participant's mind can also be a challenge.

There are also some aspects that represent affordances and constraints on a system that do not depend on the knowledge participants might have about the device. *Rider Spoke* exemplifies well such case. To this artwork, *Blast Theory* adopted a *Nokia N800* handheld computer platform. At that time, they had its reasons to chose it. *Nokia* was a partner in the European project that granted the development of the piece. As Nick Tandavanitj admitted, with the artists and researchers experimenting with *Nokia's* equipment, the expectation was that hopefully at the end the company would get work back done. Nevertheless, he also pointed other affordances on choosing this device to support the interactive experience. On the list of good points in adopting the *N800*, he puts the fact that: it was easy to program for, it fitted certain specifications of things that interest other partners, it was an alternative to the *PlayStation Portable* which was the exactly opposite regarding platform.

Despite the affordances of the device, *Blast Theory* also had to deal with some constraints of the platform. As Nick Tandavanitj observed, it is quite eccentric

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<sup>223</sup> Idem.

nowadays because it almost disappeared. That can so be a challenge for people taking part on *Rider Spoke*. Another constraint that does not depend on any previous knowledge participants might have about the N800 device are the batteries.



Figure 33: Battery test with the N800 handheld devices. Image by *Blast Theory*.

Batteries also represent a real issue to the artists when presenting *Rider Spoke*. The artwork requires all a preparation in advance to deal with the restrictions imposed by the handheld computer. Before touring with the project, for instance, the group does an extensive battery test. I witnessed it, during the three months I spent in their studios. As a volunteer, one of the tasks I had was exactly prepare the equipment for the presentation of *Rider Spoke* in Cambridge. I tested more than 100 batteries, documenting how long they could support the application running on the N800.

Ju Row Farr<sup>224</sup> explained to me that, in this kind of projects they create, the logistics and the technological development become part of the creative process to some extent. The presentation of every show requires a significant amount of work in advance. Whether the artists are who provide the devices for the interactive experience in *Rider Spoke*, participants use their own cell phones for taking part in the work in *A Machine To See*

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<sup>224</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

*With*. In this case, *Blast Theory* alerts participants that they need to ensure they have enough battery life on their phones for about 40 minutes of calls.

Why use voice calls? It is because on the other hand, in *Rider Spoke*, in terms of managing all of those devices and managing batteries for them, this is: “you do on your phone, and it is your fault if the battery runs out”. There are very pragmatics concerns in terms of the design. So you have to find ways to make it happen. But I suppose we still intend to have some sense of place in each of them or to have a relationship with how do you use that. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>225</sup>.

While the devices is not an issue to the artists, in *A Machine To See With* the preparation work focus on planning routes, rewriting and recording the calls, data entry. Plus, the technical integration of ticketing procedures, the set-up of the call center server and the VOIP provider. The call tests with volunteers on-site are also part of the work done before every presentation of the piece. All this on-site set-up needs to take place in advance of any press or public screenings, with enough time after each test for making possible revisions in the system. According to Ju Row Farr, *Blast Theory* sometimes tries to separate these different demands every work generates. It happens, particularly with the technological ones. The reason is that it can have a great impact on the process.

*Blast Theory* has been facing a dialectics when defining the appropriate technical infrastructures to work with. Matt Adams affirmed that to me<sup>226</sup>, signaling the existence of a movement of backward and forewords regarding the manner they approach these platforms. There were times in which they took technological decisions driven by artistic reasons. In those cases, they tried to shape the media to their creative ambitions, sometimes pushing hard at the limits or adapting it for new uses. He pointed *I Like Frank*, remarking that, at that time, they were working with quite high level technology because GPS was still a specialist thing. Nevertheless, as he described, they were doing something very basic with a 3G handset. The idea was to put a map with many uses on that, where participants could interact in real time. He recognized that, what today can be a very simple demand, in 2004 was an extremely arduous task. According to him, the menus were a constant trouble, and the technology imposed some constraints to their creative ideas. He commented that when they started working with

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<sup>225</sup> Idem.

<sup>226</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

wifi technology, they had to install networks around the city when they tour, because there were no one available in that period. Matt Adams told me that they had to buy equipments for their projects and that increased much in the cost of each artwork.

On the other hand, Matt Adams mentioned a moment in their trajectory, between 2005 and 2007, when they decided to create artworks only based on voice recordings and SMS. That is what he meant by an artistic decision directed to move away from complex technology. What he refers as complexity has more to do with availability or broad implementation as opposed to cutting edge or technological novelty. As he observed, those were functionalities that everyone had on their mobile devices, so participants could even use their own handsets for taking part on a project. The artist declared that it was just a phase. As Matt Adams examined, their decisions regarding the use of these media are constantly changing. Recently, during the months I spent in *Blast Theory* studios, I saw the artists pushing technology again very hard to its limits with experiments on video streaming through 3G networks<sup>227</sup>. Matt Adams told me that they started investigating it a few years ago. To him, that represents the new complex goal they had posed to themselves, considering the troublesome technical challenges implied on it<sup>228</sup>.

We were using that to set up a dedicated platform. We were like: “Why can we do it with text messaging and then any phone on earth can be used? And our audience can use their own devices?”. We have been doing quite hard in video streaming projects in the last years, and that is again quite expensive. But what I want is all of those decisions to be made by artistic reasons. What is the most interesting space we can operate? Where is the possibility for us to do something really deep and special rather than based on our skill set? We try to balance in that way. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>229</sup>

Regarding the manner *Blast Theory* approach mobile platforms, as Matt Adams mentioned, many of their artworks are essentially based on voice. Apart from *I Like Frank*, all the other three projects contemplated on my analysis have the audio channel as a crucial component. The artists designed the experience of *A Machine To See With*

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<sup>227</sup> *Blast Theory* was developing the project *My Own Demand*, an interactive film in one single continuous shot streamed live online and to a cinema. See: <<http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/my-one-demand/>>

<sup>228</sup> One of the issues *Blast Theory* was trying to comprehend at that period was whether it is possible to stream high-definition video from an iPhone over 3G network.

<sup>229</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

to use orchestrated phone calls. In *Fixing Point* they presented the story in audio fragments that comes combined with a potent and precise musical ambience that gives the proper drama to it, what *Blast Theory* achieved by a collaboration with the musician *Clark*.



Figure 34: Simulation of the interaction on *Rider Spoke*. Image by *Blast Theory*.

With a voice over, in *Rider Spoke*, they gave the tone to the reflexive and intimate interactive experience. This study can not neglect, however, that in this artwork the interface also plays an important function, what is curious considering that participants interaction demands a significative attention for the act of cycling, at night, through the streets of the city. In *Rider Spoke*, the screen of the *Nokia N800* handheld equipment serves primarily as a positioning system. Using wi-fi technology, it shows participants their location and whether there are any places nearby where they can find hiding messages from others. The interface developed by the artists is a high point of the work, employing imagery drawn from a Mexican votive painting, sailor tattoos and heraldry.

By recognizing the relevance that the audio channel has in all these three projects, I asked Ju Row Farr the importance of exploit this functionality of mobile devices to

create experiences less demanding to participants<sup>230</sup>. She answered my question first declaring the challenge they face even when working with the most basic functionality of cell phones. She considered that maybe *Blast Theory* is not sophisticated with sound or skilled with sound as they could be. Even being mere “intellectually sophisticated”, as she defined them, Ju Row Farr pointed with her response what the audio channel can mean on every particular artwork they create. She affirmed that, in a way, for a project to work really well, everything should be almost invisible and help each other work. In *Rider Spoke*, for instance, she observed that the voice should help the cycling, the cycling should stimulate the thinking. The technology chosen for this piece, according to the artist, should not be geek. Instead, it should be quite charming and gentle, as she qualifies it. They use the voice over to try to get things that participants do not notice. To her, they almost do not notice it, but they want it to function and to take them there.



Figure 35: Interface of N800 device in *Rider Spoke*. Image by *Blast Theory*.

Another specificity of mobile media that reflects on the artwork *Blast Theory* creates has to do with the experience it evokes. In general, the interaction on these devices has an individual rather than a collective character. This thesis clearly perceives such constant in the four works analyzed here. Not only in these but in most of their projects

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<sup>230</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

participants can not experience as a group. To those who wants to take part in *A Machine To See With*, for instance, the given explanation<sup>231</sup> is that they can come alone or with other people. Nevertheless, each one must have their own ticket and bring their own cell phone. Moreover, *Blast Theory* alerts that they will be going out separately, even though they may run into other people who are also taking part in the artwork. The artists even require them to make an agreement, to dismiss and ignore any incoming calls or messages during their experience.

I asked the three artists whether it was an explicit intention in giving priority to the individual experiences rather than the collective ones. Matt Adams<sup>232</sup> answered my question in the interview by saying that it is not something he believes they particularly set out to do. He declared that, at a certain point, they did realize that this was always going on. Nevertheless, he admitted to me that they have not really resisted to that. Matt Adams categorically affirmed that he would love to make a work for crowds. He declared this desire but also emphasized to me that in many projects created by them, people may be participating alone, but they are in a collective. The artist mentioned *Rider Spoke*, commenting that in this artwork participants cycle alone, they record their stories alone, but when they are listening to other people's stories, they are aware that they are part of a large collective activity of making recordings and listening to it. Matt Adams believes that there is a collective sense in there, considering that there is a group of people who have done this and a group of people who have not done. In *A Machine To See With*, he exemplified such aspect mentioning that participants are doing it alone but suddenly in a certain moment of their experience they arrive at the car, and there is someone else in there. From that point, he observes, it starts to be about the two of them.

Despite mentioning all these aspects, Matt Adams revealed what could be the reasons explaining why *Blast Theory* ended up making these works focused on individual experiences. As we expected, one of them has to do with how these mobile media operates. He listed some situations to exemplify that. When you are on a phone call, he said, you are on your own talking with someone that are there on the line. When you are updating on *Facebook*, he continued, you are on you own. When you are sending and

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<sup>231</sup> There is a Frequently Asked Questions – FAQ on *A Machine To See* page, on *Blast Theory* website, that answers the following question: “Can I come in a group? Can my friend and I go together? Will we be separated?”. See: <[http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/faq/?bproject=330#bt\\_faq-3645](http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/faq/?bproject=330#bt_faq-3645)>

<sup>232</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

email or typing messages to everyone else, he complemented, you are on your own. When you are using your computer, too. All these very social interactions, he analyzed, are atomized social situations. The second reason pointed by the artists has to do with this first one, as it regards to this immersive character of the experience stimulated by these media.

The other side of it is that, if you are trying to get someone to interact in a really strong way, if you are with a group, even if it is just two of you there is a little sort of social world between you and me. And if you get something I am asking you; you will like: “Oh, let’s talk about it. What shall we do?”. This little social group is by far a dominant thing. It constantly knocks you out of the deep immersion experience and backing to “I am here doing this thing with my friend”. There is a level of self-awareness that is very active. Whereas if you are on your own, you have this ability to, like in a novel or sometimes in a cinema, where you go deeply into something, and it becomes very much about you and this world. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>233</sup>

Reflecting on the question, Matt Adams ended up affirming to me that he believes *Blast Theory* just found individual experiences exciting, such a rich share of possibilities that people can go out and find very different things when they are out there. The artist told me that, in *Rider Spoke*, you can hear participants crying while they are making a recording. There is the voice over that joins them in their experience, asking prescript questions about their intimacy. Some of these questions can get them nerve, like the one that asks about their father. When it happens, as Matt Adams observed, they are lonely in the city, at night, on a bike. They are on their own bubble, getting the words used by the artist to describe the moment. This kind of situations, he affirms, could not happen if someone else was there with them. Participants are in their intimate moment. To Matt Adams, that can felt very rich, even though it is clear to him that *Blast Theory* is losing other things. He affirmed to me that they are aware of it.

Nick Tandavanitj<sup>234</sup> answered this same question reiterating the idea that the individual character of their artworks is a strategy to immerse participants in the storytelling experience. According to him, it functions for maintaining a mood or a sense of narrative. He exemplified it with *A Machine To See With*, in which they try to set a frame around participants' experience in the city. The piece bases on triggered phone

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<sup>233</sup> Idem.

<sup>234</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

calls, using the audio to simulate a conversation between someone and the participants. It is not exactly a conversation, but Nick Tandavanitj explained that *Blast Theory* expanded this conversation to try to make that relationship work. Nevertheless, he observed, it is very easy for those taking part to meet someone they know on the streets. Whether it happens, as he concluded, that frame the artists attempted deliberately to set up can be broken just because participants can go to have a chat with the friend they met.

You kind of got their ear, so you can not have a sense of what that relationship might be. As the same as you are talking to two people who you can not see. They are at somewhere in the city. You do not know what they are doing. You become like the third voice in that conversation because you do not take priority. It becomes a much harder to imagine or to know what is going on. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>235</sup>

Regarding *Rider Spoke*, Nick Tandavanitj reaffirmed Matt Adams answer that they send participants to have their experience individually because the piece is an act of reflection and naturally going where you want to go. It is designed to be a cult of the intimacy, according to him. The artist admitted that participants could bump into other people along their way, and it does not break the frame. They maybe can share experiences. One can tell the other an interesting recording listened in a particular location. Although it is designed to be an individual experience, that kind of interactions would not break it. Nick Tandavanitj remembered that there is something *Blast Theory* has talked in their early days about a lot of projects, about a sense that comes with a certain tune. The explanation is so that *Blast Theory* would love to make a work where it was collective and celebratory by using this technology, but they have just not found a mood for making it yet.

Ju Row Farr, on the other hand, answered this specific question I did to her in the interview<sup>236</sup> first arguing that she did not know if individual experiences is a priority on the projects created by *Blast Theory*. She then admitted that it evolved that way, analyzing that the group went from promenade performances with lots of people around all the time to focusing on individual experiences. Ju Row Farr commented that people get surprised when they come to take part in *Blast Theory* artworks, and they realize that

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<sup>235</sup> Idem.

<sup>236</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

they can not go out to do it with a friend. The artist revealed that not making projects with different kind and numbers of people or combinations of people it turned into a challenge to them. As he admitted, it is also a concern sometimes. She indicated that *Blast Theory* was looking at it much more with the recent projects they are doing, based on broadcasting to a bigger group of people<sup>237</sup>. Apart from the attempts to change the character of the experience their artworks evoke, she also justified the reasons for the kind of projects they do.

Maybe we work collaborative view in the group all the time, and we actually are looking individually for a bit of individual time. It is possible to do with things like that if I am honest. It is also to do obviously with technology and how you can use the technology. Phones are still for one person at the time. Even if you might do something social with that phone, which you can. We can make a piece differently. It is really about getting you on your head. When you put headphones on, and you listen to music in the city, it is just like walk alone, isn't it? It is a thing that is an interesting tension with technology being social or being intimate; you're moving from some privacy and offering more privacy. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>238</sup>

As Matt Adams, Ju Row Farr tried to show me the individual and the collective dimensions present in some of their projects, using *Fixing Point* to illustrate that. The experience it brings is to her almost like being in a train station with the headphones on. Although this individuality, she pointed that participants can see each other. They see other people with their headphones on and, to her, they get to know that they are doing the same thing. Ju Row Farr believes that it can indicate a social aspect that exists in the experience. It makes participants feel involved, she affirmed. Another social dimension she mentioned is the fact that *Blast Theory* attempts to create in every presentation a final moment in which participants can celebrate their effort and share their interactive experiences.

We try to do things where at the end when they come back there is a space where people can talk about it. It is a space where people can almost like recall the experience and share the experience and congratulate each other in a way. If you play the board game or any game, afterward you want to talk about it, what happened, who won, how did it go, so I think that is part of the work as well. After the work, a history ended. That is like a debrief. It is locking it in, and checking yourself out, checking how you

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<sup>237</sup> See *My Own Demand*: <<http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/my-one-demand/>>

<sup>238</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

are, and how you have done it is right, or ok, or better than somebody else. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>239</sup>

From this reward moment, according to Ju Row Farr, can even emerge the understanding of the experienced lived before. Pieces such as *I Like Frank* and *Rider Spoke* have this final celebratory moment. To the artist, that is also partially a type of game strategy, as it let people talk about things they have done in their playing section. At this final point, as she commented, emerges a natural desire of telling. Ju Row Farr mentioned that most of the participants want to say to somebody what they did and how they did that.

## b) Multidisciplinarity and Collaboration to Attend the Technical Demand

One of the elementary demands that characterize the storytelling practices based on locative media is certainly the necessity of having a technological expertise to deal with geolocation systems. Only acquiring the required knowledge or gathering a multidisciplinary team is that artists can explore the creative possibilities opened up by location-based applications. Such demand becomes a primary condition in the experimentation and proposition of innovative experiences supported by this media. To Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez (2010), it represents one more layer of complexity that locative narratives add to creators and that was not even part of the creative process of other forms of electronic literature. On their evaluation, “the variety of hardware and software interfaces to access GPS receivers expands the possibilities of creation, but at the same time taxes creators in crafting this new breed of electronic literature applications” (Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez, 2010, p.337). To them, it happens because there was not, at least until that 2010, open architectural designs able to assist artists in their creative initiatives. The lack of a build framework ended up requiring those working with locative narratives to become skilled in the design and implementation of location-aware software<sup>240</sup>.

The novelty that characterizes the technology involved in *Blast Theory* practice inevitably generates a technical demand. As we already mentioned, the British group

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<sup>239</sup> Idem.

<sup>240</sup> Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez (2010) base on the experience they had with the development of the “Global Poetic System” Version 2 to achieve a high level of abstraction and propose a framework for the design, implementation, and deployment of location-aware software able to create electronic literature as information systems.

has an interdisciplinary formation, bringing together artists from different backgrounds. Matt Adams, presenting himself to me, started by saying that he felt in love with theater when he was thirteen and went to see a play that changed everything on how he thought about the world. After that, he decided to be an actor. At University, Matt Adams started to direct plays and got interested in creative authorship theater. He became critical of theater as a traditional art form. Some time later, as he remembered, he met Ju Row Farr. She trained to be a dancer. When she was twenty, she went to do a degree in Visual Arts and Textiles. She was also into doing some performance work. When they met, they started to talk about creating a work that was hybrid. Matt Adams said that their idea was doing something with elements of live performance, but trying to engage audiences in different ways. In 1994, Nick Tandavanitj met *Blast Theory*. He came from a trajectory with a focus on creative approaches to computing, with particular skills in 3D modeling, technical design, and programming for interactive installations and web-based artwork. He studied Art in Social Context at *Dartington College of Arts*.

The multidisciplinary we see in *Blast Theory* is also a distinctive feature of artistic processes that deals with technology. Considering the technical demands generated by artworks that employs locative and mobile media, I wanted to identify the programming expertise of *Blast Theory* to understand how the group attends and overcomes the requirements related to technology present on their artistic practice. From my research field in their studios, observing and following their routine, I recognized that the team has a slightly different array of skills, but none of them does much development work. When I asked about it during the personal interviews, Nick Tandavanitj<sup>241</sup> explained to me that Matt Adams and Ju Row Farr usually do not take part in software development. Rather than collaborate with technical skills, they dedicate to the interactive experience, for instance, testing interfaces and varied types of content. They also operate semiotically and conceptually inquiring the work they are doing, as well as tracking and defining the routes in the navigational projects. Some of the technical skills needed come from Nick Tandavanitj. He mentioned that, in *I Like Frank*, for instance, he built the interface for the online players. The artist is also trying to invest a bit of his time in learning some programming language. When I arrived for my site-visit in *Blast Theory* studios, Nick Tandavanitj was preparing for taking some months in a sabbatic period. Part of his plan was to dedicate this time for actualizing his skills as a programmer.

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<sup>241</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

Nick Tandavanitj explained to me<sup>242</sup> for an extended period, *Blast Theory* overcome the technical demand on their practice by working with a group of friends that had taken part in a multimedia course run by the *Royal College of Art*. That was in the early 1990s, and, after that, *Blast Theory* started to work with the Mixed Reality Lab. according to Nick Tandavanitj, over the course of the years, the researchers from the Lab were the ones who did all the mobile and server developments required by the artworks they created in partnership. Whether the collective and interdisciplinary creation seems to be a solution to the development and implementation of technology-based artworks, Nick Tandavanitj revealed to us that it is not always perfect. As he declared, such collaborations with other professionals can be beneficial as well as it can affect the design of the work the artists have in mind.

When it works, it is really nice, but it can be a bit tricky sometimes because those relationships do not always work naturally. Sometimes they are awkward and there are lots of missteps in terms of your aesthetics, or missteps in terms of how you understand, missteps in terms of communicating and in all kind of protocols that you have on how you work. The hardest conversation I always find are the aesthetic conversations. So those collaborations are really tricky, I think. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>243</sup>

Nowadays, *Blast Theory* has tried to find different modes to work more independently, what has directed them to hire freelancers from a couple of development agencies in Brighton that comes to provide very particular skills. This technical knowledge also comes often through collaboration between themselves and with some professionals associated with the group. To Matt Adams, the mechanism they adopted is not a problem but an essential strategy for artists whose work bases on media systems<sup>244</sup>.

The way I see it is a movie director would need to have a good understanding of what he can or can not do, but he does not have to be an expert on how a camera operates. It is the same with us, what we need is to have a good understanding, a clear understanding of the affordances of a given technology or platform, but we do not necessarily need to know every detail (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Idem.

<sup>243</sup> Idem.

<sup>244</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

<sup>245</sup> Idem.

Matt Adams he highlighted the multidisciplinary character present in modern art as a counterpoint to the specializations. He adverted that when an artist wants to go deeply in the experimentation with a determined medium, they ended up working in a very particular domain all the time. As he analyzed, an artist can not go deeply every time and then move to another thing. Whether Blast Theory followed this approach, they would probably not have experimented with so many and different media. According to Matt Adams, there is some technology the group has been in favor. That would be, for instance, the case of mobile and locative media. Nevertheless, as he emphasized, most of the time those decisions regarding the system they chose to support their artworks had an artistic reason.

### c) Designing the first 3G Mixed Reality Game with *I Like Frank*

I have generically inquired Matt Adams, Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj, whether issues in the research field of Human Computer Interaction move their artistic practice. Considering the projects analyzed in this study, *I Like Frank* is probably the one that best exemplifies and answers my question. It is not by chance that we can recognize many references to it in the responses given by artists. In “*I Like Frank: A Mixed Reality Game for 3G Phone*”, one of the papers written by the artists and the scientist that developed this artwork, the project appears defined as a location-based games, or a form of entertainment played out on the city streets, which can raise new challenges for research. Among these challenges, they include:

“dealing with the inherent uncertainties of wireless communications and positioning systems such as GPS; developing hybrid architectures that support data sharing between mobile devices and more traditional consoles and PCs over both fixed and wireless networks; and establishing new of kinds of content configuration and orchestration services” (Flintham et al., 2001).

Nick Tandavanitj mentioned<sup>246</sup> that their purpose of investigating possible relationships between people who are online and those who are on the streets was a goal that directed the interaction model they designed for this artwork. There was also the narrative intention of questioning whether people would trust in a stranger aligned to it. This inquiry served as a metaphor to contextualize the game.

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<sup>246</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

*I Like Frank* resulted from the partnership between *Blast Theory* and the *Mixed Reality Lab*. Its development integrated a European Project with a research agenda defined by the Laboratory. The inquiry regarding the interface and the boundaries between an electronic and a physical space was a pivotal concept and one of their research concerns when creating *I Like Frank*, as Nick Tandavanitj declared to me. He said they investigated the properties of each space using paradigms from theatrical theory to distinguish and try to explain the boundaries that separate them. By seen them as thematic circles, the discussion was about how entering and leaving them, giving yourself permission to separate yourself from the physical spaces that you are. Presenting me a more concrete example, Nick Tandavanitj mentioned the manner we can start engaging with our phone and hang up that engagement.

That is kind of why this sense of the city as diegetic space comes from. It is actually a space where we are negotiating with each other about how we are using space. In terms of the research agenda, they had their addresses, which I think was of interest to us because they actually inspired a lot of works we have made. Their interest was really in the sort of backroom in theater, like the mechanics of staging it and like how do we work as a group. How do we actually make these things happen? Then there are the whole classic papers in our projects about orchestration. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>247</sup>

Both aspects regarding the content and the interaction created for *I Like Frank* originally came from *Can You See Me Now?*<sup>248</sup>, a project the British group did before. Important to mention here that also this artwork resulted from the partnership between *Blast Theory* and the *Mixed Reality Lab*. In the talk I had with Nick Tandavanitj<sup>249</sup>, he highlighted that in the period they created these pieces, there was this understanding about the Internet as a delivery format for preexisting forms of entertainment and culture. There was, as he exemplified, the Net.art bringing practices that experimented with the World Wide Web as a new medium for artistic creation. He affirmed that *Blast Theory* had an interest in investigating how the Internet could take shape as a delivery mechanism for pop culture and performance. That is why, according to him, they made *Can You See Me Now?*. Nick Tandavanitj remembered that other artists were already streaming their performances at that time. Nevertheless, as he pointed, *Blast Theory* had some constraints about this strategy. To them, it ended up killing the version of the

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<sup>247</sup> Idem.

<sup>248</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/can-you-see-me-now/>

<sup>249</sup> Idem.

performance people have live-experienced. Streaming the performance, observed Nick Tandavanitj, artists were, in fact, draining the act because it required participants only to visit a web page to see it with no sense of lightness and excitement.

Having these objections in mind, *Blast Theory* designed *Can You See Me Now?* to be something that felt like a performance and that could feel exciting alive. Nick Tandavanitj revealed that to me, adding the fact that they knew that some participants would be primarily sitting in front of a website. What they wanted to know, following the research goals they had at that moment, was whether the experience they envisioned was possible under these conditions. Other aims they had were to create experiences with the concept and the excitement of being driven, and with a more elaborate story to tell. Apart from these aspects listed by Nick Tandavanitj, he also included as an objective their desire of being able to inflect players with different emotions, rather than just adrenaline or exoneration, or the sense of competitiveness brought by the interaction model defined for the artwork. According to him, this was the arc of projects such as *Can You See Me Now?*, *Uncle Roy All Around You*, and *I Like Frank*.

*Blast Theory* conceived all these artworks just one decade before the irruption of Internet-enabled smartphones. In *I Like Frank*, the artists and researchers of *Mixed Reality Lab* were testing the 3G mobile network, but Nick Tandavanitj confirmed that it was before we could have the 3G deployed everywhere. The team was responsible for making one of the earlier few testing networks in the world, he remarked. Nick Tandavanitj also remembered that there was only one random phone that actually worked on it, and that was not totally made for this sort of events. He confessed that there was a bit of worry during the development. It was quite nerveing, as he told me, because they had one handset for about the first two or tree months of their residence in Adelaide<sup>250</sup>.

Another important point to mention is that, although *I Like Frank* use 3G phones, they did not track participants' position on the streets using GPS data. In fact, I got surprised when Nick Tandavanitj told me that, considering the four projects I framed in my study, only *Fixing Point* uses the GPS technology. *Blast Theory* uses self-report positioning in *I Like Frank*. Nick Tandavanitj revealed to me the trick. Essentially, when participants

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<sup>250</sup> *Blast Theory* created *I Like Frank* during the programm "Thinkers in Residence", in Adelaide, Australia.

look at the map, they turn looking at it with the middle of the view based on where they are. Doing this, they center their application. The artists so have a mechanism to ensure the location of participants in the streets. They ask them to place a pin on the map, and with this, they are affirming: “Yes, I am now at this location”. *Blast Theory* calls this strategy "red spot".

#### d) The Value of the Experience in the Creative Process

As we recognized in the previous Chapter, *Blast Theory* avoids repeatable design processes, what turns in vain any effort to codify or to understand it as a static reference. From the answers given by the artists in the personal interviews, what I could perceive is that their procedures can be diverse according to the proposal of each project. Ju Row Farr<sup>251</sup>, for instance, explained to me that definitions concerning technological aspects and other dimensions related to each artwork happen in conjunction rather than isolated. She gave me some examples to explain how it can happen.

In *A Machine To See With*, as she remembered, in a certain point of their creative process *Blast Theory* already had a good idea of which platform they will adopt. The Commission<sup>252</sup> they inscribed the project briefed and dictated some important aspects of the artwork. After some initial discussions, as Ju Row Farr revealed to me, they knew how they would approach it. Straight away, the artists saw that *A Machine To See With* would be as a cinema but on the streets. They would not film everything, but fake it. Having that in mind, she said that they scripted the narrative thinking that participants will experience it on a phone. Plus, as she commented, if they would be holding a phone, it had to be very simple, and it had to be accessible to lots of people. She observed that they could orchestrate it with somebody out there watching every single participant, but *Blast Theory* could not afford it. To them, it was not economic and nor necessary. That was when the artists decided to use an automated system. With *A Machine To See With*, as Ju Row Far stated, they wrote the script knowing what the medium was likely to be. They did not create it to after choosing the media to support, or even wrote it to latter go to the place where they will geolocate the interactive

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<sup>251</sup> Idem.

<sup>252</sup> It was a *Locative Cinema Commission*, an initiative of *Banff New Media Institute*, *ZERO1 01SJ Biennial* and *Sundance Film Festival*. See: <[http://www.zero1.org/sites/default/files/docs/LCC%20Announcement-FINAL\\_0.pdf](http://www.zero1.org/sites/default/files/docs/LCC%20Announcement-FINAL_0.pdf)>

experience. Ju Row Farr granted to me that *Blast Theory* defined all these dimensions in conjunction, but one clearly affected the other.

As said before, these are not the central premises for every artwork *Blast Theory* does. I could recognize the existence of a mixture of distinct procedures in all the four projects I selected to investigate in this study. *Fixing Point*, for instance, was also partially briefed by a Commission<sup>253</sup> devoted to stimulating creative processes based on the collaboration between digital artists and electronic musicians. In addition to this requirements set a priori, Ju Row Farr mentioned to me that a site visit was what properly dictated the core dimension of the artwork. On location, according to her, that they would respond to the essence of it quite precisely. The artists went to the place and research some historical data. Once in there, as she described, it felt contemplative to them because it was a very desolate and beautiful space. To the group, she told me, that location could serve for an artwork about memory or loss.



Figure 36: Ju Row Farr visiting a place to locate *Fixing Point*. Image by *Blast Theory*.

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<sup>253</sup> A *Faster Than Sound* commission for *Aldeburgh Music*, in Suffolk. See: <http://www.fasterthansound.com/>

As Ju Row Farr declared, in *Fixing Point* they started thinking about disappeared people moved by their natural curiosity about political or social difficult situations. She mentioned that on the research they did, they came across a website of Northern Ireland personalities who disappeared and none one had never found them again. *Fixing Point* story went from there.

It was a combination of evolving the technology, thinking about how we would collaborate with a musician, me trying desperately to get an interview with a sister of a man disappeared. Getting more and more panic, because that was not happening. So that was going to fill the basis of the writing. We were getting near and near to go to the place making the work, showing the work, and we did not get the writing. It all came very strangely. Not ideal at all. Almost like the process became part of the work. Phoning and emailing, and saying 'I fly out tomorrow'. All of that became part. That was the moment which we ideally do the writing. We were negotiating. But the process feels like part of the work, like searching somebody. Yes, it was a search. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>254</sup>

Rather than represent a problem, the subjective, emotional and subconscious drives and desires become a beneficial aspect that *Blast Theory* tend to inscribe in their works. Beyond the *top-down* versus *bottom-up* strategies, what we found through the analysis of *Blast Theory* creative process are some stages. Not necessarily on this order, they go from designing the piece, by imagining how it would be; scripting it, or thinking about it by writing down their ideas; interviewing and exploring archives; finding places that "speak" for themselves to locate it.

The artists explore the possibilities of a designing that is "process-driven", as they refer to the gradually grow of an idea<sup>255</sup>. When starting to develop a new work, they do it with no clear outcome or any precise detail in advance. They do produce a description with 1000 words. Nevertheless, the writing will serve mainly to secure funding and communicate the idea to partners. They center the process not on these definitions but on discussions. During the time I spent on *Blast Theory* studios, there was one day, every week, reserved for creative meetings between the three members. The period I was there, they dedicated it mainly to work on some new projects they were developing<sup>256</sup>. By the end of every section, some notes appeared on the board. On *Blast*

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<sup>254</sup> Idem.

<sup>255</sup> Information collected from the *Blast Theory* archives. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

*Theory* digital archives, I found many pictures from withe boards registering the design process of some artworks created by them.



Figure 37: The artists in front of a whiteboard with some notes. Image by *Blast Theory*

Nick Tandavanitj<sup>257</sup> granted to me that their design process gets more interferences coming from the place they chose to present their works, than from the media they select to work with. When building the narrative, as he signaled, the central aspect they keep in mind is that it will take place not in a traditional venue. Evidencing the distinctions, he compared the process of creating a work to run on the urban space or to run in a theater. If the artist has in mind creating a work for a theater, he can count with a defined and particular time frame and a physical space to build and present it. Some of the steps in this process, as Nick Tandavanitj observed, would be hiring a space, preparing it with the necessary equipment, testing everything within the location, rehearsing it for two weeks or three weeks, and having a share at the end of it. This process of working in closed spaces, to him, differs substantially from working in the city streets. Opposed to the previous example, the artists do not have the same type of physical space to construct the work in. That has many consequences. The first one

<sup>256</sup> *Karen and My Own Demand* were the projects *Blast Theory* was working on during the time I volunteer in their studios.

<sup>257</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

listed by Nick Tandavanitj is that to test something, the artists have to walk outdoors. Moreover, there are a lot of hypothesizing, as they have to imagine situations that do not exist yet because they do not get to see them.

In the process, you have to imagine those things and you ended up imagining software interfaces, or you imagine software systems. Do that becomes a process of making those imaginatively systems. What those systems might be? How those things might work? Then having someone to build enough of it that you can walk out the door and have few people walking around, making a come back and get all what is interesting about that. So that becomes a bit more of less fluid in a way, because becomes a bit more planning, there is a bit more of imagination procedure about how you have to think. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>258</sup>

In the personal interviews with Matt Adams, Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj, all of them accentuated to me the iterative character of their design process. The strategy, common to games, appears to the artists as an imperative when working with technology and increasing the level of participants interaction. Matt Adams, for instance, stressed how all their artworks are very iterative regarding the mode they develop it. He emphasized it to explain to me that, only by experimenting with demo versions they can know what they have, and the path they are thrilling. It is fundamental to *Blast Theory* when implementing an artwork, to built a very simple prototype, test it and refine it, he said.

The iterative design, as defined by Zimmerman (2003), is a process-based methodology, or a work in progress built through a cyclic procedure. He sees it comprising the following stages: prototyping, testing, analyzing, and refining. During the implementation of a project, some interactions done with the system serve to inform the successive versions of it. After every test, new questions usually emerge out of the interactive experience it generates. Designers get some revisions to make from the content reported by these feedbacks, re-fashioning a new prototype that will go through a test once more.

You play it. The rest of the development team plays it. Other people in the office play it. People visiting your office play it. You organize groups of testers that match your target audience. You have as many people as possible play the game. In each case, you

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<sup>258</sup> Idem.

observe them, ask them questions, then adjust your design and playtest again.  
(Zimmerman, 2003, p. 177)

Nick Tandavanitj also emphasized<sup>259</sup> the importance of following such design mechanism by mentioning how software development has particularities around it that do not allow improvisation. He affirmed to me that *Blast Theory* attempts to create more complex systems by working to get a right balance trying things out. When the group gets enough knowledge that enables them to build something that is testable and usable, they go on to the next level of the development process, dedicated to trying and see what it is like. Nick Tandavanitj detailed this process to me, observing that, even with the artists knowing the location and what time of the day they will present the piece, there is the necessity to go there physically and do lots of tests on site to get the sense of what it actually is. Once having this experience on location, according to him, is that they work out how they construct that moment and then just try it there on the city streets. The steps of the process mentioned by Nick Tandavanitj will repeat until the artists find the right balance. He admitted that all this designing process is slow and very time-consuming, but the group always try to push it quickly enough. He estimated that this cyclic development of a project could last 18 months. The artist granted to me that all these iterations are not so much centered on the technology, but on what will be the end experience for people interacting with the artwork.

An ongoing dialogue occurs between the designers, the design, and the testing audience, as Zimmerman (2003) identifies when analyzing the development of projects through these cyclic procedures of investigation and experimentation. Matt Adams examined<sup>260</sup> the impossibility of conceiving the type of projects *Blast Theory* creates separate from people's interaction, as they can not fully predict the interactive experience they design. He remarked how they gain an understanding of the dynamics of the interaction they are implementing by running the user tests. As ethnographers, the artists use formal, or casual and informal, detailed modes of feedback to evaluate their work. According to him, it helps them to update the design of the actual piece as well as to inform future ones. By recognizing the nature of the creative process followed by *Blast Theory*, we could also affirm that the artists co-design their pieces. This thesis supposes that, considering the contribution they get from these interactions and the knowledge

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<sup>259</sup> Idem.

<sup>260</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

transferred in the dialogue established between them and those experimenting the artwork under development.

Such participatory approaches, as Sanders & Stappers (2008) reveal, translate the recent changing in the design practice, as it has been leaving a user-centered research to create an openness for a collective creativity. Abeele et al. (2012), for instance, have developed a play-centered, iterative, interdisciplinary and integrated framework for the design and development of serious games, whose one of the pillars is specifically the user involvement. The difference is that this involvement does not concentrate in the later stages of the process. Such contribution does not restrict the user-tests to solve usability issues, what frequently happened when following user-centered design approaches. Instead of that, artists and game designers offer players the opportunity to take part and give a creative input in the development process. Practices like these seem to gain space essentially when the creative context present some particular factors, such as the uncertainty of the design work because of the novelty of the component under development.

### 3.3 Mapping the Space for Navigable Narratives

A wide range of artistic practices with portable, networked, location-aware computing devices emerged involving the navigation through environments augmented with historical or even fictional data. Tuters & Varnelis (2006) classify them into two categories. In both types of mapping enabled by mobile and locative media, the navigation happen on a physical space. Annotative are the ones that virtually tag the world by adding layers of data in mapped locations, seeking to demystify some places. Phenomenological are those that trace the action of the subject in the world using high technology to stimulate everyday practices such as walking or occupying public areas<sup>261</sup>.

Manovich (2001) observes that the spatialization of narratives gained force when creators saw themselves not obliged to conform to a linear medium. He believes that the experience of navigating through a space with elements distributed on it is an intrinsic characteristic of computer culture, being a general resource consistently employed by

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<sup>261</sup> Cornelio & Ardevol (2011) go beyond this functional categorization of locative media projects to identify the existence of a broader set of projects that have been using locative media as “place-making” technologies.

new media objects. To him, however, spatialized narratives first happened in the museum exhibitions context and expanded to the artistic manifestations in the whole city. Recalling the work of Peter Greenaway, he corroborates his premise by showing how, in the 1990s, the artist created some installations moved by a desire to take “cinema out of cinema”, combining narrative and database model.

So the only way to create a pure database is to spatialize it, distributing the elements in space. This exactly the path that Greenaway took. Situated in a three-dimensional space that does not have an inherent narrative logic, the 1992 installation '100 Objects to Represent the World' by its very title proposes that the world should be understood through a catalog rather than a narrative. At the same time, Greenaway does not abandon narrative; he continues to investigate how database and narrative can work together. (Manovich, 2001, p. 238)

It was also in the first decade of the 1990s, as Manovich (2001) identifies, that the digital media gave support to the creation of computer games such as *Myst* and *Doom*, inaugurating a genuine aesthetics based on the idea of a virtual spatial journey. What the games did, he observes, was present and put players in a diegetic space that they have to transverse, exploring the world, discovering its geometry and topology, learning its logic and secrets. According to his analysis, the narrative became the same as time, what is in correspondence to players' movement through the 3D world, and in agreement with their progression in the game levels. *Myst* and *Doom* released an “aesthetics of navigation”, as he defines it, whose fundamental principle is the creation of a space that players can map by moving through it.

In contrast to modern literature, theater, and cinema, which are built around psychological tension between characters and movement in psychological space, these computer games return us to ancient forms of narrative in which the plot is driven by the spatial movement of the main hero, traveling through distant lands to save the princess, to find the treasure, to defeat the dragon, and so on. (Manovich, 2001, pp. 245–246)

*Odyssey*, one of the great epics of ancient Greece, is probably an influential reference to games idea of having players creating a story based on the struggles and triumphs they will have to pass through to overcome countless obstacles during their long journey. Navigation through space gained an important and central role in games, representing to this cultural form an important mechanism for narration. Manovich (2001) also lists

some other aspects related to this “aesthetic of navigation”. Experiences structured around a first-person perspective is one of them. The narrative thought in terms of actions and exploration of space is another one. As he observes, we do not have a narrated story. Instead, we must play and performed it. The telling relies on participants engagement and activities as their performance is what moves the narrative forwards. As they walk through space, he examines, the storytelling progresses in correspondence to it. Whether they stop acting, he concludes, the narrative stops too.

Manovich (2001) recognizes the same “aesthetic of navigation” in different types of games. In action-oriented computer games, for instance, players explore the 3D game world performing two essential activities closely linked together, that is look and act. In adventure games, players explore the universe at the same time as work perform for gathering resources. In the strategy games, they engage in allocating and moving resources. In Role-playing games or RPGs, players activity concentrate in build a character and acquire skills in a narrative of self-improvement. The same feature he sees present in all of these examples is the movement through space as a valuable narration strategy.

The first signs of what Manovich (2001) calls an “aesthetic of navigation” occur even before the emergence of these games and other computer-based systems. He sees such evidence still in the 1980s, with some 3D animations built on the continuous movement of a single camera around a complex and extensive set. Although these cultural forms present a navigable space, he also indicates some differences. “In contrast to both ancient myths and computer games, this journey had no goal, no purpose. In short, there was no narrative. Here was the ultimate 'road movie', where navigation through space was sufficient in itself” (Manovich, 2001, p. 249). To him, these experiences signaled the beginning of a new genre of post-computer cinema, inaugurated by the motion simulator. In the simulation, the platform where the audience encounters move synchronously to the movement of a virtual camera that, in the first-person point of view, does 3D fly-throughs. Uncovering historical precedents of cinematic experiences such as the motion simulator, he finds even older manifestations of navigable spaces aesthetic.

They include Hale's Tours and Scenes of the World, a popular film-based attraction that debuted at the St. Louis Fair in 1904; roller-coaster rides; flight, vehicle, and military

simulators, which have used a moving base since the early 1930s; and the fly-through sequences in *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick, 1968) and *Star Wars* (Lucas, 1977). (Manovich, 2001, pp. 245–246)

The cinematic experience recurrently appears correlated to the navigational projects based on locative and mobile media. “Mobile Cinema”, for instance, is the term that figures on the writings of Crow et al. (2003), who specifies it as a narrative that stresses aspects of mobility and in particular the nonlinearity and the connection with space. The new modality of cinema, as they define, takes participants on a journey through the physical environment, in which they can find the fragments of a story possibly in the form of media clips displayed on the handheld device at different locations. The nonlinearity of the narrative allows each participant, on their navigational interaction, select, order, and time these clips in a unique manner that affects the outcome experience.

The example above is just one among a lack of other possible experimentations that artists have been doing with locative and mobile media. The creative use of these communication technologies has shown how diverse can be the telling of stories with the adoption of participants movement as a key element of the experience. What the proposed definition of “Mobile Cinema” exposes are the core aspects recurrent in most of the various attempts to name the contemporary narrative practice supported by locative and mobile media. The unifying feature we get are storytellings that invite participants to take part in an embodied experience based on the navigation through the physical world converted into a diegetic space.

Apart from the references we can get from cinema and computer games, we also identify other cultural formations that share similar premises of this aesthetic of navigation. One of them is the pilgrimage and its contribution to the idea of spatializing content based on the movement people will have to do through a specific area. Another one is the Situationism and their stimulus to a direct engagement between participants and space with an emphasis on an experiential component. This thesis discusses both references in detail in the following pages.

### 3.3.1 Phenomenological and Annotative Narratives of *Blast Theory*

#### a) Revitalizing the cinema experience with a Locative Film

Taking *Blast Theory* artworks analyzed in this study, *A Machine To See With* is an example that let us perceive how the artists use locative media associated with the navigation through a physical space, in an attempt to revitalize the classic cinema experience. This thesis already mentioned here that it is a project that the British group created having in mind the inaugural *Locative Cinema Commission*<sup>262</sup>, which happened in 2009. There was an international call for submissions put out by three partnering organizations – *The Art & Technology Network*, *Sundance Film Festival's* New Frontiers Initiative and *Banff New Media Institute*.

The sponsors aimed to bring attention to narratives of place and space, seeking new forms of experience. As stated in the submission call, the objective was to re-think cinema within the context of emerging forms of location-based media. They informed that the jury would evaluate the ability that the proposals made by the artists had to engage people using place as a key element of the experience. A requirement to the artists was that the projects necessarily had to be via platforms that ranged from cell phones to the black box of the cinema, from mixed reality to street theater, from GPS to handhelds, from distributed to ambient. *Blast Theory* won the Commission and presented *A Machine To See With* at the *Sundance Film Festival*, in January 2011. Shari Frilot, Senior Programmer of the Festival, said about the commission:

In this moment, when the entire film industry is undergoing a sea change, it is incredibly important to support artists and filmmakers who are moved to invent new ways of cinematic storytelling that adapt to the new landscape. The work of *Blast Theory* exemplifies an artistic vision that is located at the crossroads of art, film, and new media technology, and suggests a fresh new direction as our cinematic culture evolves<sup>263</sup>.

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<sup>262</sup><http://www.zero1.org/about/press/locative-cinema-comes-life-commission-sundance-film-festival-banff-centre-and-silicon>

<sup>263</sup> Locative Cinema Comes to Life with Commission from Silicon Valley's ZER01, Sundance Film Festival, and The Banff Centre. Retrieved from <<http://www.reuters.com/article/idUS198886+28-Oct-2009+BW20091028>> on August 28, 2011.



Figure 38: *A Machine To See With* image publicized by by *Blast Theory*.

The Commission was responsible for promoting the idea and the design *Blast Theory* gave to *A Machine To See With*. In the creative process, as Nick Tandavanitj<sup>264</sup> remembered, the group talked a lot about what they thought were the expectations regarding what the Commission designated as Locative Cinema. On their mind, the guess was that the jury would like something like people playing video on smartphones. Nick Tandavanitj highlighted that *Blast Theory* wanted to push it forward. That was

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<sup>264</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

when they started talking about what would a site-specific cinema and a site-specific film be. The first, and quite quickly, reference was a quote from Godard's film which says: "A machine to see: my eyes, to speak: my mouth, to hear: my ears"<sup>265</sup>. In addition to it, there was also the discussion about the experience of being in the city. That evolved into the idea that, when with a headphone, everything comes more choreographed, more poetic and more filming. That, as Nick Tandavanitj told me, felt immediately like a simple resonant experience or a moment of joy that everyone has one day gone through. According to the artist, there was another aspect they stressed on the artwork that came from one of their previous projects, called *Something American*<sup>266</sup>. The reference is to how people use their familiarity with cinema as a way of navigating their personal lives and thinking about themselves and their own situations.

Participants movement trigger the phone calls they received, whose content guides them in their navigation through the city in accordance to the place where each one is. When *Blast Theory* presented it in Brighton, those in the "Toy Museum", for instance, got the following instructions: "To start, you need to wait in the tunnel outside the Brighton Toy and Model Museum below the entrance to Brighton train station"<sup>267</sup>. Others placed in the "Thistle Hotel" listened to a different instruction: "To start, you need to be at the Thistle Hotel on the seafront near Brighton Pier"<sup>268</sup>.

## b) Tagging content in a Spatialized Narrative in the Urban Space

*Rider Spoke*, on the other hand, spatializes the narrative content and expects those taking part in the interactive experience to navigate through it in different terms. Instead of having the fragments of the story triggered by participants movement, who takes part on the artwork co-create the story by exploring the urban space and tagging content to determined spots. Participants have to find what would be an appropriate place to answer and associate the content they will record to each question received. They are invited to create these connections between location and content, even though where they choose to attach their memories might not necessarily be the setting where happened the events they described. In the interactive exploratory experience of *Rider Spoke*,

<sup>265</sup> *Pierrot le Fou* (Jean-Luc Godard, France, 1965, 110").

<sup>266</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/something-american/>

<sup>267</sup> Information collected from the archives about *A Machine To See With*, in Brighton. File reproduced in Appendix 6. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>268</sup> Idem

participants should record an audio fragment that by some sense closely relates to the spot where they geolocate it. These connections are a demand presented by the same voice over that brings the questions participants have to answer. “I want you to look for a flat or house, and find a window that you would want to go through”<sup>269</sup>, says the voice over in *Rider Spoke*. After introducing the specific place they must find by exploring the area, the voice then explains what they have to do once they manage to find a flat or a house that attracts their attention. “I want you to stare into that window, and tell me what you see, and tell me why you want to go through that window”<sup>270</sup>, says it.

When participants get the question in *Rider Spoke* they do not have to answer it at once. They have their time to think about what they want to tell and open about themselves. Apart from the content of the recording message they are going to leave, they have also to think about the place where they want to record and link it. They have been cycling wandering through the city streets, thinking and observing the urban setting until the moment they get these instructions from the voice over. After that, the voice over gives a motif to their cycling. She asks them to find a spot according to what she demanded and that any other player tagged a story they recorded. Whilst cycling, the only guidance they receive are swallows fluttering across the screen of the device interface to show available hiding places nearby.

Relax, and find somewhere that you like. It might be a particular building, or a road junction. It might be a mark on the wall, or a reflection on a window. When you have found somewhere that you like, give yourself a name, and describe yourself. (*Blast Theory. Rider Spoke. 2007*)<sup>271</sup>

The comments made by who experiences *Rider Spoke* emphasize such character and potential to animate the city. The British newspaper *Metro* reported that: "The show's greatest gift is that it manages to embrace the remorseless urban rush of the City while insisting on the individual's ability to perceive it with quiet reflection"<sup>272</sup>. The same experience of navigating through an augmented city is the feeling described by the journalist of *The Guardian*. "I am enjoying it, and looking around with more interest than I would normally. Having to find connections with myself makes everything come

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<sup>269</sup> Information collected from the archives about *Rider Spoke*. File reproduced in Appendix 9. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>270</sup> Idem.

<sup>271</sup> Idem.

<sup>272</sup> *Metro*. 15th October, 2007.

alive"<sup>273</sup>. As the *Time Out* magazine emphasized, *Rider Spoke* “turns London's spectacular and squalid alleys into a theatrical backdrop for your own memories”<sup>274</sup>.

### 3.3.2 Between a Technology-enable Situationism and a Neocartesianism

Developments in digital and satellite mapping technologies stimulated the emergence of a diverse scope of artistic projects anchored in location and spatial positioning data. As Tuters & Varnelis (2006) examine, artists had left the doors of the gallery or the bounds of the screen to enter in the city streets with a Locative Media movement. According to them, the Net.art boom was already showing signs of exhaustion and coming to an end when the artistic practice supported by context-aware technologies started to gain prominence. Different from the previous movement, Locative Media Art centered on spatial location rather than on the World Wide Web. It came as “a response to the decorporealized, screen-based experience of net art, claiming the world beyond either gallery or computer screen as its territory” (Tuters & Varnelis, 2006, p. 357).

The geographic space became a canvas for annotative or phenomenological mapping practices supported by locative media. When identifying both approaches to location, Tuters & Varnelis (2006) correlates them to the two poles of late-20th-century art: critical and phenomenology; or even as the twin Situationism techniques of *détournement*<sup>275</sup> and the *dérive*<sup>276</sup>. To Tuters & Varnelis (2006) annotative projects are similar to the Situationism *détournement* practice, as they annotate social, cultural, historical or political data in the landscape of the city for others retrieve this knowledge later. Phenomenological projects, on the other hand, approximate to the psychogeography or the *dérive* tactic, as they use technology to stimulate everyday practices like walk or occupying public space. Parallels such as the one mentioned above that compare Situationism and Locative Media Art, are a constant considering that the movement regularly appears as a precursor or at least an inspiration for artists working with geospatial technologies. Both practices do presuppose an exploratory walk through the urban space. Nevertheless, some distinctive features also appear when comparing them.

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<sup>273</sup> Guardian. 3rd October, 2007.

<sup>274</sup> Time Out. 17th Oct, 2007.

<sup>275</sup> *Proboscis* from *Urban Tapestries* is the example the authors give concerning an annotative project.

<sup>276</sup> To exemplify phenomenological practices, the authors cite *London Free Map* from Jo Walsh and Schulyer Erle.

The French social movement that took place in the 1960s had a critical politics behind its discourse. Debord (1958), for instance, talked about the necessity not to precisely delineate stable continents, as done by the old maps and aerial photographs. The matter to him was to use the experimental *dérive* to attend the lack of influential maps, able to change architecture and urbanism. To him, we can not determine an area only by geographical or economic factors, but also by the representation its inhabitants have from themselves and that the others have from them. In a passive movement, Situationists attempted to analyze the totality of everyday life by generating psychogeographical maps from this drifting strategy. What they did was ‘mapping-while-wandering’. Defining these core Situationist methods, Guy Debord (1958) explains that:

In a *dérive* one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a *dérive* point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones. (Debord, 1958, p. 1)

Holmes (2004) identifies how the aesthetic form of the *dérive* is prominent among the ideas of Locative Media proponents, who proposes the addition of a personalized sense of place by the use of satellite positioning technology. He criticizes such adoption, considering that Situationism was a proper revolt against the bureaucratic rationalism. He remembered that it was a program of unitary urbanism devoted to subverting the functionalist grids of modernist city planning. “They tried to lose themselves in the urban labyrinth, while calling for the total fusion of artistic and scientific resources in »complete decors« – »another city for another life«, as the radical architect Constant proclaimed” (Holmes, 2004, p. 1). What he argues is that the period in which Locative Media Art emerged presents dramatical changes when compared to the context of the sixties in which Situationism gained prestige. To him, what the scenario these days demand with urgency is “social subversion, psychic deconditioning, an aesthetics of dissident experience” (Holmes, 2004, p. 2).

Recognizing the personalization of space enable by the exponential grow of GPS systems and online tools, Rieser (2011) affirms that locative media offers artists a

unique opportunity for new mapping strategies. Whether tag information to places turns into a regular occurrence, he remarks that a mapping resulted from monitoring practices will never be able to equal the territory. That is why, to him, artists can promote an approach that differs substantially from the Cartesianism and all the determinist male control of narrative vision that dominated in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The potential he envisions refers to a de-centered and subtle mapping. Nevertheless, when arguing about the responses given by artists to a technology that can mutually mean personal freedom and institutional control, on his analysis, “very few mobile works have as yet tried to find a metaphoric critique of advancing ubiquity” (Rieser, 2011, p. 131).

Critics have pointed to the existence of a Neocartesianism tendency among artists, instead of engagement with a political aesthetics that employ mapping as critique and evidence the intrusive and totalitarian character of these media. Tuters & Varnelis (2006) bring some of these comments regarding a particular Cartesian revival that resurges with Locative Art. The artist and theorist, Jordan Crandall, for instance, argues that these practices come to enslave us once more because they represent “temporal and locational specificity witnessed in new surveillance and location-aware navigational technologies” (Jordan Crandall apud Tuters & Varnelis, 2006, p. 361). To the media artist Coco Fusco, on the other hand, it seems that the many decades of postmodern critique to the Cartesian subject just faded away. She criticized the way the mapping occurs and also disapproved the network idea supporting some of these locative media projects. “In the name of a politics of global connectedness, artists and activists too often substitute an abstract ‘connectedness’ for any real engagement with people in other places or even in their own locale” (Coco Fusco apud Tuters & Varnelis, 2006, p. 360).

Hemment (2004a) also examines a condition of possibility in Locative Media Art that resides on a prior abstraction. As a consequence of it, emphasis the artists put on location ended up generating a distancing from embodiment, physically and context. The reductive understanding of spatiality transforms the mentioned aspects in a pure residue of the coordinate system. He points some ambiguity in Locative Media projects. For instance, the ones that draw based on metaphors of mapping and not only on Another case commented by him is exactly the geo-annotative projects that assign media contents to spatial coordinates while the ‘true’ location of the content is a database. He stresses that it is rare to see artists critically approach the clinical precision

of digital tracking. Instead, they rely on it and gives emphasis on point-to-point correspondence.

Clinical, clean precision is the limit point of locative art, its realization and its undoing. While error may introduce sites of disturbance, when reduced to statistics it offers deviation but not disruption of the norm. The technical conditions of possibility of such projects, and the denotative relationship between contents, wherein location is unambiguously designated or assigned, is rarely addressed. Furthermore, locative art often works with a highly constrained understanding of spatiality. It encounters the fabric of space-time via an abstract coordinate system, betraying its indebtedness to cartography and GIS, in which location is reduced to a set of geographic coordinates or a wireless cell. (Hemment, 2006, p. 3)

To McCullough (2006), projects working with GPS needs to go beyond static descriptions, what is an imperative to include in the agenda of a situated semantics. He observes that geographic representations, such as a street grid, provides only the top-level orientation. What artists that have been working with locative media need to recognize, according to him, is that context can be dynamic, resulting from an active production of engaged activities rather than relying only on a preexisting arrangement of destinations. Apart from his criticisms, Hemment (2004b) also sees an ability on Locative Art to bring new manners for engaging in the world and also for the mapping of physical spaces. Nevertheless, he to achieve that, he corroborates the idea that artists need to put an effort to make people engage not in location but also in context. By this mode, he believes that these artistic practices can deviate a communication technology designed to impose a rigid cartographic grid upon the world. He grants that, when creatively employed by artists, these military media can go beyond the simple Cartesian documentation. Instead of serving to determine correspondence in a Neocartesianism, for instance, they can come to open spaces of ambiguity, “to open a rich space of contextual and aesthetic meaning” (Hemment, 2004b). In response to this homogeneity of contemporary societies, he talks about a possible “locative dystopia”, suggesting the playing of a distortion as a relevant response the artistic movement could give.

Locative Media’s associative mapping, localised interaction and its articulation of memory within a plurality of intersecting data trails results not in a singular totalising view, but in multiplicity and the heterogeneity of the local, not in giving everything its proper place but in mobility, opening up rather than pinning down. Where the coordinate system and the coordinates themselves are brought into the frame, the

operation of electronic tracking systems is exposed. And in examining location-aware experience or perception and its relationship to the dominant logics of representation, such forms of cultural production can create distortions or moments of ambiguity by which mechanisms of domination become both apparent and less certain. (Hemment, 2004b)

Hemment (2004a) does see the possibility of locative media practitioners go on the contrary direction of the objectifying gaze of Cartography. He resonates Deleuze's and Guattari's ideas to affirm that the artistic or cultural practices are what constitutes the territory by blurring the distinction between real estate and intellectual property. "The territory is constituted by the signature or expressive mark, both in the sense that birds use song to map their domain and that the artist creates a new way of seeing and occupying the world" (Hemment, 2004a, p. 2). He also mentions a tendency of artists to take art to the streets and suggest a re-embodiment of ourselves as a way to combat the sense that our experience of place is disappearing in late capitalist society. Hemment (2004a) believes in a political inception on the aesthetic of Locative Media movement, even with some artists denying it. To him, those reluctant to position their work as political, sometimes are the same that saw no problem in collaborating with industry or government. They are also the ones that do not even show themselves unsatisfied with the artistic use of military tools. Unlike the previous movement of Net.art, he observes that there are also some artists working with locative media that do not obsess in claiming their autonomy. The point is that Locative Art received many criticisms that condemned them precisely because they do not assume a political position, or even because they do it in a purely decorative function. The political dimension, in this case, has also and essentially to do with the aesthetic, what generates many comments specifically directed to the mapping perspective of these projects.

McGarrigle (2010) affirms with no doubt the influence of the Situationist International in Locative Art development of experimental methods of navigation and exploration of the cities. He sees the same spatial concerns of Situationism in this more recent practices, which centers on the re-appropriation of the city for active inhabitants. What he questions is the nature of this nostalgic influence of an old avant-garde movement among locative media practitioners. He argues, for instance, that more productive would be to have as reference walking artists, such as Hamish Fulton, Francis Alys or Richard Long. To him, Locative Art needs to recognize its origins, because only understanding the theory and techniques that inform their practice, they can then re-invent it.

Nevertheless, he also argues that it is important not to overstate the influence of Situationism on locative media because this is just one of the rich influences.

On the search for some specificities, Southern (2016) writings can give light to how artists working with locative media these days have addressed their artworks to particular demands that are fundamentally different from the ones present in the context of the sixties, in which Situationism emerged. He identifies, for instance, the advent of a category of practices with locative media that deal with some concerns of the current mobilities paradigm in social science, signaling a new sense of “locative awareness. It includes: the production of social connections in proximate and distant locations; the articulation of networks and databases in a flow of information; the creation of hybrid and multiple perspectives through experimental and social encounters.

Cornelio & Ardevol (2011) also demonstrate how some locative media projects have been proposing specific relations with space through what they denominate “place-making practices”. They evaluate, for instance, the manner this mobility and meaningful practices with locative media can help to reflect on the notion of space and place in social theory. To them, it can contribute to people's engagement with their location, what will in some cases include the contestation of urban cartographies with the inclusion of meaningful and personal content to geographical maps. The creation of these “subjective cartographies” emphasizes the difference of separates abstract space configurations and lived space. These practices, to them, refer not only to the critics of space representation with the inclusion of subjective elements. As they analyze, these place-making projects allow rethinking the conceptions and perceptions of space as they relate the physical space and its symbolic instances through technological devices.

#### a) *Blast Theory* Decision to Bring their Art to the City Streets

In the projects created by *Blast Theory* that we selected to investigate in this research, we find artists converting urban areas in a navigable space for narratives. Ju Row Farr made some considerations when talking to me<sup>277</sup> about how important she believes it is to bring the artistic experiences to the city streets. She considers that within the black box spaces such as theaters, the artwork can maybe felt somehow in isolation from the world. She first postulated that, to then explains a certain dissatisfaction *Blast Theory*

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<sup>277</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

had in create with what those spaces could offer. As she commentated, the artwork catches a certain shape when presented in a certain spatial context, because of the variations on the particular ways of operating that each location has. Among the constraints and affordances of each space, she includes people's expectation regarding the work they go to see in these enclosed spaces. Ju Row Farr affirmed that all the three artists had a strong understanding of those constraints because they have a high literacy in theater, dance, and visual arts. She declared that, partially, they did not want to see themselves constricted by that. According to what she told me, they rejected it not in an anarchistic way, but more as an act opposed to the necessity to set the frame and the context of participants' experience.

Ju Row Farr noticed that it felt to them as their work started to be on the edges of frames. The cross-disciplinary character of the group instigates the artists to think about how to approach an artwork. She remarked that they did not all came from a theater background, what, to her, naturally made them question that frame. The decision to bring *Blast Theory* works to the streets raise from this dialogue between the artists' disciplines, interests, and backgrounds, added to a disappointment they had with the traditional settings and opportunities for their work. Ju Row Farr recognized that they did not feel that as the right opportunity, or perhaps the right frame for what they were creating. When technology came much more central to their practice, she evaluated, it turned clear that their work did not seem to make sense in the classic frame perspective.

*Blast Theory* had always been looking at the audiences. From that point, it seemed to Ju Row Farr that they were much closer and looking at these key groups of people to recognize what they were doing every single day, on the streets, in their lives. Apart from identifying their behaviors, the artists started to pay attention also to the way those people use technology.

The relationship between what is private or public spaces, something which is supposedly public and the immediate question to what is private – all of those things are interesting to us. And the lines between what you do and do not do, between you, are a stranger or intimate to somebody, what is the subject that you would not discuss in public. All of those things were shifting, all of the private phone calls on the landlines in a whole way. Suddenly we are out on the bus, and you could even hear them. So all

of that intimacy were there, in turn, people became exposed and available. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>278</sup>

Ju Row Farr described to me that the artists were witnessing the life in the urban spaces and, gradually, they brought their work out on the streets. She declared that *Blast Theory* decided to present their works out there in this fluid space, trying to allow the emergence of that everyday life behavior, in a way to make the artistic experience feel comfortable to people. The streets are where people spend a lot of their time, so the cities represented to them a cultural opportunity. Ju Row Farr concluded by saying that they were looking for playing fields, or zones, or opportunities that felt comfortable for them as makers, and the streets just did it.

The artists had an interest in an urban dynamics that we can not control in some ways, as much as they had an interest in popular cultural and games. When the British group brought their artwork to the urban environment, they saw another opportunity playing in that fluid space. They visualized it as a space for narratives and play, a “big board” or a “big playing field”, on the worlds of Ju Row Farr. Within the city, she revealed to me, grown the idea that it could be an expanded type of game structure. *Blast Theory* had a keen curiosity in that universe, where people operates in and exists in some ways.

Ju Row Farr accentuated that in the urban space, artists have no guarantees over the audience's experience. Distraction and lack of interest can also happen. In her analyses, the negative side of a controlled environment as a theater is that it do not let artists really see what is going on with the audience. They mask it by setting them in the dark. According to her, the makers do not experience the dissatisfaction, or the things not working, or the narrative break, the fictional drop, or the audience engagement falling off a cliff at a critical moment. When a performer, for instance, is working in a traditional space, she affirmed, they did not really notice those things. Or at least, Ju Row Farr believes that they do not feel it so strongly as when the work is on the streets.

## b) Situationism references on *Blast Theory* practice

I was interested in recognizing how much was the influence of the Situationism ideas on *Blast Theory* practice, or even whether these were among the references the group had,

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<sup>278</sup> Idem.

inspiring their artwork. On the separate interviews that I conducted with the artists, I presented them a particular question that inquired them about their possible adoption of some Situationism strategies, such as the psychogeographic journeys. Matt Adams<sup>279</sup> answered by remembering that the *Institute of Contemporary Art* of London had an exhibition about Situationism in the early 1990s. He told me that he went to see it, bought a catalog and, suddenly, became an enormous fan of Situationism. By recalling this moment, he declared that the French movement undoubtedly influenced the work *Blast Theory* does because they were very aware of psychogeography, *dérive*, and all the key Situationism terms. Nevertheless, the artists adverted that these are not the only or the major reference they have.

Regarding the act of bringing their artwork to the city streets, Matt Adams mentioned that much more than Situationism, he believes that it has to do with an awareness of cultural traditions going a way back. He stated that and contested that cultural manifestations also happened in public spaces. Remembering the ancient Greeks, he observed that they had venues as well as numerous theaters situated outside and not in a dedicated building. The artist even argued that cultural and artistic expressions experienced in closed spaces are a relatively novel idea, that is more or less 500 years old. These ancient artistic practices can so mean an influence to *Blast Theory* inquires where culture takes place and where art might exist.

Looking at it one way, it is only the 21<sup>st</sup> century that really creates specialist venues or specialist channels for culture: the tv, the cinema, the gallery or museum. These are all 20<sup>th</sup> century inventions that someone owns it, and controls it, and disseminates it outwards from a central point. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>280</sup>

Ju Row Farr reaffirmed Matt Adams's answer to my question<sup>281</sup> declaring that they were very keen and aware of *dérive* and psychogeographic practices. She supposed that, in a way, *Blast Theory* got influences from Situationism, considering that the movement informed the work they were doing. Nevertheless, she strongly disagreed in naming the artistic practice with locative media as a technology-enable Situationism. The artist categorically disapproved it by recognizing some differences that exist between them.

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<sup>279</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

<sup>280</sup> Idem.

<sup>281</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

The main one to her refers to the fact that the *dérive* and all these practices were processes and not a structured work. To her, their feel about the random, the unexpected, the sole place often happens with no operative or structured thematic, what differs substantially from the projects *Blast Theory* does. Even though *Situationism* and the *Blast Theory* operate in an exploratory form, Ju Row Farr accentuated that each one has its very distinct social or political concerns. Indeed, she mentioned the large period that separates Situationism from now, where the work made by the British group situates.

So I think there is a big difference, it is not just technology enabling situationism. That is all from a particular era in History bar. It was very exploratory, open adventure mentality. We are aware where we sit in relation to that. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>282</sup>

This thesis have discussed previously, by mentioning Holmes (2004) thoughts, that the context exerts influence and print differences between both practices. Ju Row Farr questioned, for instance, that the artworks *Blast Theory* is making dialogues with the way people are behaving in the world right now. She corroborated Matt Adams statement, regarding the existence of many other references on their artistic practice. She remarked, for instance, that they were also aware and got motivated by the innovation of communication technology and the impact it had on people's live and behavior. There are also the references the group got from performative art. Ju Row Farr concluded by saying that their practice is about the city. To her, it also needs to matter to people, and their connection with them is the city in some ways.

A significant criticism blamed Locative Art since its inception, as we have already made reference to some of them regarding the surveillance and the tracking and Cartesian character of it. I also inquired Matt Adams<sup>283</sup> about some of the issues pointed by those who criticized artistic practices based on locative media, which are about to their autonomoy when collaborating with big companies and government. At that point of the interview, Matt Adams admitted to me that the hardest attacks *Blast Theory* ever had were from people on processing those questions. Regarding the censure the group suffered, he commented that their position was deciding, as artists, never to be outside the system. Matt Adams even remarked that what fascinates him is the fact that the

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<sup>282</sup> Idem.

<sup>283</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

system deeply implicates him into it. There is no outside position, he affirmed, so it was better to get used to it because there was no way to resist that.

It is completely pointless to say: “Oh, this is bad, and therefore we will not do locative based media”. Forget that. That is an absolutely impossible point of view, in which all technology are bad so let's resist it. Not to say that those are not really important questions, but the issues are how us, as artists and citizens, engage with these technologies and ask questions of “an” end, and adapt them for our own uses. None technology is neutral. All technology has an ideology built into it, by the designer of that technology. We have accepted that these technologies have a world view design into them, but that does not mean that they have only one possible use, they can not be adapted and developed. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>284</sup>

*Blast Theory* served as an example for criticisms that considered contradictory the adoption of a political aesthetic and at the same time collaborate with big companies<sup>285</sup>. Regarding corporative partnership, Matt Adams made an analogy of the situation by comparing with the one that musicians have to face by working with record companies. To him, in an ideal world, we could say that there will be no record companies, there will just be musicians and music. Nevertheless, that is not the real world to him. He even opined that, actually, most musicians are quite happy for other people to take care of other things. What he wanted with this example was to say how it can be working with those companies. In *Blast Theory* case, he explained that some of these corporative partnerships had been bad. When it happened, according to him, they do not hesitate to draw from them. Nevertheless, Matt Adams considers the positive side as absolutely massive. One of the advantages cited by the artist was the fact that they have learned a lot. To him, *Rider Spoke* is one of their projects that exemplify it. They developed the piece with Sony Net Services, a division of *Sony* in Berlin, and ended up working with a *Nokia* N800 handheld computer because *Nokia* was also a partner.

The difficulty with all of those restrictions is the idea that the art is completely independent, outside of everything, that there is no relationship with any societal or political context at all. They just do what they do, and then they just bring to us their artistic work. To pretend that any visual artist is not aware of the visual arts market, and

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<sup>284</sup> Idem.

<sup>285</sup> Marc Turers (2004, p.2) wrote: “While it is only a very young medium, as in the case of other more established fields of artistic practice, it seems that Locative Media is developing its own stars system of artists like *Blast Theory* who are supported by the State and, perhaps, somewhat more interestingly, by industry”.

how they work operating within that market is absolute rubbish. To pretend that the kind of work we make is not bound up with systems like higher education, government founding, estate founding, local politics in Brighton and Southeast. It is nonsense. Our work is entirely bound up with those things. It is not situated outside of it.(Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>286</sup>

After saying all that, Matt Adams adverted to me that he did not mean that artists can not do work without being compromised. The analysis is that artists can compromise themselves, and it is entirely acceptable. He believes that no one can be quite simplistic about those decisions because everyone is in a negotiation with the market. All these societal and political forces, as Matt Adams pointed, are out there. As *Blast Theory* saw no manner of being away from this context, the group decided to create an artwork which is complex by positioning core questions about society on it. When Matt Adams said that to me, I inquired him about a political trait that could characterize the artworks *Blast Theory* have been doing. He answered my question affirming that he considers some of their pieces as political and others not. He concentrated on making comments regarding the political connotations present in *A Machine To See With*, one of their artworks that he considers strongly political. From what they considered a n insane economic situation, came the rage to create a piece of work whose core fundamentals in a political scenario. Although Matt Adams let clear to me his position concerning the financial crises framed in *A Machine To See With*, he highlighted that all their projects take no particular point of view. He said that, personally, he is completely uninterested in artworks in which he knows where is the artists' point of view about a particular subject, and where he get some policy outcomes.

### 3.3.3 Pilgrimage and the Connection between Content and Location

The relation between space and content is a distinctive trace of these emergent context-aware narratives based on pervasive media. Nevertheless, as we have seen, the spatialization of narratives is by no means something new. Whether storytelling supported by mobile and pervasive communication systems are a relatively new phenomenon, nomadic and site-specific practices in public spaces are ancient (Rieser, 2011). Other artistic forms have already experimented with the resonant qualities of space to propose a physical and embodied experience. The attempt to intimately tie stories to the places they describe is not exclusive of Locative Media Art nor even

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<sup>286</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

limited to the artistic realm. Investigating echoes and resonances of spatial narratives that come from the past, we identify here an ancient cultural practice that involves the walking through a meaningful landscape: the pilgrimage. Although it might not be the primary reference to *Blast Theory*, we consider it as a relevant experience that helps us to understand possible integrations between landscape, narrative, and embodiment.

The pilgrimage act involves journeys to a location or a set of locations that have sacred, cultural or historical significance. As a religious practice, it originally started with the European Christians going to specific sites associated with the life of Jesus or Christian saints. Nowadays, as Heyward (2001) identifies, it is part of many cultures and religions. She mentions, for instance, the Islamic pilgrimage walking to Mecca, or Hindu and Buddhist visits to sacred locations in India and Tibet. Pilgrimage is essentially a historical spatial practice, which augments the landscape with histories and meaning. The act engages people in conceptual and physical journeys.

Pilgrimage – both religious and secular – can be seen as both a form of spatialised narrative and as an annotative practice whereby specific locations are associated with narrative and meaning. Further, it is an embodied practice involving both and intellectual engagement with the stories associated with place; as well as an active journey and making sense of landscape and environment as it is experienced. (Heyward, 2011, p. 2)

Heyward (2011) analyses such practices to recognize the core characteristic of these religious spatial narratives. She indicates the Buddhists in Lhasa, Tibet, who walk and pray in sacred sites in a meditation state. In the mystical space, she observes, the pilgrims see themselves transported into an enhanced, symbolic world. In Japan, she pays attention to a Buddhist pilgrimage route to the island of Shikoku. Her appointments, in this case, regard the fact that it takes the form of a circular journey for over one thousand kilometers around the coastline. Instead of attracting people in a linear journey that culminates in one especially sacred place, she perceives that the 88 locations on the trajectory have equal importance, what allows people to undertake the pilgrimage in a discontinuous manner regarding order or time. In their religious journeys, some pilgrimages can, for instance, visit a portion of it in one year and then return later to pick up it from where they left off. This thesis recognizes the same nonlinear and fragmentary experiences occurring with the Route of Santiago de Compostela, a vast network of ancient pilgrim routes stretching across Europe and

coming together at the tomb of St. James, in Santiago de Compostela in northwest Spain.

The Stations of the Cross, or the Way of the Cross, is not just the classic example of religious pilgrimage but essentially the one that can bring more emblematic questions to our research about location. The practice began around the late 14th Century when Christian pilgrims started visiting Jerusalem to walk the same path Jesus took on the final days of his life in a specialized Christian crucifixion narrative. The visit did not resume to retrace the final journey of Christ. At each site of the Via Delarosa, pilgrims would recount the story of the locality. While recounting the events that happened on that particular site, they also meditate in prayer about the significance of what occurred in there. The fact that the events took place in the position at which the pilgrimages stood was very significant to them.

Heyward (2011) also analyses such case, claiming attention to the duplication of the sites of the Stations of the Cross throughout the centuries. She mentions, for instance, that Catholic churches gained permission to built the Stations inside their temples. With that, Christians around the world would be able to have the experience of the Stations of the Cross without having to pilgrimage to Jerusalem. They could do the same walking, as she detects, but in different settings, because the new configurations removed the site-specificity from the place-based narrative. The story they experienced was not intimately tied to the place it describes.

As the Stations journey is then reproduced and distributed into local churches, further degrees of complexity are involved – an abstract representation of a journey; a virtualisation of real world locations; and the superimposition of a complex narrative onto a small number (fourteen) of signifying images. (Heyward, 2011, p. 2)

Heyward (2011) observes that unlike the more traditional experience, nowadays the Stations of the Cross is also re-enacted on urban landscapes for large audience numbers. Christians do not even have to walk for experiencing it. The embodied, meditative and spatial journey, she argues, became a media broadcast for an audience that can live it through a contemplative act from their houses. Does the meaning of the story become different, when the site-specificity and also the embodiment character of the experience disappeared? Farman (2013) poses the question to open up a discussion anchored on the

premise that the meaning of a story can differ according to the person narrating it and mainly by the location where the telling act happens. As the meaning, would the sense of the place be affected too?

Ultimately, these forms of site-specific storytelling aim to capitalize on the idea that there is value in standing at the site where an event took place: far more than simply reading about an event, being in the place where that event happened offers experiential value that gives us a deeper sense of the story and the ways that story affects the meaning of the place. (Farman, 2013, p. 7)

To Farman (2013) geographical proximity and physical experience can increase the interest in a location as they force people to engage with the place and a situated context. He believes that the engagement with the area mainly occurs when we encounter not a mere superimposition of a narrative upon location. The engagement, to him, enhances primarily by the efficient maximization of the relationship between the story and the site. He comments that we almost always want to know “where we are” and from this curiosity to locate ourselves that the information flow can increase. In this sense, locative media seems to him a perfect mechanism to create this dialogue between content and place.

Location awareness of mobile devices offers some of the most promising and solid distinctions of mobile composition in which content can be positioned at a particular site, an extremely specific place if desired, and that mobile information only can be released to people who go into that physical space and actually commune with the surroundings. (Farman, 2013, p. 24)

In a dialogue with the real scenario, determined content can emphasize particular qualities of a location, embracing some characteristics that become foundational for the experience of that particular place. Farman (2013) opines that local histories, cultural conflicts, communities and architecture features are aspects that the geolocated narratives can include on it. To efficiently maximize the relationship between the narrative and the site, most of these elements integrated into the story are unique to the place. The transference of them to another location is not easy because of their site-specificity.

Raley (2010) also remembers that sited narrative is not a new phenomenon by reinforcing the Catholic ritual of navigating the Stations of the Cross as an example of an instance of site-specific narrative. What she adds to the discussion is the inquiry of what makes these mobile narratives enable by geospatial technologies so distinctive. Apart from technological platform, to her some differences regards the delivery of media, that can be, as she mentions, standalone or networked. Nevertheless, she argues that the simply use of networked and location-aware devices is not the distinctive trace characterizing mobile narratives. “In other words, it is not simply the instrument but the mode of engagement. The real difference, then, is not ontological but experiential: with a mobile narrative, content responds dynamically to the place of the reader/participant” (Raley, 2010, p. 302).

Raley (2010) analyzes what would be these differences in the mode of engagement evoked by mobile-enable narratives, having in mind three key terms: experience, movement, and environment. To her, “reading in the physical environment particular to mobile media quite often also involves seeing, moving, listening, touching. Participating in a mobile narrative is then precisely that – physical participation that is also understandable as performance” (Raley, 2010, p. 302). To the understanding of these narratological practices, she borrows some terms from performance studies to treat embodied interaction; from art, to think about location and site-specificity; and from pervasive and mixed reality gaming, to think about environmental storytelling. Cornelio & Ardevol (2011) also observe how the representation matter becomes secondary in locative media when compared to the sensorial experience it evokes. “While traditional media are based on the representation of the world, bringing the exotic place to the living room of the audience, locative media acts on the contrary, uploading to the internet those representations created by the participants, following the logic of participatory culture” (Cornelio & Ardevol, 2011, p. 329). To them, media in this context serves to the development of a new sensitivity, to the creation of multisensorial experiences and collaborative productions in a performative practice for place-making.

#### a) *Blast Theory* and the design of Narratives for Neutral Spaces

This research could assume that, by working with locative media, *Blast Theory* engages in an artistic practice that attempts to tie stories to places. When analyzing the four

projects in focus on this study, however, we observed that they are context-aware but not necessarily site-specific. I enquired the three artists on the personal interviews I conducted, whether create narratives for neutral spaces was a strategic mechanism employed by them. My interest to this question also resulted from some aspects I could observe during the time I spent volunteering with them. *Blast Theory* had a touring schedule with numerous presentations in the year I went to the site visit in their studios. They had, for instance, programmed performances with the same project in different countries or even continents. Observing the demand each presentation required, I realized that the artists would not manage to meet schedule whether they had to create a new specific artwork from scratch to every particular site. Avoid the site-specificity and invest in context-aware experiences seemed to be what enabled the tours. By creating narratives that are not deeply about particular sites, *Blast Theory* can show the same project in completely different parts of the world.

This study detected an immutable value in the artistic pieces developed by the British group. They regularly re-engineer the artworks at every presentation, intending to adapt it to the local context. That also represented to me a strategy for ensuring a long life to the projects, allowing them to reach wider audiences. Despite the possible benefits of creating neutral narratives, what puzzled me was the strength of the dialogue established between content and place in an artwork that is not site-specific. I also asked the artists whether they believe the location where we tell a story can affect it. Matt Adams gave me<sup>287</sup> the example of *Uncle Roy All Around You*<sup>288</sup>, to illustrate what the group has learned from doing a piece that is entirely site-specific. *Blast Theory* created this artwork in 2003, setting it in the West London area.

We spent a year or eighteen months knowing we will be there, and thinking about Whitehall, Saint James Park, Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square. All the spy films that have been set around there. All the embassies that are based in that area. All the gentleman clubs that are traditional aristocratic institutions that were there. The Royal family, the parks, policy, the Libyan embassy is there. Then, it worked very well. That was very deep. It was highly integrated there. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Idem.

<sup>288</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/uncle-roy-all-around-you/>

<sup>289</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

Nick Tandavanitj also recalled<sup>290</sup> the experience of designing *Uncle Roy All Around You* to trace his comments about the way location can affect the narrative experience. He described to us how *Blast Theory* structured the whole piece to set it in the Western of London, with the character and the world of Uncle Roy entirely inspired by the sense of the western gentleman, in which the protagonist was a particular kind of post-war character. As detailed by Nick Tandavanitj, *Blast Theory* completely colored the narrative according to who Uncle Roy was, what his story was, what was his relationships with the city and that place as a location. All this characterization is what the artist believes that had transformed a bit when *Blast Theory* moved the artwork to other cities.

After the presentation in London, as usual, the tours with *Uncle Roy All Around You* started. The first opportunity *Blast Theory* had was to show it in the city of Manchester, also in England. Matt Adams remembered<sup>291</sup> that, when they got to know about the opportunity, they knew the demand was for something that could be equally thoughtful regarding that specific location. He told me that *Blast Theory* worked with some partners in a whole range of organization that helped them to do the same level of research they had done when creating the project in London. The artist commented to me, for instance, that the Irish Republican Army – IRA did a massive bomb destroying a huge amount in the center of Manchester. As he affirmed, *Blast Theory* also tried to integrate that in the piece, as well as other peculiarities found in the city, trying to have a similar depth of the particular area they will present *Uncle Roy All Around You*. They adapted the narrative having Manchester in mind. The restructuring process of the content was also necessary, as he justified, because participants goal in the game is to find Uncle Roy's office.

Particularities of each location generated not just a new ambience for the experience but semantic differences in the narrative perspective. Matt Adams evidenced the contrasts to me by saying that, in London, the office was very grant and with a large space. In Manchester, he told me that it was the first floor of a fairly ordinarily office block, resulted from some small connecting a bit decaying and warm rooms. On his comparison, Matt Adams also highlighted to me the differences regarding the characterisation of the protagonist. In London, he observed, Uncle Roy was a kind of

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<sup>290</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

<sup>291</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

grand publisher, perhaps who made lots of money and, as a result, has set up that game participants joined. In Manchester, according to him, this narrative did not really worked. Adapting it to the local context, *Blast Theory* had to write on the story key elements to reflect that.

Despite the group's effort for knowing Manchester, Matt Adams and Nick Tandavanitj when gave me this example was to explain how they considered that locative experience different from London. All the three English artists had already been in Manchester before they presented *Uncle Roy* in there. Nevertheless, as Matt Adams examined, they did not know those streets with anything like the same depth as in London. To him, it worked well but not like the first presentation. He mentioned that the tour with *Uncle Roy All Around You* also included West Bromwich. That is an area that, according to Matt Adams, they know even less well than Manchester. In addition to the low knowledge about the place, he recognized that *Blast Theory* had also less time to prepare the artwork, and consequently it worked even less well than the previous adaptation. He granted to me that it was still a strong piece of work, and many people loved it. Even so, on his evaluation, it did not relate as deeply on a scale as they formatted it.

We then had a decision which is: “Maybe we do work just once, in just one place, just at this one moment and never tour it ever again or you find a different relationship to site and place”. And *Rider Spoke* is really the classical example of that, which is like: “I could try to learn about this city and what Barcelona is like. Or Vanessa is from Barcelona. She knows everything about this city. She really knows her personal map and geography is there. Why I do not create this work that in some way activates her personal geography?” That is the decision we took. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>292</sup>

Answering my question about the design of narratives for neutral spaces, Ju Row Farr came up elucidating<sup>293</sup> other aspects implicated on that, for instance, the fact that their artworks refer more to the human behavior than to the city itself. *Rider Spoke* was the example she presented me to discuss this premise. She declares it as a nonspecific piece, considering that participants are who decide the location in the city to tag the stories they record. As Ju Row Farr remarked, *Rider Spoke* directs more to revisit thinking in

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<sup>292</sup> Idem.

<sup>293</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

participants' head and moments in their lives rather than to appoint to some particularities or stories of a determined location. They mark sites in the city with their stories, or their thoughts about a moment. Those who join the experience, as she argued, are the ones that give to places a particular significance that maybe they do not have.

Ju Row Farr compares the experience in *Rider Spoke* with the one we might have when going to a strange place on holiday. When we are for the first time in a location, to her, we have not marked it yet, like a dog that has not sense the area. After that moment, and then forever, she believes that we will suddenly get something if we go back to that beach or under that tree. There will be the meaning that arises from the experience we had from that place. To Ju Row Farr, a location does not have a meaning by itself, but it gains significance by the way we interact with that space produces meaning.

I am not saying that stories in places are not important, that there are no memories, and History, and connections to places. I think it is really important. But I think when people take part in there, they are maybe remaking History, giving significance. And, of course, there are other things that happened there. You can go into a place in such microscopic detail. The story could be about not just this street, or this building or this room. It could be about the world that is inside, the cut on the piece of wood. So it is a micro level you are focusing at. It is really important. I keep thinking about city based pieces being anywhere, anytime. That is partially very interesting to me. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>294</sup>

Considering all these aspects, *Blast Theory* designed *Rider Spoke* to encourage participants to look into themselves, instead of necessarily only look at the place. According to Ju Row Farr, they invite people to see worlds within worlds, stories within stories. Even because, as Nick Tandavanitj noticed<sup>295</sup>, *Rider Spoke* is a system that does not allow people to cycle until their neighborhood to tell about all the places they grew up, and all the things that are most personal to them. He revealed that, surprisingly, some people did it when *Blast Theory* presented the work in *Barbican*, cycling the way across London to Brixton because there was where they spent part of their lives, and that was the place they wanted to talk about.

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<sup>294</sup> Idem.

<sup>295</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

In a more pragmatic explanation, Matt Adams made clear to me<sup>296</sup> the reasons for *Blast Theory's* approach to location in *Rider Spoke*. The premiere of the artwork was in London but, according to him, they already knew they wanted to tour with that project, what made it be a much more different way of thinking about location. To Matt Adams, the concept of *Rider Spoke* bases on using the city as a network of stories. To Nick Tandavanitj<sup>297</sup>, *Rider Spoke* is about personalization and personal lives that exist in the private spaces of the city. What *Blast Theory* intend to do, he told me, was to have people taking these intimate stories out and pinning it onto things that are actually alien to them, but that in some sense resonate with some of their memories. That is why, to Nick Tandavanitj, *Rider Spoke* is a re-pinning of personal lives onto physical spaces in an entirely virtual mode.

Oppermann et al. (2011) comment some of these challenges that involve touring location-based experiences, which can go from the adaptation of the content to infrastructure issues, such as the arrangement of location-services to each new setting. They use *Rider Spoke* as a case study, exemplifying how *Blast Theory* developed filtering, survey, visualization and simulation tools and process to iteratively tune the experience to the local characteristics of each city. According to them, these solutions created by the artists are what explain why *Rider Spoke* converted in a “success as a touring product”, visiting different cities.

Answering my question on the interview, Nick Tandavanitj refuted the idea that *Blast Theory* gives preference for creating artworks to neutral places, rather than playing with the specificities and peculiarities of each city or area. Showing the diversity of approaches to location adopted by the group, he affirmed to me that they treat this relationship with place differently in different context. He recalled the case of *I Like Frank*, a piece that *Blast Theory* conceived when Frank, the son of Matt Adams and Ju Row Farr, was a baby. He told me that they created the narrative as if the protagonist was a child and all of that were recollections from the childhood. At that time, they were in Adelaide, Australia, joining the “Thinkers in Residence” program. Nick Tandavanitj affirmed that they designed the whole piece having that town in mind and directed to people who grown up in that city. Much more than a fictional Adelaide, he revealed, it was about people's recollection of their childhood places.

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<sup>296</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

<sup>297</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2

That was the type of relationship *Blast Theory* established between content and location in *I Like Frank*. Whether we compare it with *Rider Spoke*, we can attest a substantial difference. Nick Tandavanitj remarked that each of their artworks relate with site-specificity in various degrees according to its purpose. In the case of *Fixing Point*, as he mentioned to me, they selected location having entirely in mind the atmosphere they wanted to evoke with that story. It should have to do with the physical activity, and being slightly desolate. The selection they did consider the properties of the physical location rather than any historical character of it. Regardless of the diversity of approaches to the use of space, Nick Tandavanitj also confirmed to me that *Blast Theory* does think about making the artworks tourable. He cited, for instance, the demand they have with *A Machine To See With* when they tour with it. The initial and more significant request of the project is precisely regarding the process of choosing locations, which in this piece of work are very specific. The biggest demand with *A Machine To See With* that Nick Tandavanitj identified to me is specifically the fact that the mechanics of it requires a rigid definition of places. For making the interactive experience works, they need a bank, public toilets, a car park where they can park a vehicle. There is a hit list, as he indicated, and it generates a considerable effort.

Nick Tandavanitj explained to me that *Blast Theory* often works with local people to map the places to geolocate the narratives in each city they tour. In most of the cases, these people are who research locations in advance because the artists believe that the locals know the city better than them. The process, as he detailed to me, initiates on a conversation to talk about the kind of spaces and atmospheres *Blast Theory* is looking for. Knowing that, the local people come back with some ideas. Nick Tandavanitj revealed to me that they commonly set the *Google Maps* to people that are working on the ground say, for instance, where are all the banks, the public toilets in the city. As he said, it is a very pragmatic process considering that they do not have some freedom to try to determine what is the different atmospheres of the city when initially searching for some locations.

Ju Row Farr<sup>298</sup> gave more details about the process of defining places to geolocate the narrative of *A Machine To See With*, what is probably the most demanding when compared to the other four projects analyzed in this study. She started by pointing that the interactive experience of participants in that artwork has to be within a defined time

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<sup>298</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

frame. In about 45 minutes lots of things will happen, and all makes a difference. She indicated the key stages or moments of the narrative that participants will also reach on their physical navigational experience. Some precise locations set these narrative markers, for instance, the public toilets, the car park, the bank. To ensure that everything will work within the determined time frame, Ju Row Farr explained to me that they mark things out, mapping and routing each of these locations participants have to reach within their experience. She said that they measure the length of walking and also try to predict an average speed of walking between locations. To present *A Machine To See With*, for instance, they have to choose six start locations and tree toilets. Once defined it, they then know that to move between those two places participants will need to take a determined amount of minutes. She expounded this process complementing that they regularly check the precision. Sometimes, she told me, they have to change the start locations whether the toilets do not match the required length and time set by them.

In *A Machine To See With*, *Blast Theory* configures locations according to where the opportunities are and also considering whether participants would be able to see each other along the route. Ju Row Farr granted to me that the story does not change according to what *Blast Theory* finds on the streets. They do not modify the order of the events, she said, because every change has massive implications. Nick Tandavanitj exposed to me the delicate technical consequences of restructuring this artwork according to the specificities of each city they present it. In *A Machine To See With*, he emphasized, every single phone call has to be tight to function along a particular route and a specific direction. Every call that composes the work, according to him, is really kind of hand made to fit a location. They have to adjust it every time they present the piece in a different city, what also happens with the navigational instructions of the script. Tour with a piece of work with all this precision and site-specificity is, on Nick Tandavanitj words, quite shocking.

### 3.4 Performative and Full-body Interaction

Artists have explored the attributes of mobile media and the city itself to challenge established modalities of experience. They invite participants to embark on a multimodal and embodied interaction in the urban space, where the virtual and the real

data merges. Using a variety of media types and also the architectural components of the cityscape, artists sometimes erase the line between the real and the fictional world. On mobile-based artworks, participants encounter these and other particularities differentiating a performative and physical experience they take part.

Before discussing the demand these new modalities of interaction pose to participants, we wanted to observe that all classical and modern artform require a participative effort. Manovich (2001) argues that, from a cognitivist perspective, the comprehension of any cultural text involves an active mental process. Literary narration, for instance, creates textual ellipses to require readers to participate and mentally try to feel the gaps. The same cognitive demand, as he pointed, can happen in visual art, with the artist creating missing details of objects that will claim from the viewer an effort to comprehend and interpret it. While the semi-abstract painting required viewers to reconstruct objects not represented directly but through shades, patches of color, contour; the cinema forced the audience to bridge quickly the mental gaps between unrelated images showed on the scenes. These representational techniques bases on asking people to fill in missing information. Following this cognitivist approach, he points that also painting and theater demand the active participation of the audience. To him, they commonly try to orchestrate the viewer's attention using techniques of staging and composition that requires the audience to focus on different parts of the display. In the 1920s, he remembers, cinema also started to guide the audience actively using a new narrative technique of film montage based on switch people's attention from one part of a frame to another one. He sees the same happening with sculpture and architecture, in which participants need to move the whole body to experience the spatial structure.

What happened in modern art, concludes Manovich (2001), is that artists pushed these techniques even further, calling for a more intense interactive exercise on the part of the viewers. Already in the 1960's, he compares, the art of the vanguards and the innovative attempts of the Futurism and Dadaism brought new participatory demands to the audience. The emergent expressive forms – happenings, performance, and installation – tried to turn art into something explicitly participational. To him, this transformation of the 1960s vanguards represents a relevant precedent that prepared the audiences to the changes triggered by the interactive computer installations from the 1980s.

The mobile and interactive experiences we analyze in this research, as all the previous artistic manifestations, also present a psychological demand regarding a cognitive effort participants have to spend in the comprehension process. In conjunction with this mental activity, the requirement is also physical, with the movement of the body. On these narratives experiences, participants are not restricted to a desktop or confined in front of a screen. Instead, they have to perform and enact it, for instance, on the urban space. The navigation through these environments is the kind of experiences that mobile media evokes. Scott (2002) defines these dynamic spaces created by mobile-based narratives as a “nomadic system”, because the experience they propose plays out the integration of space and body. On his analysis, they redefine traditional notions of spatiality and temporality, letting the classic contemplative viewers or even the active participants based on desktop computers free to physically engage and explore. He considers that those taking part in these mobile experiences act as wandering nomads. To him, even the feeling of choice between some different nodes increases with the physical ability participants gain to move around them according to their individual preferences. Hight (2006) argues that this movement through space in mobile-based narratives differs from an exercise of sitting, reading and actively imagining. To him, this act has more to do with a conversation:

The ‘conversation’ is between the place (streets, buildings, structures), its infrastructure (sidewalks, roadways, streetlight timings and traffic speeds in car and on foot, railway crossing, etc) and the movements chosen by the person walking. The place makes certain choices unavoidable, mitigated by its design, condition and controls, but it also makes many other aesthetic choices of the viewer/reader. (Hight, 2006, p. 4)

Through the physical navigation in the real environment, participant's body position is the information interactive systems normally use to trigger distinct narrative fragments. In some projects, the walking of participants simulates the unfolding of a linear narrative with successive and sometimes simultaneously events triggered according to their movement through space. Their dislocation operates as if it was a timeline, in a function of time and distance. Moving around, those joining the experience can depict events that relates to their current location. Not only their movement can meaningfully integrate the system interface. Artists working with these communication systems propose full-body modes of interaction using implicit inputs enable by the device, such as the GPS, accelerometers and compasses. In these narratives, participants' body became the interface between them, the digitally mediated storyworld and the

physically mediated story elements. Hight (2005), for instance, lists other body inputs that artists can extrapolate, creating correlations between these variations and the triggering of the storytelling. Cadences, pauses, voices, speed some of these variations:

Movement, speed, direction, these all are elements of the participants' interaction with place and their aesthetic interface (their disposition edits what they choose to experience and thus sequenced as they move) in the sense that unseen layers in space are triggering as one interacts with what is seen and physically present, in infrastructure, architecture. (Hight, 2005, p. 9)

Participants engagement becomes a crucial component of these full-body interactive systems that rely on implicit parameters. This thesis already discussed in the previous Chapter how digital and interactive narratives composed by a complex layering of choices and multiple events can only reveal itself through participants' activity. Their actions, in the case of mobile-based experiences, can mean also walk and explore the physical space to activate the telling of the story. Shaw (2002) consider them as the protagonists in a set of narrative dis-locations, assuming that their movements are meaningfully employed by artists to direct the content flow in the artworks. On the other hand, considering the complexity of the movement through this urban areas, Hight (2005) defines participants as the ultimate end author of these mobile-based narratives. They assume this role with their particular movement and patterns to navigate the space, “their choices, aesthetic bias in the physical world toward certain sections, buildings or objects to move toward and investigate, and their selection of duration and breadth of movement” (Hight, 2005, p. 10).

Raley (2010) evaluates mobile textual, discursive and literary narratives to understand how elements of experience, movement, and environment are artistically fused to enable these artworks to form a compositional experience. The projects she focuses on, “preserve the balance between script and improvisation, between structure and toolbox, between artistic direction and reader response” (Raley, 2010, p. 304). She bases on the ideas about responsive environments in the field of virtual and artificial reality, mentioning Myron Krueger's writings to outline a system in which the environment and the participant are responsive. To her, this is a promising line of a poetic composition of experience to pursue, because participants poetically compose their affective experience and their enjoyment. Rather than admire, they share with the artist its creation. To Raley, their position is not spectatorial and neither a merely receptive audience, because

they help to produce their own experience, that is unique and can go beyond the intentions of the artists, or even to his understanding of the possibilities of the piece. According to her, these are mobile narratives that exploit the gap between program and execution, that is scripted and composed but that left room for improvisation and play.

A composed experience is not a fully programmed experience. When a participant receives a text commanding her to look around, there is a sense in which that command is more open than closed, at least insofar as there is an interpretative gap between instruction and execution. The gap is the site of ambivalence, the uncertainty of meaning, and thus open to improvisation and experimentation. (Raley, 2010, pp. 313-314)

Raley (2010) even recalls Henry Jenkins definition of environmental storytelling, to defend that spatial stories such as the ones enabled by mobile and locative media, follow alternative aesthetic principles. As she pointed, they usually privilege spatial exploration rather than plot development. More than that, she analyses, environmental storytelling conceives a plot in temporal and spatial terms. As doing so, it represents more than the ordering of events in time. The plot, in this case, also involves movement, directions, paths, and routes. Thinking about a sensing body in movement, plot needs to create a sensorial experience.

### 3.4.2 Modes of Participants Involvement

Participate in these interactive mobile experiences, as we have attested, imply sometimes engage in a performative way playing the role of a performer and spectator. Ryan (2006) list some modes of involvement or types of interactivity that narratives usually proposes to those who takes part on it. These manners cover a wide variety of relations between participants and content. She adapted them from the typology of participants' functions and perspectives in cybertexts that Espen Aarseth discusses in "Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergotic Literature"<sup>299</sup>. They refer to the participation in computer systems running a three-dimensional simulation of a fictional world, either Augmented Reality or Virtual Reality. For our research purposes, we will extend these interactivity modes to the understanding of locative and mobile narratives that places participants in the real space and not in a virtual representation of it.

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<sup>299</sup> See Espen Aarseth (1997: pp. 62-65). *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergotic Literature*.

The taxonomy created by Ryan (2006) anchors in the confrontation of two binary pairs, whose chosen labels emphasize participant's relation to the virtual world. The polarity between the internal and external types of interactivity exemplifies it. As explained by her, the former puts participants into the story space as a member of it. The latter situates participants outside the diegetic space, a position that enables them to play the role of a God, who controls or conceptualize their own activity while navigating. The other binary pair is the exploratory versus the ontological interactivity forms. The exploratory allows participants to navigate through the content space but not to alter the plot or impact the destiny of the story world. The ontological participation presumes that the decisions made by participants direct the story to different paths.

Mobile narratives generally assume an internal form of involvement with participants placed into the diegetic space, not through a third or first person perspective of an avatar but with themselves enacting it. Analyzing the four projects of *Blast Theory* framed by this study, *Fixing Point* is in which we more clearly saw participants in an external and exploratory interactive experience. When taking part in the mobile narrative, they wander and explore the space as they wish. Through their way, they can find metals fixed on the ground that will allow them to have access to the fragments of the story. Nevertheless, their actions do not correspond to the behavior of a member of the storyworld. They are not a character participating in the story, or even someone that can alter it. Instead, they are just discovering and assembling its parts together according to their individual preferences. The space participants navigate, has nothing to do with the one where the story events took place, even considering that the location where they are creates a correspondence to the searching subject of the account. In *Fixing Point*, they are external to the time and the space of the storyworld.

Opposed to the external mode, in *A Machine To See With* we will encounter a significant example of an internal and ontological interactive experience, with participants casting as a character situated at the same time and space of the story events. Their actions determine both, their fate as protagonists and by extension the destiny of the fictional world. They dramatically create the narrative, enacting it instead of having access to its narration. They generate a live story passing through many challenges and adventures trying to accomplish the mission assigned to them. For writing the story through their actions, participants do get absorbed by the demands posed by the guidance they receive through the phone calls.

On the other hand, *I Like Frank* has its particularities as an example because its intricate gameplay results in a blend of internal-ontological and external-ontological types of involvement. All participants that take part on it are inside the storyworld, exploring it through their game actions to find locations that are hot points in the narrative. The diegetic space is both, the real city and a 3D virtual representation of it. Street players are physically in the urban area and virtually represented in the three-dimensional version through an avatar that reproduces their dislocations in the city. Online players are in the virtual storyworld also with an avatar representing their presence in there. Interesting to note in *I Like Frank* is that, when those playing from computers find one of these hot points they are all looking for, they assume a position directed to interfere in the game of street players. They keep sending messages to them trying to partner. When they manage to do it, they start to make decisions regarding the destiny of these entities in the physical world. They will guide and direct them to the correspondent location they found in the virtual city, where there is a hidden object that only street players are can retrieve to them. From this moment, those participants online act to hold the strings and control the navigation of those in the urban space. They play the God role, posing difficulties or helping them. From their computers, they can guide the navigation of players in the city according to their specific wishes, as well as throw obstacles in their way, disturbing their experience, giving wrong directions or overwhelming with messages. They partner, but online players do not necessarily identify with any of these entities on the streets. Would they trust in a stranger?, asks *Blast Theory*. By this manner is that both kinds of exploratory interactivity, the external and the internal one, coexist in *I Like Frank*.

Common to all these types of involvement discussed above is the fact that the narrative embedded in the physical space can only come into being through participants' active engagement. Instead of posing themselves in a contemplative position of a spectator, they have to participate and live it, even in an internal or external position about the story. As said before, the storytelling act on mobile-based narratives relies on participants geographical movement and action. They need to work in bodily construction of meaning. In *Fixing Point*, for instance, it is only by exploring the space that participants can gather the pieces of the story and make sense of it. The embodied experience can also evoke a strong metaphor related to the story meaning, as we see *Blast Theory* doing in *Fixing Point*. Participants walk through the wood, navigating through the area looking for metals that reveal hidden fragments of Seamus Rudy's

story. What seems a simple exploratory act can be emotionally intense for participants, considering that the narrative talks about a mysterious disappearance of a person whose body is believed to be in a forest in France.

It is kind of you piecing together a puzzle based on the fragments that you can find. And it is a bit intended to be that sort of sense of trying to recover something that is lost. You are trying to put together something. I suppose, make it physically enacts something which is a process of the sister we are going through. She only has kind of memories of her brother, and you are trying to search, like learn about the fragments what actually happened to him. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>300</sup>

A mobile-based narrative that evokes such metaphors with the navigational act can create strong experiences, as people construct and feel the story interacting with their bodies. These exploratory, performative and embodied activities can also mean a too high physical effort participants will have to spend to take part. That is the case, for instance, of *Rider Spoke*. In the artwork, *Blast Theory* requires participants to cycle alone, at night, to accomplish the mission given to them. Initially, they have to pay attention to a voice over and the questions she makes. They then have to think about their answer and a specific place to record it. Indeed, they constantly have to check the handheld device mounted on the bike handlebars to see whether there is a suitable location to hide their recordings, or whether they can find others recordings nearby.

The effort spent to experience a mobile narrative, as Farman (2013) evaluates, is considerably high compared to what linear, or hypertext narratives demands from its readers. In the case of a book, the reader has to spend an energy interpreting and turning pages. In a hypertext narrative, the digital reader has to interpret the content and physically click on a link. To him, all these physical and mental demands seem to be far less than the effort required by interactive stories told via mobile devices. First, participants have to navigate physically and explore an area to access the story. Plus, the story space they move through, that is the real space, is harder to understand, because sometimes these projects blur the boundaries between the storyworld and the environment in which they tell the narrative. When navigating, he observes, participants have to discern which events or elements are part or not of the story. That is, for instance, what happens to participants in mobile-based narratives such as *A Machine To*

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<sup>300</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

*See With* and *I Like Frank*. When moving through the city, they have to force themselves to identify what is part of the story and what is not.

### 3.4.3 Effort Required To Engage on A Mobile Experience

Older art disciplines, especially the vanguards of the 1960's already used to integrate the body as part of the artwork. The space formulated according to the audience physical participation is also present in artistic movements such as in Performance and Conceptual Art, or in Experimental Cinematic Media. Regarding mobile narratives, the question is so why should people engage in these experiences that demand a significant effort as we discussed previously? How to keep participants involved in this embodied interaction? To us, the answer to these questions probably justifies why most of these projects exist around the idea of proposing a more playful experience. Buckley (2002) points how these types of interactive narratives incorporate the notion of games, based on the live action of participants in the real world. The ludic aspect resides mainly in the structure of the experience that these mobile artworks offer, orienting the engagement around perambulation and spatial exploration.

Farman (2013) grants that for the audience be willing to commit itself, the value of the reward offered must exceed the level of effort required to enact the story. "Narrative value threshold" is the name given by him to this difference between perceived effort and perceived reward. He believes participants mostly take part in the story, to overcome the value threshold of it. He also recognizes how these narratives that usually follow a branching structure opens up on participants a desire for closure, that works as an ending narrative payoff. With the design leaving up to those interacting the achievement of the required closure, to him it functions as a mechanism to conquer their effort and engagement in mobile storytellings. Considering what he called a "nontrivial effort", he believes that mobile narratives need to foster far greater motivation for the audience, what justifies the introduction of elements to create in participants the desire for closure. To him, that is what keeps those joining the experience on track until the end of the story, getting the motivation to navigate the storyworld identifying and understanding the story fragments until they reach the narrative closure.

Artists devoted to mobile and locative narrative can also push participants to spend the required effort of an embodied experience by other means than enhancing their desire to

bring the story to closure. Other elements and strategies can also arouse the attention in such interactive projects without necessarily demanding the integration of gameplay. Heyward (2011), for instance, believes that one way to keep participants engaged in a locative experience is to avoid a rigid and closed set of stories. Plus, stories should be in an active and intimate engagement with landscapes, bringing a complex set of meanings.

#### a) Playfulness on *Blast Theory* Artworks

When I asked Nick Tandavanitj<sup>301</sup> about the way people respond to this necessary effort *Blast Theory* requires them to spend for joining the projects, he answered by saying that participants react in very different ways. To him, one of the strategies to engage people or to keep them moving is intrinsically related to the necessity of artists establish and manage the frame. As he explained through metaphor, it works like setting both clocks, the artists, and the participants, in a similar way. He cited *Rider Spoke* as an example. In their experience, riders listen to a voice all the time during their cycling, what makes it easier considering that they do not have to do anything to listen to the voice and to have the instructions heard. Thus, he believes that the text recorder by Ju Row Farr sets the tone for the artwork and allows people to relax. When setting people correctly, Nick Tandavanitj believes that they are ready to let it go.

*A Machine to See With* is another example the artist gave me to explain what he meant by setting the clocks. He emphasized that most people who come to experience the piece bring lots of expectations with them. To him, the curious is that most of the participants did not expect to have something related to the sense of being ledge through the city. Instead, most of them come into it thinking that it is going to be a game. Other people, he said, believes it is a walking tour or even an audio tour around the city. On the other hand, the artist remembered when they presented *A Machine To See With*, in *Sundance Film Festival*. He considered it as one of the best time they were able to establish this parallel between what the work is in fact and people's expectations of it.

It is quite difficult. Actually, the best time that work was when we did it in a film festival and people generally got to think they were going to see a film. And they were completely shocked when they knew that they will use a mobile phone. But then they would come back having understood completely what the idea was, and the experience

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<sup>301</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

was. Because their expectations were a film and that was also our intent as well. So that was the best time, it works the best in a film festival. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>302</sup>

Ju Row Farr also recalled<sup>303</sup> the presentation of *A Machine To See With*, in *Sundance Film Festival* to answer my question. She mentioned the event to explain how these strategies to make participant engage in the experience can function. The artist affirmed that people, in general, loved *A Machine To See With*, what can be part due to the public that attends the Festival, and part because of the own innovative and ludic character of the work. She supposes that they maybe liked it because they were watching screens all the time, so that was an opportunity to them being out. On her evaluation, people who took part were some of the most adventurous participants joining the experience. She remembered that they challenged the rules, they waited for people to come through again, they stage things for people. To her, they really got into it.

Ju Row Farr mentioned to me that *Blast Theory* has a great appeal to a young audience that are adept game players and keen on technology. She affirmed that generally within five minutes using the technology, participants of their artworks are comfortable to manage it. To her, the explanation is that most of those taking part in the projects are young people used to learn quickly and open to new games. Ju Row Farr and Matt Adams commented on the personal interviews I conducted with them how the use of game strategies in these narratives experiences proved to have its reasons to engage participants.

This thesis discussed in the previous Chapter how playfulness characterizes the interactive experience proposed by all the four projects created by *Blast Theory* that we analyzed in this research. The qualitative analysis recognized that some have a clear game syntax, while others just some elements and traces that refers to it. The game design process gave the artists knowledge around certain aspects regarding interactive experiences, such as the strategies to introduce participants to what can be a new and unfamiliar experience. When applying some game mechanisms, they attempt to do not intimidate or overwhelm those joining the interactive experience, allowing them to understand enough of the ideas underlined in the artwork. Matt Adams gave me<sup>304</sup> as an

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<sup>302</sup> Idem.

<sup>303</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

<sup>304</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

example a standard technique based on completing a task, what they applied in works such as *Uncle Roy All Around You* and *I Like Frank*. At the same time that it involves participants on the experience, it also allows them to familiarize in the interaction within the system.

We had a system called the red spot. Just, the very first thing that you ask them to do is an entirely meaningless task. In a grand scheme of the work, it is just a formation that you know what you are doing. So it basically says: 'you just get out, walk over there and sit in that chair'. And when you get out, walk over there and sit in that chair, we say: 'well done. You sat on the chair!'. It is just for you to go: 'Oh, cool, I did the right thing'. It is just to give you a platform to be forwarded. To us, we can go: 'Vanessa has got the red spot, she is ok'. It is like training. Of course in games, this techniques are thousand of years old. It is like fully understood. We use those of techniques. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>305</sup>

There are other mechanisms employed by *Blast Theory*, such as the perceived and minor recompenses spread through the interactive experience, that comes to maintain the engagement. Ju Row Farr affirmed that all of them in the group are aware of the importance of creating this kind of feedback loops. She ratified that such mechanism regularly presents in games is a fundamental element to motivate players. The reward is an aspect present in most of their projects. It can be an audio feedback or a success sound. Whatever it is, the gameplay reward functions to her as a stimulus that tells the player: "Well done! Keep going". Although the three artists share the certainty about the value of this mechanism, Ju Row Farr highlighted that individually they have a very differently approach. They all know that it works within games but, to her, that kind of feedback in social context needs to be a bit distinct.

I think we know that the effort is best asked for if there is some gameplay reward or narrative payoff or event development, or high interaction point, or whatever it is. That is the idea that is not always going to be like that. I suppose we go along in a journey in a piece of work. There is a trust involved, and you do not have to get a patted on the back and well done every step of your way. It is actually you taking part in very meaningful situations that are important and you have probably done well. If you look at traditional theater, the reward for an audience maybe is the story concludes in a certain way, but then you clap yourself at the end for having it. So that is a kind of a

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<sup>305</sup> Idem.

reward based mechanism, in a way. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>306</sup>

*A Machine to See With* is an artwork that explores all the strategies we identified before to keep participants engaged in the experience. This thesis assumes that the intimate engagement with the urban landscape and its intricate set of meanings is a crucial component of the artistic piece. Nick Tandavanitj called for the fact that the pleasure participants have on the experience has to do with the sense of being ledge through the city. To him, the engagement of those joining the locative film has truly to do with being “guided by the hand”, as the artists referred to it.

You do not know where you are going. You do not know in the next time seconds whether you will going to be asked to turn down anyway or to stand behind the bin. And there is pleasure in that as well. We ask you to be on the street corner, and you do not know where you are going and what is going to happen, other than that you are going to be in a heist movie. That sort of suspense really is the thing which kinds of drive people because they do not have to make a decision in that. For the most part in their experience, they just have like obey exactly. Yes, they have just to listen and follow. The story, you make it work by actually walking. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>307</sup>

On the other hand, as in a game, *A Machine To See With* presents some tasks that participants have to complete. Through their interactive experience, they will have to find a toilet, hide money on their body, meet a partner in crime, find the getaway car. All these are step-missions for achieving the major one that is the attempting to rob a bank in a revenge mission. At the same time, it will activate an intimate engagement between the story and the landscape where participants move through. Together, all the elements of the cityscape convert into components of a rich storyworld with complex connotations. Moreover, the narrative will also instigate participants to move the story forward and stay engaged because of the expectations it creates for them. The experience makes they keep trying to figure out what they are going to do next.

Nick Tandavanitj emphasized to me that *A Machine To See With* creates a sense of initiative that some audiences completely like to feel. To him, this is the essential strategy *Blast Theory* adopted to involve participants. Nevertheless, he made a

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<sup>306</sup> Idem.

<sup>307</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

reservation by observing that, this approach to detaining people engaged will depend on the culture of the audience. To him, it often has a lot to do with the kind of public, what he sees as an interesting aspect regarding how people respond and how you motivate them physically. He exemplified remembering when *Blast Theory* showed *A Machine To See With*, in the *Edinburg Festival*.

It is clearly, definitely, a theater festival with a much more clearly theater audience, is not a media art audience. People do expect to have everything served to them and give to them. They do not expect to act or initiate anything themselves. Although there are few points in *A Machine To See With* where you have to even just call back for making the next thing happen. People in the early test with the work in Edinburg did not realize they have to do that, to call it back when arrived in that such and such location. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>308</sup>

I have inquired Matt Adams<sup>309</sup> whether *Blast Theory* defines a target public, specifying the kind of people they want to reach when designing a piece. He started by admitting that he believes their projects over demand their audiences. “It is not for everyone”, he declared. Then, the artist observed that lots of people choose not to take part in their artworks. To him, one of the reasons is clearly the effort required by the embodied interaction model adopted on their mobile and locative pieces. Another surprising motive brought by Matt Adams is the fact that some participants became apprehensive to expose themselves in some way.

Especially sometimes critics and the press, they hate it! They hate it because they have to show themselves. In *Rider Spoke* we had some terrible reviews because a theater critic, who suddenly have been told he had to record something, was like: 'No, no, no. I am here to see the artwork. I have not booked it to make the artwork'. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>310</sup>

Still about *A Machine to See With*, Matt Adams also remembered when they presented the piece in *Sundance Film Festival*. What he wanted to recollect with the occasion was that some of the public thought they were going to watch a film. According to him, people booked at the central office without realizing it was an interactive piece of work

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<sup>308</sup> Idem.

<sup>309</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

<sup>310</sup> Idem.

and not a piece of cinema. Despite this particular expectation proper of people that attends to a film festival, it went well. At least considering the comments mentioned before made by Ju Row Farr on my interview with her. With this example, Matt Adams tried to corroborate his belief about the existence of two categories of audiences. To him, whether on one side, there are those people used to a more contemplative type of experience, on the other hand, there are also the ones that want a more game and interactive style.

*Blast Theory* has been creating projects that blend references from cinematic, game, and theater domains, always in an attempt to engage audiences in innovative ways. They invite people into a piece of work and test that, exploring what kind of possibilities exist with it. To try, they take some risks when stretching the opportunities of a determined media as far as they can. Whether they started as a multimedia performance group, in their trajectory we will see them working with Mixed Reality Games, Mobile and Locative Media, Digital Broadcasting. All this mixture of references and technologies ended up turning complex to define each of their artworks precisely. Also to the artists, this amalgam challenges them when trying to target particular groups of people for their projects. As Matt Adams, analyzed:

For the game's people, it is not enough as a game. For the theater, people is far to interact with it. For the visual art people, it is too pop cultural, mainstream. Our audience is a challenge. It is a challenge to find that audience who feels conformable with all those different things that are going on. But as far as I am concerned, these are contradictions of a position in which we are doing our work and making it really strong. The fact that is not even one thing nor the order. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>311</sup>

I have asked Ju Row Farr<sup>312</sup> whether they target their public by observing that interactive artworks have a greater appeal to young people, who are more knowledgeable of games. Reflecting on the question, she emphatically did not agree that the acceptance of such projects is necessarily generational. Nevertheless, she did accept that perhaps seniors might not want to run around on the streets for 45 minutes. She also said that it is obvious to her that young people are a generation more comfortable with technology. Such familiarity with games and technology, she argued,

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<sup>311</sup> Idem.

<sup>312</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

can also be problematic because the “tech gamers”, as she called them, are usually sure about what the artwork is going to be, and this expectation ended up creating a frustrating experience for them. Ju Row Farr brought *Rider Spoke* example to illustrate it better.

Lots of people came thinking it has GPS. So it is like: 'It is GPS, I know how it works, I have done this before, etc'. We do not get to say like: 'No. You are wrong. It has not'. But they are wrong, and they come with certain game expectations. So it is not like they would not mind because they are young, fresh and crazy. They actually have narrative constructions and expectations of what a work is or should be. There are those new forms overcoming traditional forms, so sometimes people are like very surprised because they are not over minded. It is not that you get closed minded if you get older. They think they know, and they got it like this. And they are like: “Yeah, yeah, cool”. You know, they got it for a certain way, because they are completely missing on the thing, or they not like it because it is not what they thought it was going to be. (Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014)<sup>313</sup>

I also asked Nick Tandavanitj<sup>314</sup> whether *Blast Theory* target specific audiences according to each piece of work. He explained that with these projects they did not really define it. Though they have knowledge about their audiences, about how they reach them and also have a hook about how they might expand that audience. Nevertheless, it is not very methodically planned. For *Rider Spoke*, they actually designed it thinking about cyclists but based on their own experience. Then they look for ways to find cycling festivals, cycling clubs, and also some organizations that are interesting.

### 3.5 Editing the Diegetic Space

The urban area is an architectural space with an intangible dimension build by architects to influence our perception. Originally, all these urban elements – buildings, streets, parks and people itself – are already full of History and stories. Moving through the city is also a performative practice in which pedestrians assign meaning to the space. While walking through public areas, citizens can use the material world for their own purposes and enjoyment. As Michel de Certeau (1984) analyzes, the actions and the events lived

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<sup>313</sup> Idem.

<sup>314</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

by the inhabitants, or as he named them “the ordinary practitioners of the city”, generate and represent the infinitude of stories built in our everyday life<sup>315</sup>. He points their walking like an elementary form to experience the city, and this same walking denotes stories that live under the visibility. As walkers or Wandersmänner, their bodies write a text without being able to read it (De Certeau, 1984).

By adopting new means of telling a story, artists convert the city into a storyworld with the physical landscape becoming a fictional or historical setting. They do it, creating a blend between real and fictional spaces, or what Susani (1999) suggests as being the “Third Space” that, “doesn't belong solely to the material sphere or to the virtual one” (Susani, 199, p.29). Instead, it results from the combination of both, turning the city into an interactive and fluid territory that connects the physical and the digital, the material with informational. To him, to formulate such spaces, we should think about mobile media in conjunction with the creation of social and collective environments accessed through these devices.

Ruston & Stein (2005) believes that mobile-based narratives operate exactly by materializing the ideas pronounced by Michel de Certeau. The projects bring to an empirical level what at first sight can look too intangible or only with a philosophical character. Playing with the elements and features of the urban spaces, “these mobile narratives invites the individual to become more apart of their physical environment, to become engaged with the city than they might as they simply move through on their way home or to work” (Ruston & Stein, 2005, p. 7). Participants of these narrative practices act similarly to the pedestrians of the city. The difference is that powered by mobile devices, they are no longer unable to read the story they write as they travel through the urban space. The technology comes affording new manners for authoring and accessing these city's narratives. Places have layers that people can read and write with the use of mobile media. The physical environment itself become a medium on these interactive experiences. While participants move through the urban area, they can wander, look around, identify sounds, colors, smells, objects, buildings, paths, people and behaviors that sometimes become hidden in the everyday rush of the city. There are an infinity of components in the city environment that those who join these locative narratives can rediscover and experience in new ways. As commented before, walls,

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<sup>315</sup> Cornelio & Ardevol (2011) analyses how Certeau and also Henri Lefevbre's ideas evokes the notion of place as a symbolic space, socially constituted and subjectively experienced.

buildings, streets, paths, bystanders are some of the elements mostly integrated as part of the storyworld.

Hight (2005) discusses the existence of two dimensions present in the city, the connotative and the denotative. To him, we can find both perspectives in any physical space. The farmland, or the desert, or a mountain range have a connotative and a denotative level. According to him, artists designing narratives based on mobile media usually arrange the storytelling act knowing that they can integrate historical, ethnographic and also architectural information provided by the cityscape. They can “select elements of the information about the locations where trigger points are to be placed, the area as a whole, its fit and tension within larger spaces both in geography, cartography, politically (demographic shifts, borders, gentrification issues, preservation concerns...)” (Hight, 2005, p. 6). For doing that, he presupposes that artists need to study the place to find some particular resonances, perceiving what is present in an immediate level and what they can infer on a deeper level. By recognizing these connotative and denotative elements, he affirms, they can author a narrative that conveys some meanings to participants while they move on their interactive experience through the story space. Rather than necessarily separate the physical and the story worlds, the tendency on mobile narratives is precisely integrating both layers. To him, artists have incorporated in the story space what they can deduce from the physical one.

The author can place forgotten or faded histories, lost buildings, previous incarnations of areas, the tension or richness of who has come through the place at what times in waves of commerce, housing, and previous events. Narrative Archeology allows a context to be selected as in the narrative and its resonance of symbolism, detail and connectivity of its parts into a larger whole (as in written non-linear works); but it also allows this in terms of what layers from the part are placed together in sequence(s) as well as what information of specific trigger points is selected to resonate again. (Hight, 2005, p. 7)

Regarding the complexity of the urban landscape and its built environment, Hight (2006) observes that the design of mobile narratives includes editing the physical space. He recognizes that not all of the elements and events happening in the city become part or gain relevance to the unfolding of the story. That is why, to him, artists seek to control the environment to suppress its components that do not represent a relevant role in the narrative. They decide not to reveal these elements, as he comments, whether

these aspects do not add any contribution to the intended experience. To him, as writers do when creating a fictive diegetic world, artists choose certain details from specific places instead of others. They establish the tone of the narrative by selecting what type of information and properties of the area that they want to highlight. He sees this act integrating the development of the concepts and meanings for the artwork as a whole.

Farman (2013) indicates how the artists can edit the physical environment by different manners. One of them is controlling participants' perception and movement through the architectural and spatial languages. It implies, as he explains, in guidance on their exploratory navigation. He compares that controlling the attention or the dislocation of participants is the same as to regulate the unfolding of narrative elements, considering that digital and physical worlds are usually dramatically connected. Affording or constraining movement and perception represent, on his understanding, revealing or concealing information. When guiding participants experience, artists end up in some ways forcing participants to perceive just a few objects of the cityscape in a selective attention mode.

A change in physical location or in point of view can physically reveal information or reinforce a feeling that influences the reception of the story. Architects and city planners have long manipulated pedestrians' movements and perspectives to impart a view or tell a story through a spatial vocabulary. (Farman, 2013, p. 59)

Artists deliberately design the narrative in an attempting to guide actively participants' point of view. Whether one strategy is to emphasize some elements of the cityscape, another identified by Farman (2013) is a bit more natural, just relying on existing visual hierarchies in the physical environment. “The mise-en-scène of nodes in the physical (built and natural) environments, augmented as they are through the addition of digitally mediated narrative elements or lexia, affords rich opportunities for framing the perspective and point of view of the participant/reader” (Farman, 2013, p. 62). Wayfinding information, for instance, can direct participants' perspective and movement. These elements can draw their attention delineating what is important in narrative context. Artists can even integrate them as a kind of clue to participants, that have to struggle to find them and consequently the locations containing the story fragments. Hight (2006) sees this act as a punctuation done by that artists:

Punctuation in language and the written world can be viewed as a mediation and mitigation of speed, movement and flow. Structures such as sidewalks, stop lights, bridges, and roads can be seen also as mitigation of speed, flow and movement; thus both narrative space and physical are punctured in a similar fashion. The new narrative can work with this parallels in alteration of narrative content triggered, voice, cadence, and resonance as built to move along these same mitigations and mediations of movement of the participant in the physical spaces. (Hight, 2006)

Nevertheless, this guidance not always effectively controls the perspective of participants. It is not easy to limit the view in such rich and saturated built environments. These spaces are in general fulfill with a series of simultaneous events and stimulus. Artworks, such as the ones of *Blast Theory* that bases on the live performance, when using the city as a setting includes these risks. Dealing or playing with the uncertainties is an important matter in such interactive projects.

### 3.4.1 The Orchestration of Participants' Movement

*Blast Theory* has worked creating stories and allocating them in the physical space to engage participants in a navigational and interactive experience. One of the questions I posed to the three artists when talking about their artworks was regarding the challenges of designing a narrative for real spaces. Matt Adams commented the fact<sup>316</sup> by emphasizing how chaotic, uncontrollable and contested can be the city. It is by considering all these aspects that he believes the urban space is a fascinating setting for doing an artistic work.

People fight all over these places. They are shared as well, but there is also this element. Private developers are trying to get hold of public land. Demonstrators are trying to demonstrate while the authorities are trying to stop them. People are trying to treat the street as a place where they live, and they owned it while other people are coming into that area from outside. You have got immigration even as a huge issue which is: “Whose streets are these? I have been here 30 years, and you have been here six months. This is more my street”. All of these sorts of questions are played in the city. And then you just got random these. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>317</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

<sup>317</sup> Idem.

Matt Adams accentuated that the city is a deep imaginative space, remembering a cliché that defines it as “the place of 1000 stories”. The artist believes that filmmakers use the urban setting all the time exactly because it is “the city that never sleeps”; it is a place of romances as well as of robbers. All these ideas, according to him, are what active his mind. When we walk on the streets, observed Matt Adams, we can be walking past murderers, rapiers, bank robbers, politicians, prostitutes. He noticed that we know these things are all in the city, that they are all around us, though we may not identify them. The artist explained that *Blast Theory* places their projects in the city streets with the intention of evoking this inventive aspect intrinsic to the setting. All those properties Matt Adams described as being part of the chaotic nature of the urban space became assets for the mobile narratives they create. Whether the British group can not resist or control them, the solution is to play and transform these elements into a resource in the context of the narrative experience.

Matt Adams revealed how they play with this imaginative conversion of street elements into diegetic ones by giving as an example *Uncle Roy All Around You*. In a determined moment of their experience, participants are stood on a bridge that goes across a lake in a park. They come in the middle of the bridge. They then get a message that instructs them to wait for a woman with black hair coming across the bridge towards them. They have to turn and follow her. Matt Adams considers it as the simplest trick because all the artists want, is to get participants to walk back that way again. Nevertheless, the manner employed for doing that deliberately activates the imagination. Matt Adams commented that, while some participants can see straight through that, others can be surprised and excited when they see the mentioned woman. He considered it a trick because the strategy consists of having participants deciding who is the woman with black hair, as there is not a predefined one.

*Rider Spoke* brings a different dimension of how artists can play with the urban space elements to activate the imagination of those taking part on the mobile narrative. In the project, participants engage in an exploratory experience through the city. In addition to the stories they hide and discover, there is also a proper imaginative ambience the voice over attempts to create by suggesting participants to look at that location and feel it from a very particular perspective. Moreover, each story participants listen to can bring a new and an unknown meaning to specific places they encounter. As *Blast Theory*

emphasizes on the project web page: “the streets may be familiar, but you've given yourself up to the pleasure of being lost”<sup>318</sup>.

Today everything changed. The streets are piled with overflowing sacks of rubbish; smoke drifts from office block windows. The sky is empty. The streets are empty. You have only yourself. You are free to make the city yours – choose a building to make your own. When you find a building, tell me what it's like, and what you'd do there. (*Blast Theory. Rider Spoke, 2007*)<sup>319</sup>

In *A Machine To See With* or *I Like Frank*, *Blast Theory* works to blur the limits that separate reality from fiction. When joining the projects, participants enter a space of ambiguity in which they will have to figure out what is part of the story and what is not. *A Machine To See With* opens up to the geography of the storyworld but participants do not need to know well the city because the directions they receive in the phone calls take them through the space step by step. To Matt Adams<sup>320</sup>, whether those joining the locative narrative do not know the area, it often represents an advantage considering that this unfamiliarity adds excitement to the interactive experience. He analyzed how the reality of the urban environment mixes with the fictional story, creating an uncertainty lived by participants. Matt Adams draw a hypothetical situation to evidence that, saying that, at any time, a police officer can walk up to a participant and ask: “Can I just ask what you have been doing?”. On the artist interpretation, whether something like this happens, it suddenly forces the participant to think: “Why is he asking me? Is he a real police officer?”. These random situations are just some of the events he mentioned that could happen when using the city as a storyworld. As remarked by him, it can occur even when the artists previously acknowledge the context settled on those streets. There are some events, he admitted, that there is no way to control them because, as part of the city, they are alive.

Ju Row Farr reiterated such aspect on her answer<sup>321</sup> to my question about the challenges when converting the urban area into a diegetic space. To her, what the city offers is an opportunity. As an artist, you can embed a story into there and suggest things. You can draw people's attention to aspects that are around them, or even to things that seem to be

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<sup>318</sup> <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/projects/rider-spoke/>

<sup>319</sup> Information collected from the archives about *Rider Spoke*. File reproduced in Appendix 9. (Source: *Blast Theory* server)

<sup>320</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

<sup>321</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

there but that are not there. She gave me an example, thinking in the Queen's House in the center of London as a location for a mobile narrative. In that area, she indicated, helicopters are flying around, and snipers are on the roof. Through an artistic point of view, those things can give the work the intended flavor. Artists can make participants see things that are not actually in the work, but that gives to story a rich resonance. Knowing the place, artists can consciously play with that to things unconsciously stare on participants' mind. Ju Row Farr observed that who creates a narrative using that will have an interpretation of how those joining the artwork might feel walking through this particular straight. What can even happen, according to her, is that those taking part in the experience might go out from that thinking that it is not relevant in the context. On Ju Row Farr understanding, both interpretations can work.

The restraint over the interaction is an artistic and design decision that we have already discussed when examining control and agency on participants experience. When talking with Matt Adams<sup>322</sup> about the orchestration on their artworks, he compared it with some mechanisms present in other artistic modalities.

Even if you look at the cinema, you can direct a film where you control the gaze of the audience, every frame, and every shot. Or you can create where there is much more openness where the audience might look. You have a scene with six, eight characters in one shot, and they are all talking, and you got room to observe someone in the backgrounds. It is all decision making. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>323</sup>

Matt Adams emphasized that the work they do behind the scenes has the function of preventing and deal with risks regarding technical problems or someone getting lost in the city. Such orchestration seems fundamental when thinking on these incidents that might happen on projects based on a direct lived experience, such as the ones *Blast Theory* does. In “Towards a Citywide Mixed Reality Performance”<sup>324</sup>, the group pointed that this process of monitoring events, intervene, and communicate becomes more complex in citywide performances. According to them, the difficulty relates to the distributed nature of participants when joining an interactive experience in public areas.

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<sup>322</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

<sup>323</sup> Idem.

<sup>324</sup> Benford, S., Anastasi, R., Flintham, M., Schnädelbach, H., Koleva, B., Izadi, S., ... & Row-Farr, J. Towards a Citywide Mixed Reality Performance. Retrieved at: <http://www.blasttheory.co.uk/bt/documents/Twds%20a%20city%20Mixed%20Reality%20Game.pdf>

The urban space contributes to adding complexity to this behind-scenes work of coordinating actions, considering that participants' movements are longer and in an unpredictable time when compared to interactions in virtual reality environments.

Nick Tandavanitj remembered<sup>325</sup> that in artworks like *Uncle Roy All Around You*, they had almost twenty people in an hour going out as street players and the same number working in backstage. From those, according to him, at least four stayed in the controlled room, two running the office, one in the office, one riding a limousine, one in the car, and all the rest in charge of looking for people who just got completely lost. He explained to me that they were doing it primarily on bikes or on foot. On Nick Tandavanitj's evaluation, that was an almost ridiculous situation because he became a role within the whole thing.

The staff can operate on the orchestration, for instance, pointing to participants the right direction to walk. These interventions can even become the high point of the experience, as the staff often folded it in the narrative building the moment in a kind of one to one theater. Indeed, for Nick Tandavanitj, they create in participants the sense of trusting in people in the city streets and all those relationships *Blast Theory* has a great interest. Most of the time, he affirmed, it fits the story and also generates that context where participants are amazed by the amount of attention they are gaining.

When people were walking in the wrong direction, it would someone they may never meet before, come walking up them and say: 'you are walking in the wrong direction, you need to go back. The direction is over there'. And then this person would just turn around and walk away. So people were like: 'Oh, my God! How the hell someone I have never met before, in the most dizzies part of the city came up to me and told me where to walk'. Or someone called them up and said: 'Hey, excuse me, I have a message from Uncle Roy. I think we need to have your device'. And then he goes. They just restarted the device while they pretend to be like doing some secret thing. But they are resetting the whole thing. And then they come back and say: 'ok, Uncle Roy said you need to go that way'. (Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014)<sup>326</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

<sup>326</sup> Idem.

Matt Adams explained to me<sup>327</sup> that they heavily orchestrate some of *Blast Theory* artworks. While in *I Like Frank* it is massive such as the one of *Uncle Roy All Around You*, in *A Machine To See With*, *Fixing Point* and *Rider Spoke* they have no orchestration at all. In the latter, Matt Adams observed that they filter which recordings will go back into the system after a while. In this sense, they control the frame by determining which stories people might find when exploring the space. Apart from that, on Matt Adams perspective, the lack of orchestration is one of the beauties of the construction of *Rider Spoke*. Anyone can cycle an area and make a recording in any location. On the other hand, in *I Like Frank*, the backstage team are there:

with a walkie-talkie on the streets scouting people, saying: 'yes, I see Vanessa, she is walking down that street towards that bicycle, she is going to find the postcard'. And then someone else in the walkie-talkie saying: 'I've seen Dan. He is lost, definitely. I could see he walking in the wrong direction. He is not looking at his map'. And someone else in the backup base say: 'ok, I will send a message to Dan telling him to turn around to go back the other way'. What we found is that the more you try to orchestrate everything to be perfect, the more responsibility you have to make everything perfect. It is worst, worst, worst. We are trying to look after people. (Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014)<sup>328</sup>

By giving such examples of how the orchestration mechanism works, Matt Adams wanted to clarify that it does not actually intend to control participants behavior. It is more about guiding them through and trying to ensure that they have a minimal level of good experience. The strategy is to guarantee that their misunderstanding will not ruin the interactive section. He justified the adoption or not of the orchestration mechanism by relating it to the social changes we have gone through. *I Like Frank* is from 2004. On the epoch they preview the artwork, it would be normal someone out of the venue with a map on their device in the wrong way up. When that happened, they walked directly in the opposite position just because they had not realized they put the phone in the wrong way. The other three projects analyzed here that do not employ orchestration on that heavy sense are more recent. As the artist exposed, in 2014, ten years after they present *I Like Frank* for the first time, everyone knows how to use a touchscreen, how to use a button, and an app, and a map, and a direction finder, and a message system. Even with some exceptions, he believes that these are the commonly ubiquitous skills.

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<sup>327</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Matt Adams is in Appendix 1.

<sup>328</sup> Idem.



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## A GEOLOCATED NARRATIVE WITH GAMEPLAY

This Chapter discusses the designing and experimental implementation of geolocated narratives having as a particular case the process and activities contemplated on the practical stage of this doctoral study. The outcome of the arts-based method is the development of *Chronica Mobilis*, a narrative experience primarily conceived for research goals but presented as a proper artistic project in the field of mobile and Locative Art. Using geospatial technologies and handheld devices as a social communication medium, we take the spaces of Poblenou, in the city of Barcelona, to tell the story of a resident of the neighborhood in three stages of his life: child, youth and adult. The narrative has as subject the changes on the site over the time and its influence on people. The project combines audiovisual narrative with game dynamic, mobile technology, and the urban space.

How to design and to implement a narrative that uses locative and mobile technologies? What takes into consideration for building meaningful stories that dialogue with the urban space? What are the technological obstacles? How do participants respond to determined interactive experiences? The next sections address all these questions regarding the creative process, with special emphasis on the discursive strategies and participation modes adopted and on what justifies our design choices. Apart from the knowledge acquired and generated from the creative process, the development of a geolocated narrative gave a relevant contribution to the analysis and the evaluation of participants interactive experience according to the different modalities of participation. Important outcomes will also be present here regarding the feedback gave for those who joined *Chronica Mobilis* interactive experience. This Chapter contemplates the collaborative planning and execution of the project, the interactive character of the locative story and its game mechanics, the technological demands and challenges, the participant's involvement and feedback.

## 4.1 Development Process

We had discussed before how important we considered approaching the interrelation between narrative and locative media in a more empirical way, by following practice-based research methods. The creative process of *Chronica Mobilis* did reveal how fruitful is the terrain for experimenting new mobile storytelling manners, especially regarding discursive strategies and participation modes. Parameters, concepts and the sometimes abstract discussions unveiled by the previous phases of this PhD investigation were implemented, tested and evaluated from a more concrete perspective through the designing and implementation of a mobile narrative experience. The methodology chosen for the study generated a balance in which the theoretical review and the qualitative case study analysis played a crucial role in the applied theory stage, informing and assisting the practice.

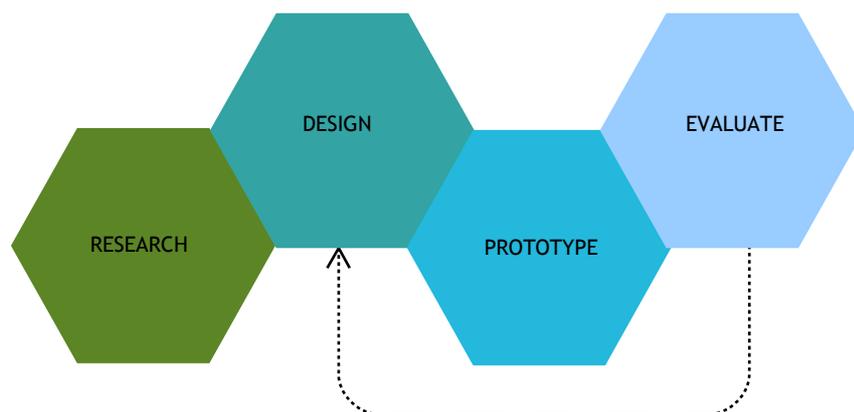


Figure 39: The steps followed in *Chronica Mobilis* design.

We have got significant references for authoring *Chronica Mobilis*, from the articulation of a built framework regarding the design taxonomy of locative and mobile media art, to the recognition of the aspects involved by *Blast Theory* on their artistic practice. The initial concept for the project we will develop came initially from my research premises and the precise issues it addresses. The core concept involved a narrative that has mobile devices and locative technologies as a social communication medium, the city as a diegetic space and the physical navigation as an interactive model. The possibilities opened up by the ubiquitous technology in the art of telling stories delimited and guided our practice. The design process centered on the new ways of

creating and experience stories in the current technological scenario. The technical aspects related to the development of a locative media art project was not our primary concern, even though there is no way of separating the form from its content, the supporting medium from the narrative told through it.

#### 4.1.1 Using Collaboration as a Mechanism to Overcome the Limitations

I was aware about the necessity of having an interdisciplinary team for the development of such kind of interactive project. When I invited an external artist to collaborate, the purpose was that this person could bring his interests and devote his skills to the technical demands that a work like this would certainly require. VJ Pixel, the invited artist, did bring many references from what he has done before<sup>1</sup>. On the other hand, I had my professional and academic background<sup>2</sup> as well as the knowledge resulted from my doctoral research to apply in the piece. Whilst I aimed to create a locative and mobile narrative to be evaluated in terms of participants' interactive experience, VJ Pixel had some interactive narratives and gameplay ideas he would like to test. *Chronica Mobilis* followed an initial design proposed by me and by the Brazilian artist, unifying our intentions.

For every resolution we took in *Chronica Mobilis* project, we considered the many factors involved. Time was one of the variables we had to think about, as the development had to be in accordance with the research agenda I had for my PhD. The budget was another issue, considering we did not have any financial sponsor that would enable us to pay for others' job, to invest in buying equipment or developing software. The essential support we had came from *Hangar*, regarding space and equipment; *Pompeu Fabra University*, in terms of audiovisual equipment; and Bahia Government, that granted VJ Pixel's trip to Barcelona.

Aspects like those ones were central when we discussed the development of softwares from scratch or the implementation of customizing tools to attend our creative necessities. Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez (2010) mentions the subject of cost involved in these projects, observing that hardware plus software (licenses, development, and maintenance) costs can go around five percent of the total cost of labor of a team

producing a piece of electronic literature. The software reutilization is one alternative they present to significantly lower cost of implementation<sup>329</sup>.

All these variables mentioned before regarding time and budget ended up influencing much in the way we built *Chronica Mobilis*. One of our crucial decision, for instance, was to work with existing tools, combining, adapting or re-signifying their uses. Even having to cut off much of the work related to software development, these limitations did not imply in a restriction to our artistic ideas. Instead, we had to be even more creative to solve the constraints we had.

The design and implementation process of *Chronica Mobilis* gained a unique feature resulted from our efforts in overcoming the challenges, that is the great creative contribution done by all the artists that collaborated with the project. Since the beginning, the work was thought to be done collaboratively, in association with other researchers, technologists, and artists. The belief was that only by sharing the practical process with others I would be able to achieve my research goals. I developed a mobile narrative experience by gathering together a group of people interested in the topic. The first one was the own VJ Pixel, who accepted to co-author the locative media piece. A series of research questions addressed to enhance knowledge about the problem I was investigating should guide the design of the artwork we will create. Not just VJ Pixel but all the others who joined the project, were aware of such conditions. Rather than contesting the artistic value of the piece, most of them showed a great interest in joining and collaborating exactly because of the exchange of knowledge it would generate.

#### 4.1.2 Merging *Top-down* and *Bottom-up* Design Strategies

The first official meeting in presence with VJ Pixel was in Brazil. In January of 2014, we went together to *Ecoarte* group, at the University of Bahia – UFBA, to present the project, discuss our general and broad ideas about it, and invite the students to collaborate. The opportunity was also the first time we exposed and got feedback from other researchers and artists about the concept we had in mind. Before that, Dr. Roc

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<sup>329</sup> That is why Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez (2010) propose the production of electronic literature as an information system, or aggregated composition that has three independent but interconnected tiers: the presentation, the process and the data. As they affirm: “In this way, the process of creating, delivering, and maintaining a structure of literary information becomes the central issue, and this happens irrespective of the choice of technology. With this approach, sharing software, libraries, architectural designs, and software as a service becomes far more efficient than simply sharing source code (Borràs Castanyer & Gutiérrez, 2010, p. 345).

Parés and Dr. Karla Brunet, my thesis directors, were the only ones who had done important comments and suggestions regarding the artistic and interactive experience, in terms of content, structure and presentation.

From February until May, together with Vj Pixel, we defined the core ideas of *Chronica Mobilis*, what we achieved after many online meetings. During the period, I was in *Blast Theory* studios, in Brighton, doing a field research<sup>330</sup>. Both phases of my PhD, the case study and practical one, were programmed to be executed in separated moments as one should contribute to the other. Nevertheless, it ended up coinciding. Reflecting now on the process, I can affirm with no doubt that being there with *Blast Theory* was really important to enhance my creativity and to apply the experience I was gathering from the volunteership activities. In the course of the months I spent with the British artists, I had the opportunity to talk informally with Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj about the project I was designing. They gave me some ideas, references, comments and advices. Despite the merging between practical and case study phases, it did not represent a problem. Instead, it revealed itself as a fruitful creative moment.

We defined all the main specification concerning the design of the geolocated narrative experience during this period. For doing that, we could take different paths. The development strategies of computer-based applications, according to Parés & Parés (2001), can usually be interaction-driven or content-driven. The former concentrates on the interaction model rather than on the content. The latter specifies the topic of the application to then determine the interaction elements and its interface. We tend to create a balance between both strategies on the initial conceptualization of *Chronica Mobilis*. We did not idealize the form separated from its content. Instead, we blended *top-down* and *bottom-up* approaches. When making considerations about the content and the context of the application, we did discuss and adapted it having in mind how participants would interact. On the other hand, as we inquired ourselves about the interaction modes we wanted to propose, the discussion ended up contributing to our creative ideas regarding possible topics and themes for the project.

I would say that we came up concomitantly with either, the tone and the way to implement it. Whether we did not conceive them simultaneously, we at least delineated

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<sup>330</sup> Chapter 1, section 1.1.2 describes this specific stage of the research, and Chapters 2 and 3 present the outcomes it.

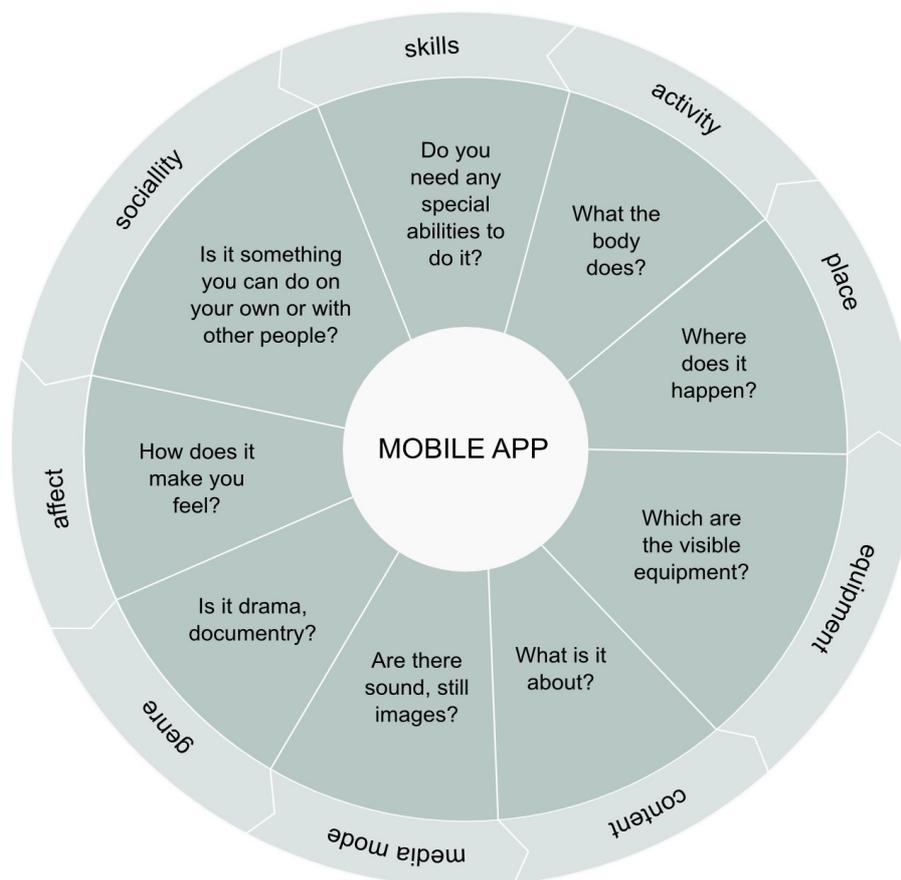
them through a dialogue we established between the two instances. Nevertheless, as being part of a Ph.D. research, the work served for the interest of testing certain theoretical premises about mobile narratives through a series of experiments. As so, *Chronica Mobilis* has by nature the objective of clarifying concepts related to the interaction model proposed by it. The acceptance of the system role in the design process did not direct us to an undervalue of the artistic vein of the piece. There was a message we wanted to get through with the artwork. We wanted it to be an interactive narrative about the facets of urban life in the postindustrial era and a narrative to take place on the city streets through a geolocated full body interaction.

On the initial stage of the design process, we have created a document with some descriptive dimensions that defines the concept of *Chronica Mobilis* regarding both domains, the interactive and the thematic one. Before writing it, though, we had a series of discussions in an attempt to identify the main features of the project. We dedicated most of the talks to precise the type of application we were creating and its content. There were also other relevant points we had to treat in this initial structuring process. From Parés & Parés (Hight, 2005, p. 6), we have got a reference to many aspects involved in the designing of a computer-based application. These were some of the issues we have talked about on the initial conceptualization phase, even though we did not follow the order in which they will appear here.

One of the requirements was identifying the input and output interfaces, the hardware and software involved and the needed of developing tools. Defining the type of participants we wanted for taking part in the work was equally important as the technical aspects we had to determine. The concerns regarding audience had less to do with the aim of reaching and building an artwork with a focus on a particular group of people and more to do with media literacy . During the design process we did not directly target an audience. Instead, we asked ourselves whether the interactive experience we had in mind would exclude some participants because of a set of competencies or skills needed for the interaction we visioned. Once discussed those aspects, rested to us delineate the processes, the data involved and its type.

For guiding the characterization of *Chronica Mobilis*, we have also considered the framework developed by Dovey & Fleuriot (2011) devoted specifically to the description, understanding, and production of mobile and locative media. At that point

of my PhD, I had already used the model proposed by the authors in the qualitative analysis of *Blast Theory* case study projects, done in the second phase of my research. The framework bases on real and existing projects rather than on theoretical ideas, what makes it also a useful tool for authoring teams conceptualizing the kind of applications they want to produce. As shown in *Figure 41*, the model indicates some basic categories for specifying a mobile application. On the most basic level, it assisted us on listing the general features of *Chronica Mobilis*, describing: the place or where the experience will happen; the activity, or what the body does when interacting; the skills needed for that; the equipment required and the media mode available on the system. Using the model as a reference, we also included sociality as a topic in the descriptive document, precisising whether it will be something you experience on your own or with other people.



*Figure 40:* Descriptive dimensions for a mobile app. Image based on the model presented by Dovey & Fleuriot (2011, p. 100).

Apart from these basic categories, Dovey & Fleuriot (2011) present other dimensions able to precise a mobile app with more specific details. A relevant one we discussed in

the designing of *Chronica Mobilis* was the level of participants control under their navigation in the data environment. This category also involves the definition of the interaction rules. The question we had was whether we would make clear participants' role or let them discover it by themselves. This is a classic interaction design problem, which contrasts experiential learning with more didactic approaches. The possible relations between space and place is another delicate factor Dovey & Fleuriot (2011) consider important to be on projects that deal with locative and mobile media. The topic involves the decision about the degrees of site-specificity of the piece, what can have a major impact on the quality of participants experience. We considered the importance of discussing such factor and decide to adopt an arbitrary or a meaningful mapping, creating a physical link or not between place and content.

It was relevant to us initially precise some of these categories in the design of *Chronica Mobilis*, but we also decided to discuss and delineate others aspects over the time. From the conceptualization of what we considered essential features, we advanced to think about the most detailed dimensions. The document we created to register our ideas contemplated:

- 1) the context, the addressed topic, and the related metaphor;
- 2) the type of data involved, the structure and the presentation of content;
- 3) the type of interaction and its related processes and features.

We also generated a wireframe with specifications for all the systems: for mobile, for desktop, and for the vjing projection. We assumed that all the aspects regarding the interactive model could change as we discussed the project with other people or started to develop the narrative content. Even lacking some topics, that was an initial description able to communicate the artwork we were envisioning. This document was also important for sharing our ideas with the artists involved in the development process. After this preliminary design stage, we were ready to start articulating the necessary resources, not just the technological but also the human talent.

### 4.1.3 Implementation Process

#### a) Open-Call to a Multidisciplinary Team

I came back from my period in *Blast Theory* studios, in England, in May. I had finished my field research and was ready to dedicate my time entirely to the practical process of designing and implementing *Chronica Mobilis*. In June 9, 2014, we did a first open call for collaboration. We were looking for a multidisciplinary team, able to assume the most different demands and functions required for the project. We advertised the project as a mechanism for the exchange of knowledge.



Figure 41: Open Call inviting people for collaborating in *Chronica Mobilis*.

The announcement circulated through websites and discussion lists on the subject of art and technology<sup>331</sup>. The call was for artists and researchers from Brazil and Spain, interested in the sharing of experience in the field of locative media and mobile narratives. We announced that most of the development activities will be done remotely and that the final stage will take place during a six-week residence in the center of artistic production *Hangar*, in Barcelona. We have got responses from twelve people interested on collaborate, programmers, researchers and artists from different nationalities, some of them leaving in Brazil, some in Spain and some in England. We decided to not restrict the exchange of knowledge. With VJ Pixel, I have talked through

<sup>331</sup> To mention some of the social media, websites, forums and lists: Hangar <hangar.org>; Memelab <memelab.com.br>; Ecoarte <ecoarte.info>; Constelaciones <constelacionesonline.net>; Yasmin Announcement <estia.media.uoa.gr/mailman/listinfo/yasmin\_announcements>; Garoa Hacker Clube <groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/hackerspacesp>; Fugas <lists.aktivix.org/mailman/listinfo/fugas>; Spectre <post.in-mind.de/cgi-bin/mailman/listinfo/spectre>.

video conference with each one of them. Nevertheless, only some have in fact work and integrated the team in this initial development phase<sup>332</sup>.

Thiago Lima is a Brazilian photographer who had done some photographic essays about the urban life. He helped us creating the first visual identity of *Chronica Mobilis*, sharing with us some of his photos and allowing their use in the project<sup>333</sup>. Ximena Alarcón<sup>334</sup> is a PhD, Sound Migratory Artist, who had been working with urban soundscapes, memory and telematic performances. She showed her first interest in collaborating in the narrative creation, but we proposed to the Colombian artist and researcher to assume the sound requirements of the project. Nacho Durán<sup>335</sup> is a VJ and multimedia artist from Spain, but at that time he was leaving in Brazil. Together with Paulo Henrique Dias, a Brazilian who was leaving in England doing his PhD, they attended the software development demands. Their initial task was researching possible applications and solutions for implementing *Chronica Mobilis* design.

## b) Iterative Approach based on Playtests

The development work has properly begun in June. When in *Blast Theory* studios for my field research, the artist Ju Row Farr advised me that it was wise to start prototyping and testing the application to refine it according to the outcomes we get from the trials. The artist tutored me to invest in an iterative process, what she considered an intelligent approach for projects that involve technology and interactivity. Both aspects had a great influence on the initial design we gave to *Chronica Mobilis*.

The concept we created for the artwork had an interaction model with a considerable contribution coming from games. Salen & Zimmerman (2004) points that the game design process cannot consists of a purely theoretical approach. Designers can learn best through the process of design by directly experiencing the things they make. We adopted an iterative design methodology for *Chronica Mobilis*, or as they define it: a play-based design process that emphasizes the playtesting and prototyping. The method presumes to take design decisions while the game is under development and according

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<sup>332</sup> We counted with the help of Thiago Lima, Ximena Alarcon, Nacho Durán and Paulo Henrique Dias.

<sup>333</sup> The selection of photos Thiago Lima presented to us for using in *Chronica Mobilis* can be found here: <<https://www.flickr.com/photos/tiagolima/sets/72157645923879714/>>

<sup>334</sup> <http://ximenaalarcon.net/>

<sup>335</sup> Nacho Durán integrates a international multimidia group called Telekomando. Some of their works can be seen at: <<http://www.telekommando.net/>>

to the experience of playing it. Even though it is not feasible to completely anticipate the play experience, designers attempt to answer some questions when playtesting the game. They try to predict at least part of how will be the experience of a game.

Following such approach, we programmed a series of playtest to refine the interactive structure and the game dynamics according to the results get from the experiments. Different questions guided each one of the many playtest we made. We asked ourselves whether or which technology could support all the functions required by the interaction model. We inquired whether the game was accomplishing its design goals, or the players could understand what they were supposed to do. We even examined what we considered as the most important aspect: will they have fun? In the designing process, we contemplated issues regarding participant's experience not only from the usability perspective but recognizing the enjoyment value in Human-Computer Interaction (Blythe, 2003). We experimented many possibilities for giving form to a structured work, testing from technical to content and funology issues. It was a cyclic process of designing, prototyping and testing the solutions we found.

We were ready to realize our first technical test one month later we started working remotely with the collaborator team. The experiment happened in São Paulo, Brazil. We had some primary issues to verify. The first one was evaluating the capacity and the quality of a streaming made through mobile phones with Android system connected in 3G networks and using *Hangout* app for it. The other aspect was the accuracy for tracking the geographical position using the *Self Hosted GPS Tracker* app.

For the test, we had two people moving through the streets of São Paulo following different routes. Each one, logged on the tracking app behaved walking and stopping next to every street corner for ten minutes. At the same time as they move, they send audio and video streaming. While it, one person remained online receiving the transmission and monitoring the GPS position of the ones in the streets. The observed and documented points of the test were: behavior and functionality of the applications, reliability regarding geolocation. We also evaluated issues concerning the experience. In the perspective of who was in the streets, we wanted to know how a person will feel holding the phone all the time for filming. Regarding the point of view of who stayed as audience, the interest was in understanding whether the streaming of images coming from the mobile phones will be "watchable". After the test, we invited Miguel Peixe, a

Web designer and developer, to join the team<sup>336</sup>. The challenge we gave to him was developing a framework for showing the GPS tracking data in real time on a map. We have discussed all the needs with him and he programmed a system to present the essential features necessary to run *Chronica Mobilis* geolocated narrative experience.

### c) Psycogeographic Practices Defining Location

In the meantime, we also started to decide and research the locations and the area in Barcelona to *Chronica Mobilis* takes place. I made a contact with Andrea Olmedo<sup>337</sup>, who I got to know her because of *Constelaciones*<sup>338</sup>. From a talk with her, came a possible topic that the narrative could frame: the ongoing gentrification in the urban district and all the shifts and consequences it had been causing. The phenomenon is a common and controversial topic in urban planning. The thematic was in agreement with the core of the fictional story we were conceiving, about the changes in the city, in people's life and in the way we experience the urban space over the years. Thus, our goal was also to create a story possible to transpose to other contexts. The gentrification was happening in Poblenou as well as in many other cities of the world.

The talk with Andrea Olmedo added value to the narrative. I started a research about gentrification, about how it was affecting the present and the future of Poblenou. I adapted the story to evidence this multi-faceted phenomenon of contemporary cities and its consequences on peoples' life. *Chronica Mobilis* narrative documents the changes over the time that culminated on the urban “renew” of Poblenou. Gentrification became the central conflict of the story, responsible for triggering a series of events represented in each of the three subplots that compose the whole narrative. As we will explain in detail later, the embedded narrative brings the three stages of a protagonist life: child, young and adult. The child perspective portrays the character arrival to a low-income neighborhood, deteriorated, old, abandoned and neglected by the government policies.

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<sup>336</sup> Miguel Peixe works on community engaging platforms, maps and data visualization. For more details about the repositories he has contributed see: <<https://libraries.io/github/miguelpeixe>>. We highlight *Código Urbano*, a project in defense of free software and related to open data and open technologies for cities <<http://codigourbano.org/>>.

<sup>337</sup> Andrea Olmedo is enrolled in the Doctoral Program of the Communication Department, at Pompeu Fabra University, with the project "Medios locativos: del mapeo de información a la transferencia de conocimiento punto a punto (P2P). Estrategias creativas de descentralización de la información geoposicionada". In 2014, she won a Honorary Mention in *Prix Ars Electronica* for the project *Montenoso* <<http://montenoso.net/>>.

<sup>338</sup> The group works with digital media and has been developing an extensive research on Poblenou neighborhood in Barcelona. See: <<http://constelacionesonline.net/>>

The young moment frames the time in which the area got gentrified, what affect longtime residents; the case of the protagonist of the story that have to leave his house. The adult life symbolizes the character's return to the old neighborhood, marked by the memories of the past and the newly gentrified manner it looks like.

With the central conflict of *Chronica Mobilis* narrative gaining form, the next step was finding the places in the city to geolocate the story fragments. A house, a bar, a bus stop, a school, a square were some of the locations in which the scenes of the story occurs. We determined these diegetic spaces even before starting with the writing process. I imagined, created and wrote each scene having in mind where it will take place and what was the protagonist age at that time. The method was visualizing the ambient to then imagine what could have happened in there in a precise moment of that person's life. Which memory he has from this place? Following this approach, I idealized every location where the story events occurred. The consequence was starting the search for some real places in Poblenou neighborhood guided by those pre-requisites. When geolocating the scenes, the chosen spots in the city should be minimally in correspondence with the imagined ones present on the plot. We knew that it will certainly be difficult transpose the fictional locations to the real ones with precision. Aware of that, we were open to adapt the story according to what we find.

In August, I started doing some exploratory journeys through the streets of the neighborhood. I followed the premisses of the situationist technique of *dérive* (Debord, 1965), taking an unplanned drift through Poblenou urban area without any special or usual motive for my movement and action. I let the attractions and encounters in the environment guide me, discovering which emotions and behaviors would come in response to the environment. My desire was to look differently to that space. I just wanted to feel the life in Poblenou, its inhabitants, its public and private spaces, its architecture. Drifting around the area in a psychogeographic journey, I played of getting lost. Regardless of knowing the district quite well, I took unpredictable paths through alleys that I had never taken before. Whilst walking, I registered my experience in audio recordings. Even tough the goal of the first exploratory journeys was not to map locations, I took some pictures from local scenes I came across. The photos served to remind me later of what I experienced. After this initial phase, my subsequent journeys in Poblenou were to find locations to geolocate the scenes of *Chronica Mobilis*

embedded story. In a more advanced stage, the goal was experimenting possible routes participants will have to do for going to the target places.

#### d) Playtest of the First Prototype

By September, we realized another playtest. At that time, we were able to examine almost all dimensions involved in *Chronica Mobilis* interactive experience. The first aspect to verify was the streaming via *Hangout app* in a mobile phone with *Android* connected on a 3G network. Despite it looks like the same we had already done since the first evaluation, there were some differences. In the previous playtests, we analyzed just the quality and frequency of the streaming. Now the experiment will last one hour, simulating the expected duration of the interactive section. We wanted to check whether the device had enough battery for the required functionalities, ensuring that the handsets will not run out of charge in the middle of the presentation. We also kept evaluating the accuracy and the actualization of the *Self Hosted GPS Tracker* application, now having the opportunity to perceive on a map interface how was the representation of the data it gathered.

Apart from the technological issues, we also intended to experiment one of the possible routes participants will make during their experience in the streets. We used the geolocation set for one of the subplots, simulating the group of participants seeking the memories of the young character. This second playtest inaugurated the series of other experiments with software, geolocation of content and gameplay, which enabled us to work in some concrete adjustments on the structure of *Chronica Mobilis*.

#### e) The Game Metaphor and the Embedded Narrative Content

We kept refining the gameplay and the plot simultaneously to the technological implementation process. The game was still missing a convincing motif to justify players mission. In the middle of this crucial moment Murilo Dada<sup>339</sup> appeared contributing with the creation of a contextual metaphor. He had the idea of situating *Chronica Mobilis* in a remote future ambiance, in which there is no more analog or digital data about the past and archeologists have to work digging memories on preserved brains to understand the old days. This futuristic prediction ended up giving

<sup>339</sup> Murilo Dada is a copywriter, working on Marketing and Advertising. He has a great interest in ARG's and games in general. At that time he was working on his first interactive book, called *The Swan Overseer*. See more about him at: <<https://www.linkedin.com/in/murilodada>>.

the tone for the whole project. Murilo Dada also contributed to a relevant refinement of the narrative embedded in the game, improving the three subplots concerning the fictional memories participants had to find through the city.



Figure 42: Shooting the introductory video of *Chronica Mobilis*.

The game acquired an interesting nuance in the same level as it gained complexity. How to explain the whole intricate metaphor to players and to the audience taking part in *Chronica Mobilis*? We were still thinking about the way we could do it when Ana Vilar<sup>340</sup> came with a solution, collaborating with the idea of making an introductory video in a futuristic aesthetic to exhibit at the beginning of *Chronica Mobilis* presentation. We accepted the video as an engaging manner to set everybody in the fictional context of the presentation, the ones in there for playing the game as well as those whose intention will be just watching it.

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<sup>340</sup> Ana Vilar is a creative Art Director and Post-Producer. See more about her at: [http://www.domestika.org/es/ana\\_vilar/portfolio](http://www.domestika.org/es/ana_vilar/portfolio)

I invited Oriol Cardús<sup>341</sup> to contribute in the conception of the video. We scripted it together based on the text Murilo Dada wrote. He directed, shot and edited the images with the help of other contributors from his professional circle. The actresses Laura Baker and Natacha Elmir answered affirmatively to my proposal of acting on the film. Laura interpreted the “Super Máquina”, an intelligent computer able to analyze and retrieve information of old and conserved brains. Natacha interpreted the “Coordinadora de Prospección”, a crazy scientist leading the whole game operation. We exhibited the films at the beginning and the end of *Chronica Mobilis*, introducing and giving closure to it.



Figure 43: Shooting the video fragments of *Chronica Mobilis* embedded narrative.

By this time, another decision we took was that all the embedded fictional story of the game will be represented by short films. We opted for this solution, even though we knew the huge demand it will generate. We believed that transposing the story scenes to video fragments will engage more who joined the show as audience. The decision implied to shoot twelve videos with scenes interpreted by actors and some of them

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<sup>341</sup> Oriol Cardús is a cinema and TV commercials Director and Scriptwriter. See more about him at: <http://www.oriolcardus.com/>

filmed in the exact spot in which we geolocate them. We opened another public call in this last stage of the process, to seek out actors. With a great effort and the help of Laura Baker, who did the casting, we managed to have the required team. I produced the filming, and with the collaboration of Ana Vilar, we shoot and edited all the video fragments necessary to run *Chronica Mobilis*.

#### f) Artistic Residency in Hangar



Figure 44: Playtests done during the residence in Hangar.

In October happened our residence in *Hangar*. After so many time working remotely, we had the opportunity to get together some of those who collaborated on the development process of *Chronica Mobilis*. It were six weeks of intense work. VJ Pixel was already in Barcelona, since the end of September. Ximena Alarcón, Murilo Dada,

Nacho Durán and Karla Brunet came to join the in presence work on the last weeks before the presentation. Those days represented a period for unceasing playtests, followed by the final adjustments. We kept testing the software, the gameplay, the geolocation of the narrative fragments. We also did experiments to prove the live vjing with three streaming channels coming from mobile phones. After every simulation of the game, we adapted and fixed the problems encountered. The issues were not just technological. We had, for instance, to cut off some fragments of the embedded story to fit in the time players will have to search the places they have to visit. With the playtests, we also created and tune the game cues to give participants.

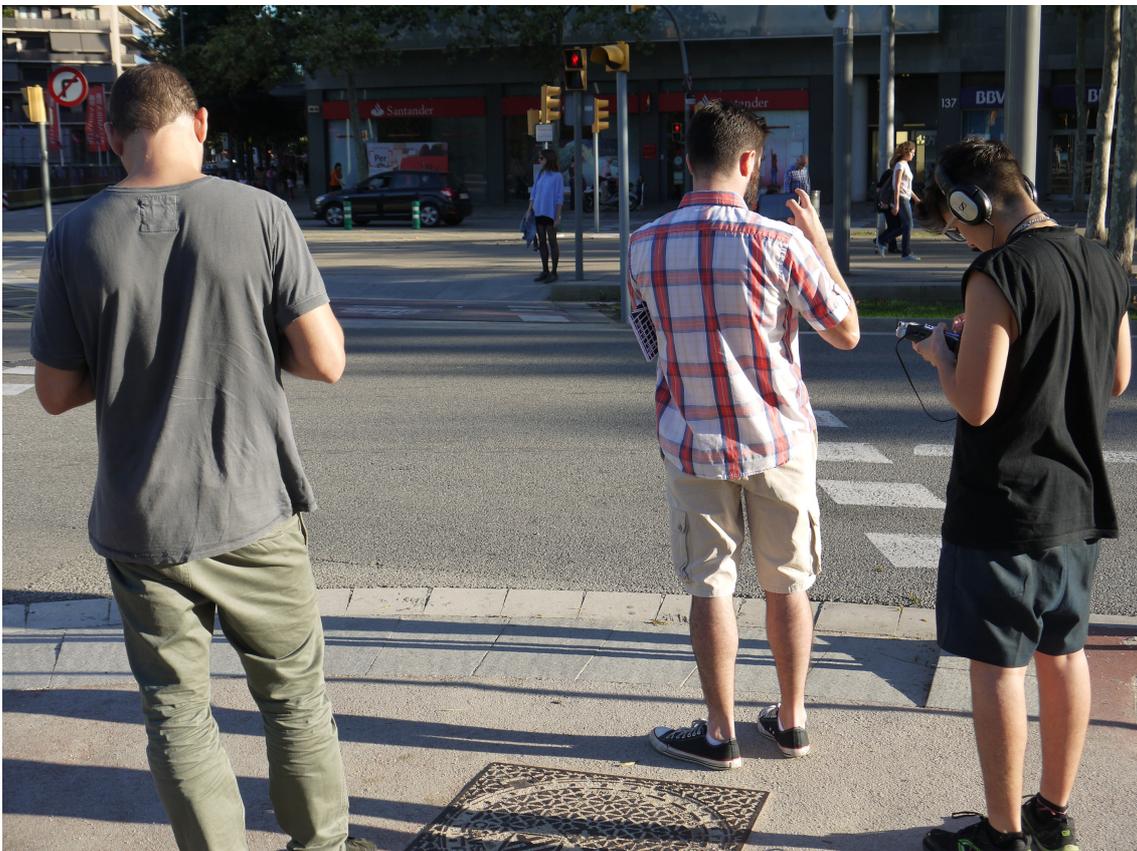


Figure 45: Deep Listening practices through the streets of Poblenou.

Together with the final activities programmed for the month, there was the *Jornada Chronica Mobilis*, an event planned to precede the presentation of our work in *Hangar*. We conceived it to be a three-day workshop on the subject of locative media and mobile narratives. The program offered different activities in the attempt of sharing the knowledge acquired with the project. On the first day, Ximena Alarcón conducted deep listening practices in “Intangible Poblenou”. On the second day, there was a debate with

the participation of Roc Parés and Karla Brunet, discussing “The new narrative genres and the use of locative technologies on artistic project”. The third and final day we were “Deconstructing *Chronica Mobilis*”, explaining the technological solutions we found for the project and the manner it will operate. The workshop was also a great opportunity for us to get together a group of people interested in the topic. Moreover, many of these participants were the ones who joined *Chronica Mobilis* as a player. As mentioned before, collaboration was the core of the project. The compromise assumed by all the artists that integrated the team over the year was essential for developing the initial idea designed by VJ Pixel and me. At that point of the process, it was even clearer the role it played in the piece we conceived. All the interactive structure designed will just run in case we were able to have enough participants playing the geolocate narrative with game dynamic. We needed at least nine people willing to play the game. The presentation depended completely on public participation.



Figure 46: Open call for participants we spread on Facebook.

The last week before the presentation marked an intense work of production as well as of marketing. As we called artists to collaborate in the development of the piece, we were at that moment inviting people to join us in this experience. *Chronica Mobilis* was presented in Barcelona, on Saturday, 25th October, at 5 pm in Ricson room, in *Hangar*.

Surprisingly, we have got 22 people playing the game. Some of them came in futuristic costumes. They not just played, but acted as proper performers. Most of the success and fun we had on that afternoon was mainly due to their commitment to the whole story.

## 4.2 Organization of the Narrative Content

How differently do we perceive and live the spaces and the city in distinct moments of our lives? *Chronica Mobilis* represents an attempt to reflect upon these question, by framing the correlations between time, perception and our experience in the world. The piece assumes the character of a chronicle, expressed by the own name given to it in its Latin transcription. Chronicle refers to historical accounts of facts and events, a predecessor genre of the modern timelines. Different from analytical histories, a chronicle range the facts in chronological order. Chronos, from where the word derivates, means exactly time<sup>342</sup>. We conceived our story taking all these references regarding chronology but deviating a bit on purpose. Rather than just recording the events that occurred giving equal weight to them, in our chronica we selected some of the occurrences in a meaningful interpretative context as authors do in a narrative.

We first considered a substantial period of time to represent in *Chronica Mobilis*. Not necessarily the lifetime of an individual from birth until dead but precisely a 30 years timeline. Instead of categorizing the facts year by year, we marked what we believed to be the three essential and quite distinct phases of a person's life: child, young and adult moments. Similarly to a chronicle, it gives the impression of an epic story that extends through a vast temporal length, tracing the trajectory of an individual in the world. The deviation is that the chronicle we produced goes beyond an impartial and historical account of facts. Interpretative, it does not necessarily contrast the narrative principles but assumes many of its traces. It reports the events the protagonist has passed through and the tales and moments he has recorded on his mind. *Chronica Mobilis* brings his memories of facts in an almost mental diary that he kept with him over the time. As memories, these tales are a product of an interpretative and selective mind.

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<sup>342</sup> chronicle. (n.d.). *Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition*. Retrieved July 11, 2014 from <<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/chronicle>>.

As the term *mobilis* also from Latin refers to<sup>343</sup>, we will attest some inconstancies of a movable and changeable person and urban space. The story is about a character named Valentin and marked situations faced by him in three stages of his life. We see the protagonist when a child, young and adult, or accurately when he is 10, 25, and 40 years old. In concrete terms, it works as if we had a storytelling in three acts with each of these phases represented in the narrative by a subplot. There is a baseline tracing all the story events over the course of the character's existence. Even though not necessarily all of the facts are clearly shown in the narrative, some of them are indirectly assumed or mentioned somehow.

The central conflict that unifies the three subplots is Valentin's family struggle to settle a new life. They move to a district on the suburbs searching for better conditions. When they seem to achieve it, they are forced to change place once more due to a renewal occurring in their neighborhood. In the last act of the story, there is Valentin's regress to the place where he grew up, what is motivated by a contradictory reason. The life of the story protagonist changes significantly over the years and also the urban space that surrounds him. Most of the transformations and reversals on the story happens as a reflect of the gentrification, a real issue in the contemporary cities<sup>344</sup>.

#### 4.2.1 Plot and Discursive Structure

The central premise when we began to shape *Chronica Mobilis* was creating an narrative to be interactive. In the theoretical part of my doctoral research, I analyzed a series of hypertext architectures adopted by digital textuality (2011). These are some of the models and structures commented on Chapter 2. The interactive schemes allowed us to think and organize *Chronica Mobilis* on the level of plot and discourse, according to the interaction model we wanted to propose between participants and the content. One of the important design decisions we took in the creative process of *Chronica Mobilis* was do not let participants influence on the plot level of the embedded story. Instead of allowing their interactive actions to affect the content itself, we consented their decisions to rebound only on the narrative discourse domain. We let them dictate the telling act but not alter the destiny of the characters or events itself.

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<sup>343</sup> mobile. (n.d.). *Collins English Dictionary - Complete & Unabridged 10th Edition*. Retrieved July 11, 2014 from <<http://www.dictionary.com/browse/mobile>>.

<sup>344</sup> File with *Chronica Mobilis* embedded story reproduced in Appendix 12.

We restricted part of the participant's agency to certify ourselves that we would not lose the control under the story-logic. We tended to opt for ensuring participants meaningful experience instead of giving them the freedom to author or change the course of the story. Pursuing a balance regarding control, we decided to be the authors of a pre-determined story, but let participants assume the role of storytellers. We let them free to trigger the fictional events in any order they wish, believing that the story-logic will come in the end from a linear and temporal arrangement of the fragments reconstructed by them applying a cognitive schema that reveals the narrative underlying logic. As participants progress in their interactive experience, they mentally make meaning of everything they access.

Considering so, we authored the fictional story embedded<sup>345</sup> in *Chronica Mobilis* on a singular linear plot with a state-transition representation of events, guided by the chronological order of what happened in the protagonist's life. We split this one destiny line into three distinct subplots, each one for a period of time: the child, the young and the adult.

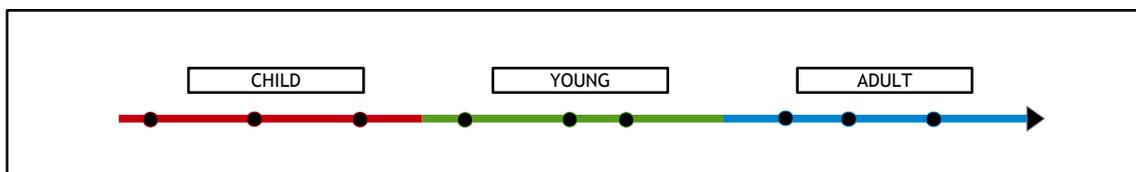


Figure 47: *Chronica Mobilis* plot interpreted in a state-transition diagram.

Despite the linearity of *Chronica Mobilis* plot, a braided scheme is a structure that approximates and exemplifies better the narrative on the discourse level. As shown in Figure 48, three independent story lines referring to a period in the protagonist's life compose the braided diagram. The nodes on them represent the story events, each one taking place in a determined location and in a precise time. The three subplots are running in parallel. Even though the divergence on the narrative temporality of each subplot, the telling act will reveal them concomitantly. We pre-scripted the story, but

<sup>345</sup> As we will discuss in the next pages, *Chronica Mobilis* narrative is composed by Valentin's story and the story participants create through their game actions. The embedded story, or the one we are discussing in this section, is manipulative. The other one that raises from the game play is contributive, considering participants collaborate to author it by putting their body, their words and their image and sound through the data they generate.

participants triggers the discourse formation. The three authored subplots are available for three distinct group of participants unfold simultaneously.

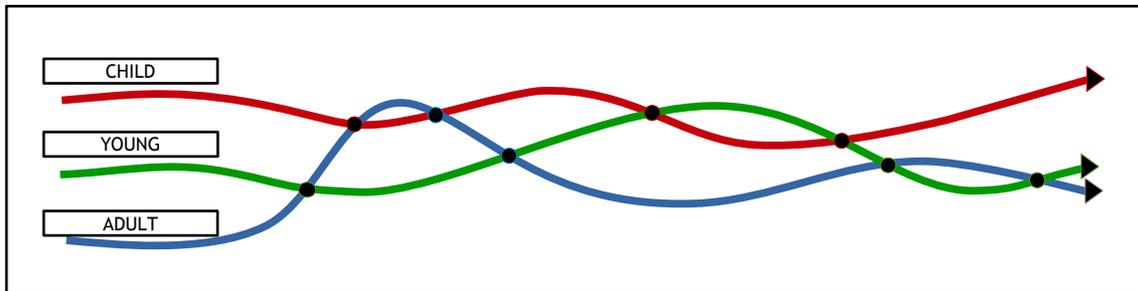


Figure 48: *Chronica Mobilis* discourse represented on a braided design.

We opted for building a discourse as an interwoven of destiny lines, letting participants interaction interleaves three subplots and concurrent storylines. The difference is that, rather than following the function a braided architecture usually serves to (Ryan, 2006), we applied the model for another purpose. On *Chronica Mobilis*, each subplot does not correspond to a different character destiny but represents the different perspectives the protagonist of the story has about a place. The three stages all together reveals the most profound changes in the life of the character as well as in the site where he grew up. The three subplots can share the same location for some of its fictional events. These are the exactly moments in which the destiny lines interwave. On the narrative, the interlace result is variations in accordance to the event the character lived in that location and the perception of the facts he had on that stage of his life. Such parallelism between the telling of the three subplots comes to suggest the existence of a contrast regarding the manner a same person can experience, feels and understands its surroundings.

*Chronica Mobilis* narrative follows a database structure that approximates to the design of a fractal. It comprises small unities that in the first instance are the three subplots. The subplots, in turn, are formed by the assembling of even smaller unities, represented by the scenes that compose it. All these pieces forming the narrative are independent elements. The unities, or nodes, has to mean on its own. They can figure alone or in a network. The fragments do not require any other specific content to be seen before or after. For allowing that to happen, we wrote each subplot and each of its scenes giving them their own story arc. In the case of participants have access to just one of the three subplots, or even to only a few of its scenes, they recollect some of the protagonist

memories regarding that specific stage in his life. Even though it will be the perspective of one particular moment in the character's trajectory, this will not compromise the story logic. The subplots and its scenes are individual episodes. The three destiny lines are independent but complementary. Like pieces of a puzzle, participants can combine them with other parts, amplifying and adding nuances to the whole story.

The narration, or the discourse formation in *Chronica Mobilis* consists of participants accessing the various story nodes in the most diverse order and later assembling them together in their temporal structure. There is no determined beginning, middle or end to the storytelling act. It is a nonlinear narrative determined by participants interaction. The story is linear, but the narration of its events does not have necessarily to be in a focused chain. The manner the story unfolds is unpredictable and can vary according to the election made by each participant. They can not alter the embedded story itself, but they can customize the narrative according to their election of the order they will access the fragments.

#### 4.2.2 Relations between Site and Story

*Chronica Mobilis* explores the nonlinear possibilities inaugurated by digital media, at the same time as it benefits from the potentialities opened up by the creative use of locative and mobile technologies. Narratives that geolocate its content normally operates reinforcing the relations between site, story and participants, creating an embodied experience rooted in particular, lived and shared, places and moments. Immersive and compelling experiences can result from such dialogue, making participants engage with the space mapped for the diegesis that can even be the original location where the represented events happened. *Chronica Mobilis* stresses aspects that characterize these narratives forms, in particular the connection with the space in which participants experience it. We explored the convergence of digital data and physical location using portable media and the geographical space as an extension of the story.

One of the goals leading the design process of *Chronica Mobilis* was experiment with embodied forms of experience based on physical navigation. We created a juxtaposition of the real and the storyworld, converting an area of Poblenou district, in Barcelona, into a space for the narrative takes place. Instead of working with the whole amplitude of the district, we delimited borders for the narrative experience happens. Inside this

kind of arena, we placed the story with its fictional events to bring the sense of a lived experience root on the area that geolocates the account.



Figure 49: Map of Poblenou district in Barcelona, Spain.

*Chronica Mobilis* tended to become a site-specific locative work, regardless of our initial desire of building a context-aware narrative that we could adapt and translate to other cities. The result was a narrative that resonates the environment. Poblenu and all its elements inside the framed arena play a central role in the storytelling, becoming part of the diegesis and integrated to it in a meaningful way. When entering in this universe, participants see themselves situated in ambiguity, between what is reality and what is fiction. The geolocated narrative associates data to specific spots in the mapped region. We focused on significant places of Poblenu that we could use to geotag content. The selection criteria included evaluating the appropriateness of each location according to some variables. The first aspect was the own character of the place. We had a list of precise locations to find. Among them, there were: a bar, a square, a school, a bus stop. The demand we had extrapolated the pure act of finding places according to their functionality. We should look for sites that correspond to the characteristics of the ones described in the story. We had a mission, for instance, of discovering a bar with specific elements that could coincide with the ones present on the story scene geolocated in there. We wanted to achieve a minimum correlation between the fictional and the real universe. For that, the chosen places should evoke the atmosphere brought by the story and its events.

The local context was determinant in the selections we did. By context we mean a place with an emblematic History, or even in a geographic position of the district that could coincide with and enrich the fictional world. To geotag some scenes, for instance, we needed historical sites or at least places with a marked History in the neighborhood. For some other scenes, we needed locations able to evidence the contrast between the new and the old. That is the case of a modern building present in the young subplot that represents the contested “progress”. Looking for a location to geotag this scene, we found a building in Poblenu in a modern architecture that does decharacterize the block where it is, contrasting significantly with all the others in the area.

Such parallels between the story and the real space intended to create a connection between both layers of meaning and by somehow blur the line on participants mind that separates what is fiction from what is non-fiction. Finding locations with these particular features was not a big deal, as we wrote the story and adapted it having as a reference our psychogeographic incursions on Poblenu area. An example we can give is the case of the place to geotag the scenes that happened in the protagonist's house. We

aimed to find an empty terrain, as in the story they demolished the house when the gentrification starts. As we can see in *Figure 50*, we do manage to find a location compatible with our wishes, and it was even better than what we needed. The place was protected by a construction fence and had a real sign announcing the sale. Thus, looking through the metal plates, we could see written on the walls words such as “speculation: the neighborhood virus”. We considered all the elements we found in that location that could serve for enriching the scene we geolocate in there. We rewrote that part of the plot for including in the story some of the landmarks present in that place.



*Figure 50:* Place in Poblenou district chosen to represent Valentin's house.

In *Chronica Mobilis*, the reality of Poblenou and the fictional story placed as a virtual layer in the district establish a fruitful dialog. That is not exclusive to the case illustrated by the examples given before. These connections between the story universe and the urban scenario that geolocates it occur in the whole work. Plus, *Chronica Mobilis* narrative has much of the current situation lived by Poblenou residents and the signs present in the own environment evidence such reality. All these connections ended up creating a powerful connotation for the piece.

### 4.2.3 Geolocation of Content

When taking part on *Chronica Mobilis* and following its embedded narrative, participants experience Poblenou through the lens of the story's character. We choose the video support to represent each scene of the three subplots and recorded all of them in first person perspective. The intention was to make them look like they were memories of the character, simulating his subjective view on situations lived by him as it has occurred in the past. The audience witnesses the events and the environment where they happened through the protagonist's eyes.



Figure 51: Video scenes of the three subplots geolocated in Poblenou district.

To reaffirm even more the connections between site, story, and participants, we recorded the videos fragments in the same physical locations of Poblenou where we will geotag them. Indeed, those were the exact spot participants would have to visit to retrieve them. We evidenced on the recorded scenes some of the elements and features that characterize each place, carefully bringing visual references of the real locations. By doing that, we believed that participants would be able to recognize and make a mental link when visiting the place to retrieve the story fragment.

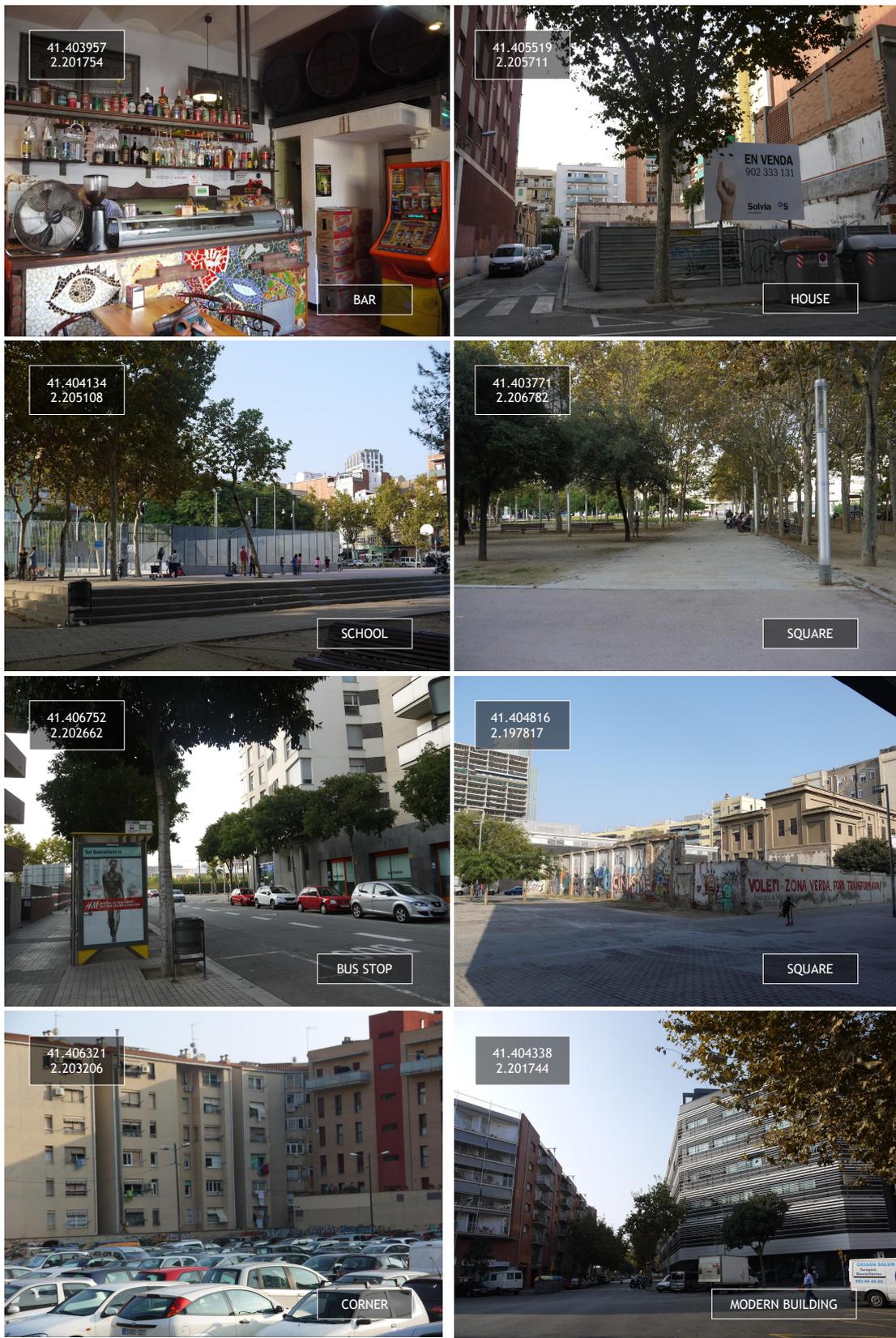


Figure 52: Places in Poblenou district in which we geolocated the story fragments.

The embedded narrative of *Chronica Mobilis* is a network of geolocated nodes that works as a spatialized database with twelve fragments of content, which are the video scenes of the three subplots. The access to these content happens only through the physical navigation in the story database. Real locations in Poblenou neighborhood function as locative nodes, containing a virtual fictional layer added to it. There is a link connecting the protagonist's memories to the target real spaces in the district. *Figure 52* shows the eight nodes of the geolocated narrative, where participants can find content. Some of these spots are exclusive and reference scenes of just one subplot, while other contain multiple and distinct fragments of the narrative.

Both, the child and the adult subplots, for instance, have events that occurred at the bus stop. On the scene that stands for the childhood, it symbolizes the arrival of the protagonist's family to a decayed neighborhood. The same location appears in the subplot for the adult phase. In that case, the bus stop marks the return of the protagonist to the district. Instead of the disgust of the child subplot scene, now the events bring the feeling of surprise with how fancy the place has turned into. The same happens with the house, a site that geolocates scenes of two subplots. It appears in the protagonist's childhood and the adult moment. In the former case, the events happen inside the house, showing the everyday life and struggle of the family. On the latter, the facts are in front of an empty place with the demolition of the house serving to point to the consequence of the gentrification in the district.

#### 4.2.4 Choreographing the Navigation through the Storyworld

*Chronica Mobilis* is a navigable story triggered by participant movement through an explorative journey in Poblenou district. Considering the configuration of an experience in space, we also needed to pay attention to the distance between the chosen spots. We pinned on a map all the places of the geolocated narrative and then traced a connection showing the ones included in each of the three subplots. As can be seen in the *Figure 53*, they come differentiated by color. Red is the child, green is the young, and blue is the adult subplot. As mentioned in the previous subsection, some spots are exclusive to one subplot and others geolocate scene of more than one. We carefully measured the distances among the pins. We should avoid long distances between one point and another one, as it corresponded to the level of physical effort participants will have to spend in terms of navigation.

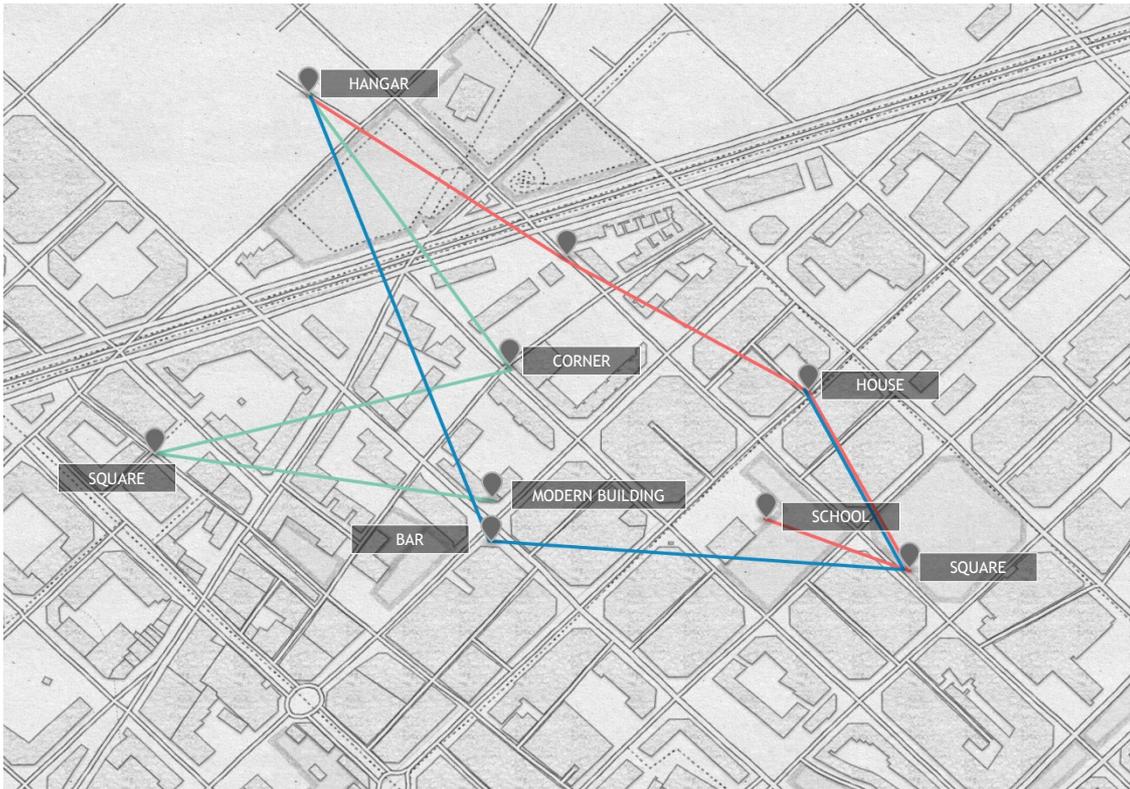


Figure 53: Map and satellite view with the geolocated points of the three subplots.

When determining the length to go from place to place, the requisite was turn it into a feasible experience for people be able to make it. This aspect is important to consider

when having an interactive model that requires a considerable physical energy to spend on the explorative act. Long distances between the target places would demand too much effort from participants. We have delimited a geographic radius for the story and attempted to situate locations of each subplot close to one another.

The strategy of measuring distances between spots had an even more relevant requirement. Our goal was not only to administrate participant's physical effort but orchestrate and choreograph the duration and the rhythm of their experience. What also motivated us to adopt such mechanism was the desire to force participants to see their partners during the storytelling act. This relational aspect was important to us because we wanted to create this collective sense on those joining the interactive narrative from the streets. We believed that the act of seeing others doing the same would foster some responses<sup>346</sup>. We imagine that it could create collaboration or even competition between participants. These were the sort of relations we wanted to observe emerging from their interactions.

### 4.3 A Gameplay to turn Participants into Storytellers

*Chronica Mobilis* narrative has its pieces spread as a puzzle in Poblenou neighborhood. The storytelling act takes form only through participants physical dislocations. It is not a guided journey, in the sense that it has to follow a predetermined linear and sequential course. Instead, it is a free and explorative one, with participants defining its trajectory. A precise goal directs the exploration of the area. The mission is to find the meaningful locations that are part of the fictional story. The path they will take to reach the target places is however defined by their decisions. Exploring this story maze, participants have the opportunity to exercise and expand their agency in individual and collective ways. They act as an engine, walking through a network of data elements. By visiting the target places, they retrieve the story fragments geolocated in there. The narration of *Chronica Mobilis* relates to participants' progress in finding these spots. Only by this way the story can come into being. They are the storytellers giving form to the narrative discourse.

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<sup>346</sup> As we detected by the analysis of *Blast Theory* projects discussed in Chapter 3 when we talk about the individual character of experiences based on mobile devices and the strategies to foster a collective feeling on participants.

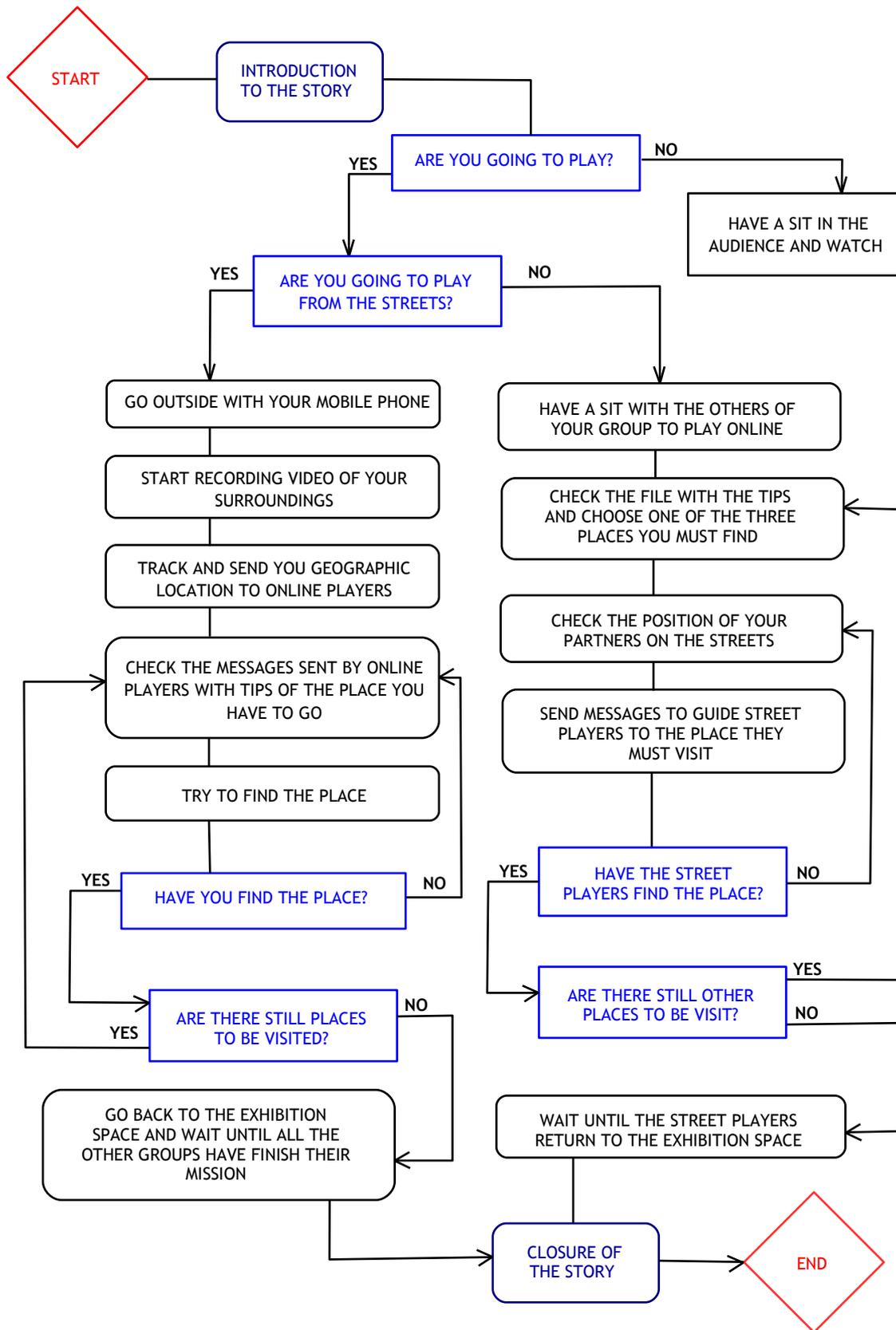


Figure 54: Flowchart showing the steps and mechanics of the game.

Participants encounter the story nodes in an aleatory sequence, and the meaning will rely on their ability to recollect and mount these fragments. But the meaning of *Chronica Mobilis* experience does not come only from the scenes participants collect through the city. Their interactions itself is meaningful. They act in a behavior that goes beyond than a click retrieval of narrative fragments. Their actions in the diegetic space get motivation from ludic strategies. We adopted a gameplay as the primary conduit to engage participants in the interactive experience. Because of the dynamics of participants' interaction, we situate *Chronica Mobilis* at the intersection of games and narratives.

There is a dilemma regarding whether the concept of narrative can apply to computer games or, in other words, the belief that the status of game can somehow preclude the status of narrative. Espen Aarseth (2004), for instance, argues that the analysis of games as stories can erase the differences of both as well as turn impossible the understanding of their intrinsic qualities. To him, the set of rules and the agency of the player define a game more than its theme. He affirms that what distinguishes a game from another one is the gameplay and the range of strategic options comprised on it. Following the same approach, Jull (2001) argues that interactivity and narration can not happen at the same time. He believes that narrative is regarded as necessarily retrospective, so there is no way to influence something that has already happened, as it occurs in games and other interactive media. Ryan (2006) comments such ambition some ludologists have to emancipate the study of computer games from literary theory. On the other hand, Pérez Latorre (2010), in “Análisis de la significación del videojuego”, shows how the study of discursive structures of games or ludic discourses has relevant synergies with the study of the discursive structures of narrativity. As he concludes, there are significant similarities between these two formats. Despite this apparent controversy interrelation or conflict between ludology versus narratology, we designed *Chronica Mobilis* to exploit both of these traits.

Together with the fictional story embedded in the game, the live presentation of *Chronica Mobilis* have a significant contribution coming from the game dynamics, from the challenges it poses to players and their consequent unexpected and not scripted acts to overcome the difficulties. We oriented the gameplay to accomplish determined goals. We wanted to allow players to build their parallel story based on their action on the game. In a certain point, we even considered bringing actors to integrate the team of

players, as a way to ensure an exciting and attractive game performance. That did not happen. We relied only on players performance. We opted for an interaction model that could enhance their sense of personal control, allowing them to build their parallel story based on their game actions. Attending our desire, participants should conclude their experience motivated by the urge of retelling both, the embedded and the game story. The retelling of the play experience in *Chronica Mobilis* does evidence the narrativity that exists behind the game, even considering that it is not the same as the live experience. They have been agents and spectators, living and watching the story.

#### 4.3.1 A Combination of Embedded and Emergent Narrative

As explained previously, our first attempt when conceptualizing the *Chronica Mobilis* was to create an interactive experience that uses mobile and locative technologies as a delivery mechanism for storytelling. Plus, we wanted to place participants in the physical locations where the story events happened. We not just rethought space and the options for narration but also suggested a game dynamics for motivate participants full body interaction in an locative experience. As a result, we got two layers of story featuring on *Chronica Mobilis* as in a narrative of discovery, according to the definition that Jenkins (2004) gives to it.

The three subplots about Valentin's life embedded on the game compose one layer. It is a pre-structured fictional story awaiting to be discovered, with its fragments linked to some places in the city to serve as a kind of treasure players will have to encounter in the game. As a rewarding storytelling, it comes fragmented in the format of cut-scenes presented every time players successful complete a step mission. Even tough players experience this embedded narrative through the game, the story can formally exist apart from their play actions. Pre-generated, it exists before players' interaction.

The other layer is the metaphor that gives the context and the motivation for the play actions. We created an imaginative, humorous and futuristic metaphor to justify the game activity and to enhance the interest of participants<sup>347</sup>. In the game, players are archeologists of the future, in the year 6014, trying to figure out how society was four thousand years ago as there are no digital or analog registers from the past. They have to navigate in a virtual scenario situated in the year 2014, looking for emotionally

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<sup>347</sup> File with the metaphor of the game reproduced in Appendix 14.

important places that can trigger memories of a person associated with those locations. This person hide what are the last analog recordings from the past. By recollecting and analyzing these memories, players can find and retrieve these hidden objects.



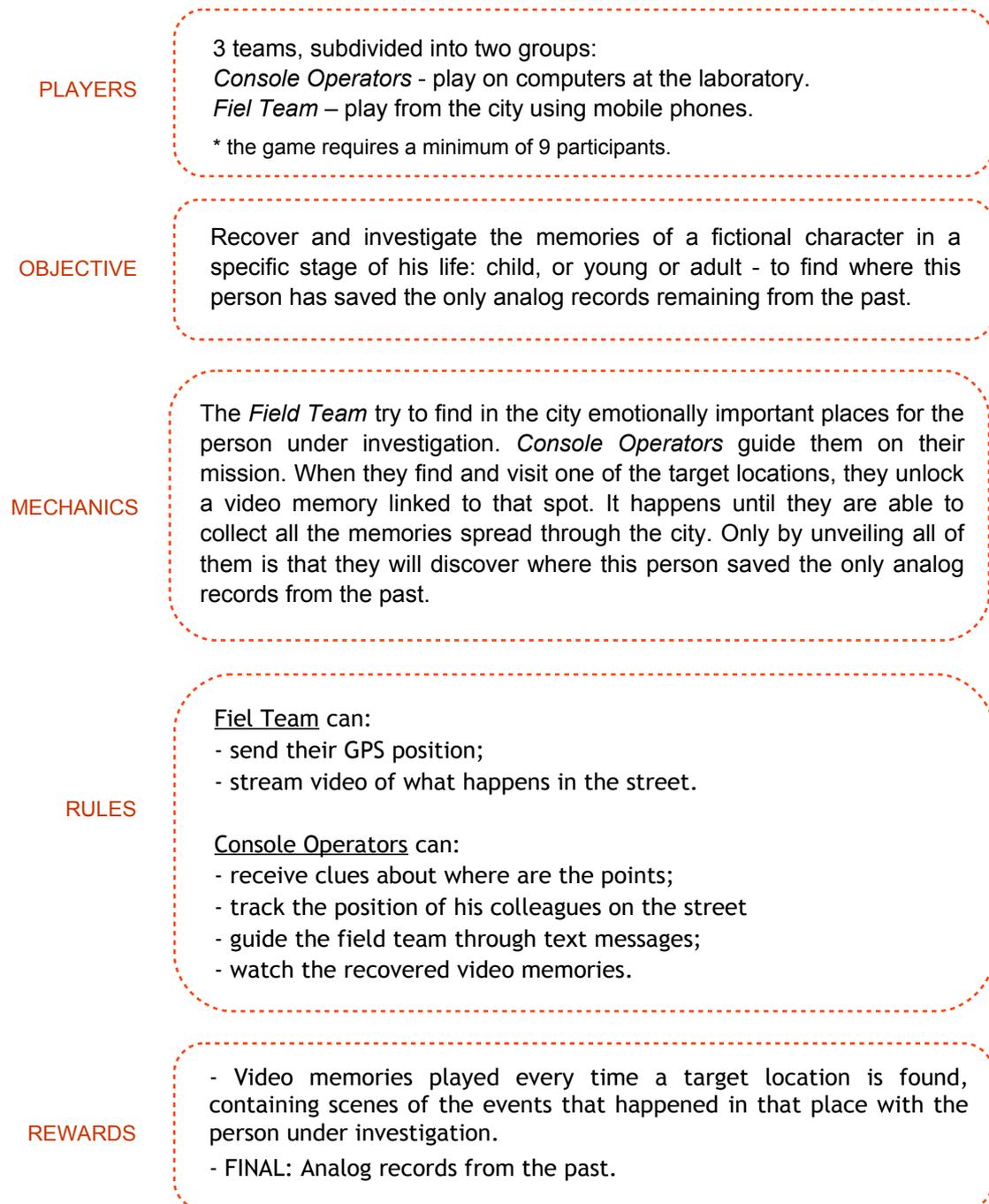
Figure 55: Scientist in the year 6014, part of *Chronica Mobilis*' game metaphor.

The story contributed to contextualize who joined the presentation, both players and non-players. Relatively unstructured, it is concurrent and complementary to the embedded narrative that comes in the game as cut-scenes. Players are the ones who controls it, exploring the game space and unlocking its secrets. They produce a parallel story based on their search through the streets. The story of archeologists of the future is similar to an emergent storytelling, arising from the meaningful actions played by those who interact under the complex set of rules that governs the game world. The moments of this narrative are not pre-scripted and structured in a relatively fixed manner. The events in this story are unexpected and depends on players behavior. On *Chronica Mobilis*, players become authors and characters of an incessant story of search on Poblenu's streets. They are archeologists of the future in one layer and the storytelling engine of both stories through their performance.

#### 4.3.2 Establishing a Formal Structure for the Play Action

Right in the beginning when defining the interactive model of the artwork, we asked ourselves: what are the rules? That was when we discovered that *Chronica Mobilis* was

thrilling the game path. Designing a gameplay for the work was a concrete demand we had. As shown in *Figure 52*, we conceived and defined the rules and the interactive structure that would result in a particular experience for players.



*Figure 56:* Gameplay designed for *Chronica Mobilis*.

As stated by Salen & Zimmerman (2004), a game design scheme has to contain the formal organization of the designed system, focusing on the essential logical and mathematical structures of the game. It has also to contemplate the play aspect, or the human experience within that system, including experiential, social, and representational schemas that foreground the player's participation in the game and with other players. Rules, goals, player activity, their possible actions and the projection of their action into the game world are some of the topics we had to specify. As shown in *Figure 56*, and explained in detail in the following pages, we focused on what we considered essential.

### a) Determining the Rules and Goals to Create a Sense of Flow

Every game has a goal, or in other words, a reason for playing. Salen & Zimmerman (2004) believes that it is a core component for creating pleasure on players. When engaged in a game, according to them, we accept the invented goal as our ultimate objective, acting guided by the necessity of knowing whether we are advancing or falling to achieve it. To the authors, goals are responsible for shaping player's experience in a game. The desire of moving forward comes from the expectation of a positive final outcome. One of the designers' challenge is exactly engineering and maintaining player's relationship to the goal. The short-term goals are as important as the long-term. "Along the way, a player struggles toward short-term goals, each one providing kind of pleasure that is less immediate than the instant gratification of the core mechanic, but more rapidly obtained than the long-delayed ultimate outcome of the game" (Jenkins, 2002).

We took a time to precise and delimit *Chronica Mobilis'* long-term goal. Initially, it would be only retrieving the identity of a person. Then we refined it with an additional aim, that is to analyze this person's story to find where he has kept some of his belongings from the past. The person in case is the protagonist character of the fictional story embedded in the game and geolocated in the city. Players accomplish their long-term goal by completing some step missions. While recovering the identity of the character and finding his belonging was the broad and macro objective, visiting some target places in the city to recollect his memories were the short-term goals. Only by gathering all the memories, players will be able to retrieve the identity of this person and then analyze his story to find where are hidden his personal possessions. These step

missions would aliment the core mechanics of the game and maintain players engagement until the end.

On the other hand, we had to define what will be the rules. The rules, according to Salen & Zimmerman (2004), constitute the inner of games. They are the formal structure that precise how it works, its logic and formal identity. A set of fixed, binding and repeatable rules must limit players action on a game. According to the author, when they come in an elegant design, establishing meaningful relationships between action and outcome, players do not have to focus on its logic but in the experience of play. Regarding the rules, we saw some essential ones governing the experience, such as the fact that we will not allow players to use the handheld device for purposes other than communicate with their partners in game. Moreover, the communication will happen through predefined manners. An important aspect we considered in the initial design had precisely to do with the way participants will interact with each other. By preventing players to directly and freely communicate, we will add some difficulty to the gameplay. We also decided to limit the game activities to 50 minutes. Players will have a determined time to complete their mission, what will make them urge against the clock.

The limitation of players' actions will certainly increase the difficulty in their attempt in completing the assigned mission. Whether we could not let the play be easy enough, we could not give players a task too difficult for mastering. A game goal can be too arduous when we lack the required abilities or when we play under too limited conditions. Trying to create a balance between challenge and frustration, anxiety and pleasure, we asked ourselves how difficult should be the game and which restrictions should we pose for players.

The elusive balance between the ability level and the challenge is a key mechanism to intensify players experience, with part of the pleasure of games resulting exactly from the struggling in mastering the adversities encountered on it. The psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihaly (1990), on his *Theory of Flow*, discusses the results we can get from combining the degree of challenge versus the skill a participant possesses. We have anxiety in one extreme, and boredom on the other one. To him, tension is the outcome perceived when a game poses an activity that exceeds the abilities of players. Apathy and indifference is the result when players' abilities exceed the challenge they have on a

game. Ideally, we should encounter the middle position, that is the elusive flow. To the author, players have a sense of flow in a game when they meet a balance between the skills they have and challenge they must overcome. On *Chronica Mobilis*, we found such equilibrium adjusting the degree of difficulty according to the results we got from the series of playtests we did during the iterative implementation process. Or we operated restricting some behaviors and facilitating the step missions players will have to complete; or adding difficulty to the tasks and allowing some players' actions.

## b) Using the Story Fragments as Rewards

When designing *Chronica Mobilis* gameplay, we also asked ourselves about the rewards. We considered the option of having no rewards but the dynamics of rewards and punishments seems intrinsic to the nature of games, influencing players' motivation and their overall experience. Salen & Zimmerman (2004) describe how both traits are part of the core mechanics of games, that works by presenting some choices for players, letting them act and then getting an outcome from their performance. The outcome can be a reward or a punishment, respectively a positive or negative reinforcement according to how successfully the player is in completing the required mission. The authors observe that, through this psychological operant conditioning, designers encourage or discourage certain players' behaviors shaping the choices and actions they will take on the course of the game.

Csikszentmihalyi (1990) considers rewards as an essential requisite, reinforcing the idea that such mechanism has the crucial function of keeping players desire of going on to achieve more and more. To him, this not just make them feel satisfaction thinking that they managed to accomplish a task; this is essentially what makes them involve in the game. Considering that, we assumed that players activity in *Chronica Mobilis* should be intrinsically rewarding. The question was then whether there would be rewards throughout the play section or just a final one. Know how to integrate rewards into the experiential structure of a game was equally important to us.

A possibility we had was to compensate the players every time they completed a short-term task. Finding and visiting the places where the story fragments were geolocated was one of these step missions present throughout the game. We defined that players will receive a given reward every time they manage to discover and reach one of those

target places in the city. The compensation will be the story fragment, a video scene containing the protagonist's memory of the events that happened in a determined moment of his life at that exactly location. The fragment players will find symbolizes a piece in the puzzle. Players will need to assemble it to the other ones they will find in the course of the game. Collecting all these rewards gained when completing a step mission, they will manage to have the final recompense. The final bonus will be have access to the whole story lived by the protagonist, what will enable players to discover the place where the character has kept his belongings.

### c) Integrating Different Levels of Participation

The design of *Chronica Mobilis* was in accordance to the issues posed by my ongoing PhD research. The general demand for the work was to integrate distinct participation modes. The game dynamics propose different manners for taking part and experiencing the narrative. When joining the presentation, participants are able to assume different roles. They can play or just watch it. For attending the research goals, it was necessary to include a classical audience, which does not necessarily has to play for joining the presentation. Those who decide to attend only following and watching the game, do it in person at the exhibition space or also online, on the web page of the project. In both levels, participants are on a contemplative reception situation. On the other hand, the ones who wants to join *Chronica Mobilis* as a player can assume two possible roles or participation modes: play from a computer inside the exhibition space or play it from the streets. We call them respectively: online players and street players.

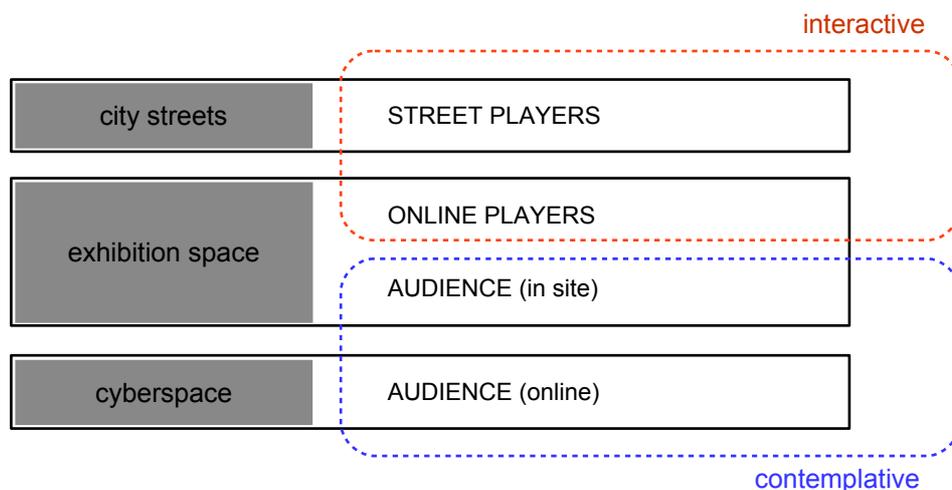


Figure 57: Different levels of participants engagement in *Chronica Mobilis*.

The presentation had free entrance but limited to 50 people. Who joined it as audience could book a seat in advance through the project website. Who wants to attend it as a player, the procedure was different. They necessarily had to inform their intention, at least, one day before the presentation. They subscribe themselves by filling up a form available on the website of the project. We required such formalization because we wanted players to go through a briefing process before the live performance of *Chronica Mobilis*. We met those who came to play three hours before the presentation, in order to create the atmosphere and make them become deeply involved in the fictional context they will enter in that afternoon.

During the whole time we spent together, we attempted to make players incorporate the identity of the character they will perform on the game. We did not refer to them as players but as archeologists. For our surprise, some of them already came from home playing this role. We talked with the archeologists about the mission we were to realize that day and how important was their role on that. We explained everything acting as if we were really in the year 6014 and living the circumstances of having no analog registers about the past. We created a hilarious FAQ – Frequently Asked Questions<sup>348</sup> with twenty answers to possible questions they could make regarding the futuristic and illusory story we created. We answered participant's possible distrusts in an inventive and funny manner, even though humor is usually a way of creating distance.

The briefing was also a moment for letting people get to know each other. There were friends who went together as well as people who went alone for playing. That moment was an opportunity for unifying and generating the necessary complicity among all of them. More than making players assume the archeologist character, what we needed was to let it clear to them that the telling of the story embedded on the game will only happen whether they manage to complete the step missions. It was indispensable to us that players understood *Chronica Mobilis* dynamics, making a pact with us by realizing that they will play a crucial function on a live presentation with an audience watching it. We will be together running and making it happens.

We designed the game for three groups to play it, what was in accordance with the three concurrent subplots composing the embedded narrative. Having three teams, we would assign each one to experience a different moment of the story, one for the child, other

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<sup>348</sup> File with Players Manual reproduced in Appendix 16.

for the young and another for the adult phase. Precising how many players each group should have, we realized that the minimum was three, considering that the teams will split in those playing online and others sent to the street. Resulting from this reasoning, we had that *Chronica Mobilis* was to be played by three groups of at least three players with two of them designated to act on the city streets.



Figure 58: The three group that played *Chronica Mobilis*.

We let players form the three teams and decide by themselves who would act online and who would assume the mission from the streets. On the game, players assuming both functions were called, respectively, “Console Operators” and “Field Team”. Participants in the urban area, equipped with mobile phones, have to navigate, exploring and looking for the game target places in a full body interaction. Participants online have to coordinate and guide their partners outside, interacting online with computers.

Once participants defined the teams, we assigned to each group one of the three subplots that compose the narrative. They were differentiated by colors: red, green and blue. The group A, red, searched for memories from the childhood. The group B, green, was in charge of the remembrances related to the young phase. The group C, blue, focused on the adult memories.

#### d) Merging Competitive and Collaborative Strategies

Rested to us define whether the game will require competitive or collaborative strategies on the part of the three groups. Are the teams competing against each other? Is there a winner at the end of the game, and consequently three losers? By discussing there questions, we decided to benefit from both strategies. By nature, most of the games raise a competitive mood on players. We supposed by experience that the teams would automatically think they were competing to see who first manage to complete the mission, specially because we determined a fixed time for that.

Nevertheless the competition it could incite on players, *Chronica Mobilis* had collaborative traces. It was relevant for the teams that everyone manage to achieve its objectives in order to have a holistic view of the protagonist's life. Only when the three groups completed their mission unveiling the fragments of the three subplots is that it will happen. The narrative works as a jigsaw puzzle, whose parts are assembled collaboratively by the work done by each group. The more places each team finds, the more scenes from the three subplots they will have access. Reasoning by this manner, the game could run from a collaborative perspective rather than from a competitive point of view. Players at some stage of the game should realize that they need the information the other groups of players have to find. Just by having the whole story is that they will solve the mystery, finding where are the objects hidden by the protagonist. We expected that whether they realized that, they would adopt collaborative strategies.

In the presentation of *Chronica Mobilis*, even tough players realized that only by helping the others they would be able to unravel the mystery, the first group to finish the mission opted for not collaborating with the other ones. Contrary to what we have predicted, competitive feelings emerged in the place of collaborative ones.

### 4.3.3 The Interactive Section

*Chronica Mobilis* started at 5 pm. It was a sunny day outside, contrasting highly with the ambient inside the venue where it took place. The presentation happened simultaneously in the streets of Poblenou district and inside the *Ricson* room, in *Hangar*. Outside there will be only players selected by their groups to operate on the search for the target places in the city. Inside what we called exhibition space, there were all the other participants: those playing from computers and the contemplative audience. We left the exhibition space all dark and illuminated only by the lights of the projectors and by the lights coming from the computers screens used by online players. The idea was simulating a proper immersive cinematic environment. The contrast between the closed dark box and the bright urban landscape became evident as players in the city streets stream their game actions, sending audio and video that was projected in the exhibition space.



Figure 59: Exhibition space of *Chronica Mobilis* called laboratory.

#### a) Core Mechanics

The presentation started in the exhibition space with the projection of a video introducing the game metaphor and explaining its intricate set of rules, its goal and its

core mechanics. After this opening act, players started on their pursue to complete in 50 minutes the task assigned to them. Online players took their positions on computers, and Street Players with their handheld devices went outside. Those that did not participate in the game stayed in their seats inside the exhibition space watching the geolocated narrative experience. Started the game, online players had regularly to check a map projected on a big screen. It was a psychogeographic map<sup>349</sup>, rather than a Cartesian one. It had the traces of some streets but did not contain their names. On the map, there were all the seven points that geolocated the fragments of the game's embedded story. Each group of players had to visit only three of these spots, but the pins on the map did not differentiate which were the target places for each team. Only by combining all the information available is that they will figure out the locations they have to search and go.

On their computers, online players of each team had access to a document containing tips regarding their assigned points<sup>350</sup>. The document presented tracks to help them discovering what was each of these places. By analyzing its content they could also discover where they were in the city. The tips came as memories of the protagonist of embedded story, full of descriptions regarding the location. One of them, for instance, says:

My father was always in that bar in the corner. He worked in front of it, erecting a modern office building in black with white lines. The name of the bar means speaking softly, but there everyone uses to speak aloud. Now they have to control the noise because there is a center of physiotherapy next door. Jamal did well. He has a supermarket next to the bar and a butcher in the street below. (*Chronica Mobilis*, Barcelona, 2014)

As we can perceive in the example given before, even tough it did not tell players clearly which kind of place it is, from the description they could come to realize that it was a bar, whose name is “Susurro”, the Spanish for whisper. Deconstructing the content, they had enough clues to guide street players in their search for this place, as it indicates that there is a building, a supermarket, a butcher and a physiotherapy center surrounding it. The imaginative use of the landmarks in the memories suggests to

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<sup>349</sup> See: Kotányi, Attila; Vaneigem, Raoul. “Unitary Urbanism”. In *Leaving the 20<sup>th</sup> Century: The Incomplete Work of the Situationist International*, ed. and trans. Christopher Gray (London: Rebel Press, 1998), 26.

<sup>350</sup> File with the riddles for the three groups of players reproduced in Appendix 18.

players an alternative way of looking at the location. With the document, we also gave them a panoramic picture showing by far the area where was that place. In addition to these tips, the projected map showed online players the geographic location of their peers in the streets. The coordinates were updated in real time, what enabled them to see players movement through space. The video stream sent by the their players in the city was another information that helped them to understand where their partners were.



*Figure 60:* Online players sending messages and watching the video streaming.

The game procedure was online players choosing one of the descriptions of the document with the tips, analyzing it to get the clues from that, and starting to guide street players to find and visit the location. The guidance happens through text messages they sent indicating what to look for. Meanwhile, the street players were in the city with a GPS tracker sending their location to online players. They could not answer the text messages they received but they could and had to transmit video. That was a way of self-reporting their position as well as of showing what was happening with them in the streets. When they find one of the target points, those in the exhibition space could watch a video played as a reward. The video represented a memory of the protagonist of the embedded story, revealing some events that happened with him in that exactly place.

The memory could be from his childhood, from his youth or from his adult life. It depended on the group of players that discovered and visited the place.

*Chronica Mobilis* required players to learn a set of rules that they mastered as they go. We designed the core mechanics to create patterns of repeated behavior regarding players' activity. The dynamics was meant to be exactly the same until the stipulated time is over or the teams find all the places assigned to them. They should play exploring the possibilities they have, making their choices, performing the allowed actions and waiting to get the expected outcomes. That was the dynamics we saw happening during *Chronica Mobilis* interactive section. Players kept selecting a tip, discovering what was the place, looking for the site, visiting it, and waiting for the video reward. Such play mechanics was responsible for revealing the game and the internal narrative logic.

## b) Multimodality of the Interaction

There are multiple layers of meaning in *Chronica Mobilis* interactive section. Online players are inside the exhibition space struggling to communicate with their partners in the city, trying to figure out where they are, attempting to guide them efficiently to specific locations but not sure which place is it. Street players are outside, lost among the cityscape labyrinth without knowing where they must go and waiting for a clue on this challenge in which they had no idea about what is ahead. Both category of players create a story that has many layers of interpretation and contextualization. One is the image of a psychogeographic map, a representation of the space explored by the three different field teams with colored lines defining in real time each trajectory through the city. The abstractly drawn image on the map becomes figurative with another layer of information, that is the video streaming sent by street players and projected on the huge screen inside the exhibition space. The images recorded outside gives a more concrete tone to the experience and the challenges lived in the city, being also a representation of the environment by the players' eyes. Another layer of meaning is the one side communication via text messages directed to guide those that are playing on the streets. They must be precise as the system restrings the content to 140 characters. Whether the the messages are short, they come in a great volume during the whole game.

The audience, in a contemplative position, is there in the exhibition space trying to connect all these layers of meaning. To understand the game performance and the story embedded on it. Even in a contemplative reception mode, they have actively to observe online players, to check the map with the real-time displacements of those on the streets, to read the text messages sent to street players, and to watch the VJing projections that mix the streaming sent from outside by the three groups with the fragments of story they unveil.

### c) Predefined Closure

Although we left the players free to choose the order in which they would reveal the pieces of the geolocated story, the final act of this fragmented narrative was scripted and fixed by us. The players did not know, but there was only a pre-set end to *Chronica Mobilis*, regardless of whether they find or not all locations. They could fail or not on their mission, that the scene planned to close the narrative and the experience of participants will be the same. Since the beginning we saw the game being more about exploring the space and the content geolocated in there, rather than scoring points or competing with enemies. That is why we designed it without conditions for victory, or better saying with all the groups winning in the end. We decided that the narrative closure scene will represent the game final reward. Moreover, that players will act without knowing that the reward will be to all of them.

The final scene depended of two factors. First, we needed all the three groups of street players in front of the door of the exhibition space. Second, they had to record what will happened in there in order to participants inside watch it. We solved both issued creating two specific rules for *Chronica Mobilis* game. One of them said that street players from the three teams only enter in the exhibition space whether they are all together. In the event that a group complete its task before the 50 minutes assigned to their activity, they could either help the other teams or return and wait until they arrive. The rule was strict: the doors of the room only open when all the groups are there. We solved the second issue we had by creating another rigorous rule, stipulating that street players have to film during the whole game. They only stop recording when they are back within the exhibition space.

Solved both requirements, we scripted the final scene merging the embedded story with the emergent one. That was to be the moment when the archeologists meet Valentin, when players meet the protagonist of the game's narrative. Even though it was a live scene, it happened as we planned. The groups of street players arrived separately. The firsts to return stayed waiting until the others were back. While waiting in front of the door, they kept streaming from their mobile phones. When the last team of street players arrived, not because they completed their mission but because the time was over, the final scene happened. Taken by the need of telling their experiences, players did not see a man carrying a vintage red suitcase walking on their direction. When they noticed, he was already among them, and unexpectedly he asked: "Have you been searching for my memories?". The man was the protagonist of the embedded story, Valentin, interpreted by a performer.



*Figure 61:* The story's protagonist Valentin giving players his remains from the past.

Players realized with surprise and excitement who was that person. After a pause to see their reactions, the man kept speaking about his life with a bit of nostalgia. As we

scripted<sup>351</sup>, Valentin told what happened to him revealing his story to the archeologists of the future and giving to them what they were looking for. They went to the city to recollect memories of that man in order to discover where he had hidden what could be the last analog records that remained from the past. In the closure act we scripted, the own Valentin will be who brings the final reward of the game. As shown in *Figure 58*, the actor performing the character gave to players a suitcase with some objects and told them that they could only open it inside the exhibition space. He then left and we opened the doors of the room for players to get in. The live scene represented also the closure of the embedded story. Street players got inside the exhibition space with the suitcase, joining the others who were watching everything from there. Finishing the game, they watched a video that greeted the archeologists for their progress.

## 4.4 Technical Overview

Even though the complex gameplay designed for *Chronica Mobilis*, the work used a very simple hardware/software configuration. The technical system for tracking players, the tool for streaming and the one for sending messages were not developed by us specifically for the project. Instead, we appropriated existing applications, making a creative combination to solve the demands we had. That was the solution for making the geolocated narrative experience we designed run on time according to my research agenda. The most expressive work done was the development of the map to show in real time the position and the displacements of the three group of players exploring the urban space in their search for the places linked to the story fragments.

As mentioned before, Miguel Peixe was the person collaborating with the project that became responsible for developing the map. He mounted a server in *Node.js*, a JavaScript runtime considered the largest ecosystem of open source libraries. He configured the server to receive data from the *SelfHosted GPS Tracker* app and then store the information on a CSV file with four columns, specifying: user ID, latitude, longitude, and timestamp. Another demand developed by Miguel Peixe was creating a system able to interact with the backend. That was necessary to exhibit the dots in real time on the map according to the geolocation data received from each user. We needed the bullet style and the trace line settings predefined and distributed in correspondence

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<sup>351</sup> Script reproduced in the Appendix 15.

with the user ID. Miguel Peixe built a system that automatically generated the "trace", forming a line across the map in accordance to the navigation on space. The interface permitted also to alter the marker image and the style, color, and thickness of the trail line. He made use of *Leaflet*, an open-source JavaScript library for mobile-friendly interactive maps<sup>352</sup>. The interface allows customization of the map's base layer, what we did using the ones available on *MapBox*. He documented the system described above for future implementations, letting sample codes to insert predefined markers in case we need it<sup>353</sup>.

#### 4.4.1 Dealing with Mobile Phones Constraints

The map that depicts each group of street players location and movement got data sent in real time from mobile phones equipped with GPS technology and connected on a 3G network. The handheld devices were the main hardware of the whole project, which aimed to investigate the creative use of locative and mobile technologies for telling and experiencing stories. The phones served as a tool for tracking position, for receiving text messages, for live streaming.

The function that we deliberately avoided was using it for watching a video. We wanted participants to explore the urban space in a constant action able to engage the audience. Moreover, we wanted them to experience the city looking for its details, possible hidden by the rush of the everyday life. Both things would not happen whether they had to watch some video on mobile phones, even short films as the story fragments. We believed that they would get immersed on the device's screen. Plus, only one person would be able to watch it properly. We preferred to show the video rewards to those in the exhibition space and to have street players just imagining the events that happened in the location they were.

Using mobile phones for receiving text messages was another issue we considerably discussed. Equally, for reading or for checking whether they got a message, players would be forced to spend the whole play time with their eyes turned to the devices' display. We tried to solve it for not generating a too high cognitive demand on players. The alternative was using the audio source as a way for letting the visual attention free.

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<sup>352</sup> <http://leafletjs.com/>

<sup>353</sup> The documentation can be find here: <<https://libraries.io/github/miguelpeixe/chronica-mobilis>>.

Nevertheless, we did not manage to find an application in time to solve this requirement in a satisfactory manner.

The streaming was another concern regarding the use of mobile phones. We did not want players having to hold it constantly during the 50 minutes they will navigate through the city. We did try some solutions, but we missed a manner in which they could carry it on their bodies and at the same time be able to monitor regularly whether the stream was on.

#### 4.4.2 Hardware and Softwares

As explained before, in *Chronica Mobilis* we combined different participation modes. Each category of participants joined the presentation through a set of distinct interfaces and technologies. Street players were with two mobile phones connected on a 3G network. They dedicated one for streaming video and audio using *Hangout* application for that, and the other for running the *Self-Hosted GPS Tracker* application that sends geographical coordinates in real time during the whole game. On the same device, the ones in the city received guidance from their partners playing from computers. The guidance came through text messages sent via *Twitter* application.

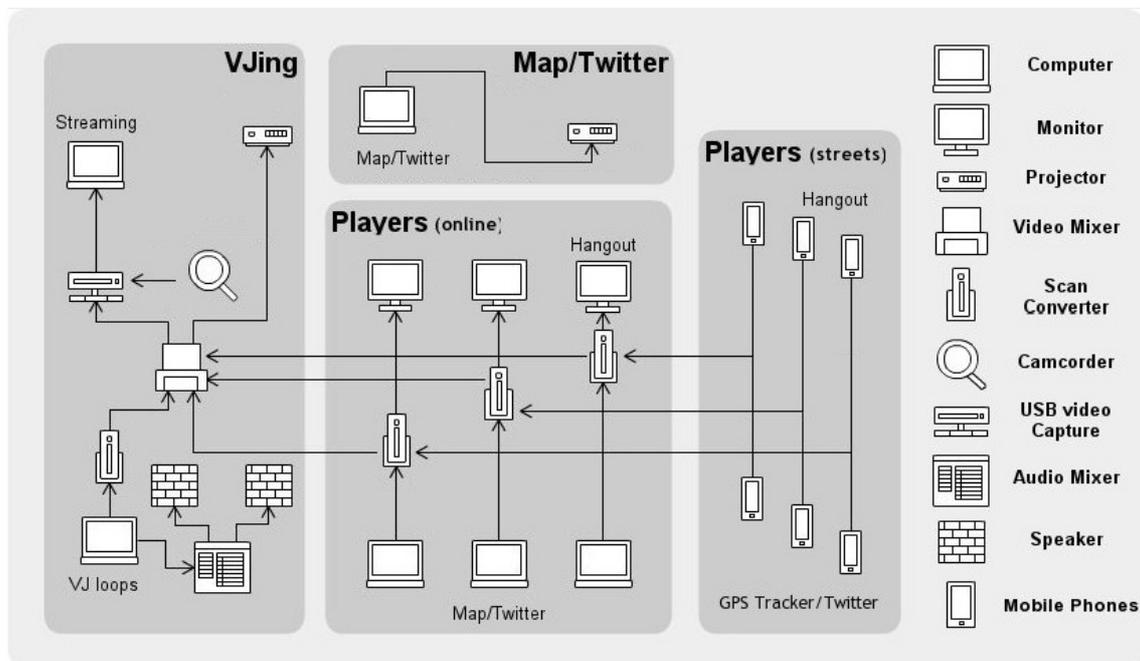


Figure 62: Map with hardware and software required on *Chronica Mobilis* presentation.

Online players were using softwares running on Desktop computers. There were three computers inside the exhibition space, one for each of the three groups, equipped with two screens displaying different interfaces and contents. In one of the displays, online players had access to a file with the clues. On the same screen, they also had a *Twitter* interface, from which they could send text messages to their partners playing on the streets. The other screen had the *Hangouts* application opened, showing the streaming made by street players.



Figure 63: Online players computer connected on *Hangout* and *Twitter*.

Two VJs were responsible for mixing the images showed in the main projection. They used a computer installed with *Resolume*, a VJ software, plus a video mixer, a sound table, two projectors, five scan converters and active sound boxes. Using the scan converters, they got the *Hangout* signal that came from the three computers of online players. These audio and video streaming sent by each team of street players was the primary content used by them to engage the audience that was following the presentation. The VJs combined and alternated the three video stream sent from players'

mobile devices with the video memories of the fictional story they were struggling to discover.

As explained before, these video memories appeared as a reward every time a street player manage to find a location linked to each story fragmented. There was not a system automatized to screening these videos. Instead, VJ's triggered the scenes in real time as a live cinema<sup>354</sup>. We did not programmed the function for a computer precisely execute it. Nevertheless, we worked to synchronize their exhibition with players' actions. For that, we counted with the work of a Game Master, a person that certified when players found one of the game target locations and signalized for the VJ's which video they should trigger. Together with the visual, the VJ's were also triggering the sounds designed for particular moments of the game experience.

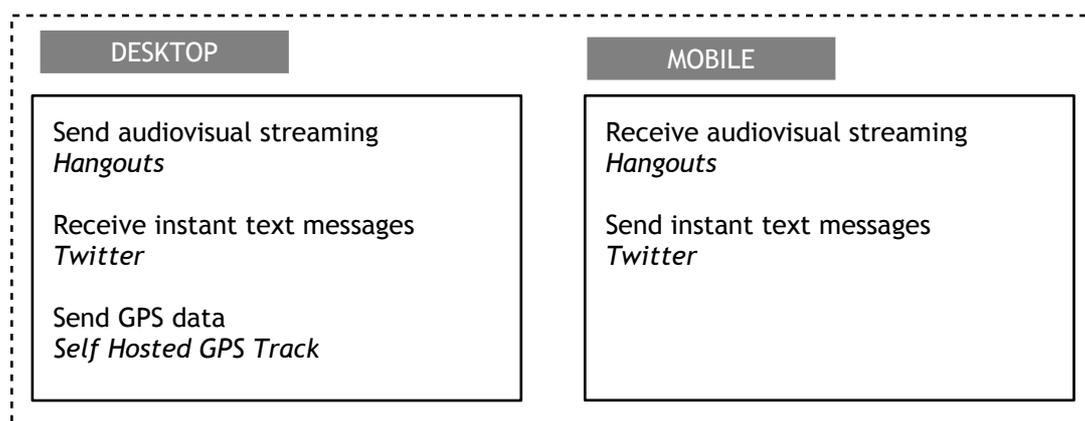


Figure 64: Functions and respective applications adopted by each system.

We also had one computer dedicated to project on a big screen the online map interface, which monitors in real time the position of the field team. It was running the *CMMMap* system we built for that. The same display showed to the audience a *Twitter* feed with the guidance messages sent by all the groups of online players to their partners on the streets. We also live broadcasted via *Hangouts* the whole presentation for those who could not follow *Chronica Mobilis* in person. Nacho Duran designed a web interface to integrate all the information sources – *CMMMap*, VJ projection and *Twitter* feed – in one screen.

<sup>354</sup> See: Rieser, M., & Zapp, A. (Eds.). (2002). *New screen media: cinema/art/narrative* (p. 151). London: British film institute.

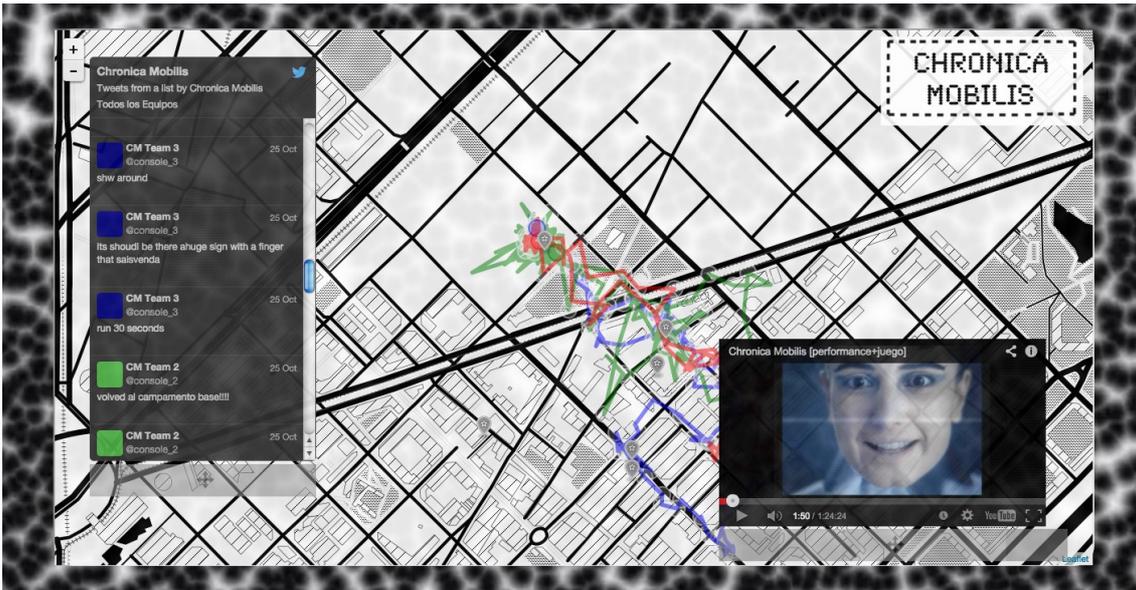


Figure 65: Web interface used for streaming, combining the many layers.

We strategically placed the many categories of participants that joined the show inside the exhibition space. In the first level, we had the VJ's with their equipment mixing all the content. Facing them, on a second line, we distributed the three online player teams on their play activity on computers. On their back, we had the audience on their seats watching everything.



Figure 66: The audience, the online players and the VJ's on the exhibition space.

Whether *Chronica Mobilis* had a very simple hardware/software configuration, the presentation did demand a significant list of devices. *Hangar* provided us with all the equipment required by the project. We asked participants that inscribed themselves as players to bring their mobile phones, even though we also had some prepared for the

game. We informed them in advance to bring their smartphone if possible with the applications we will need installed. We also asked them to come with the device battery charged and bring the charger in case we needed. For joining the game with their mobile phone, it had to be enabled with a 3G or 4G data plan. About 300MB of data would be consumed during the interactive experience.

As explained in the previous section, the performance was programmed to happen at 5 pm but those who inscribed as players arrived in *Hangar* around 2.30 pm. During the hours we spent with them before the presentation of *Chronica Mobilis*, we installed and tested the required applications. The devices and most of the tools we will utilize were familiar to most of the participants, so we did not have to give them any too technical explanation to operate the devices. We instructed players using on the streets about how to solve some possible problems that could happen during the interactive experience. They will be on their own in the city, so they should be able to respond by themselves in the case of a trouble involving the device or the applications running on it.

We knew that the video streaming was one of the fundamental problems street players might have. In case it stopped, they should wait until online players based on computer called them back. Whether the cell phone used for streaming went off, the instruction was that they should turn it on again and do the same: wait until their partners return the call. Another important information to them was regarding the reporting of their location. For ensuring that they were being tracked, we asked street players to check constantly whether the *Self-Hosted GPS Tracker* application was running.

#### 4.5 Evaluation of *Chronica Mobilis* Participants' Experience

Just after the presentation of *Chronica Mobilis* we asked participants to fulfill a questionnaire<sup>355</sup>. We explained to them the purpose of that, introducing what were the objectives behind the development of that artwork. Answering those questions was not only a way of helping us to improve the piece but an essential mechanism for letting us understand how had been their experience. We did not get answers from everybody who joined the geolocated experience, but most of participants dedicated a time after the presentation to answer the form. We collected 35 questionnaires as a whole, from

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<sup>355</sup> Questionnaire reproduced in Appedix 19.

players and audience members. The feedback we got from them represents an expressive outcome of this PhD research. It helped us to qualify the experience evoked by each of the three participation modes we were investigating with the project.

Instead of posing close-ended questions to gather quantitative data, we opted for self-reporting forms for evaluating participant's experience. A merely "yes" or "no" response, or even multiple choice questions would be easier and quicker to answer. Moreover, it could have been more appropriate considering the context in which the experiment took place. We knew that requires people to sit and write long and reflexive answers after an aesthetic experience that demanded a considerable physical effort could not work. Nevertheless, the responses of a close-ended type of questionnaire will not be able to bring the most unexpected points raised by an experience like the one we proposed with *Chronica Mobilis*. That is why we opted for letting players free to retell their experience.

We applied the same questionnaire to everyone who joined *Chronica Mobilis*: players and audience. We dedicated the first section to gather personal information, such as gender, age, and nationality. We did not ask names, as a strategy for creating a more relaxed atmosphere in which the anonymity could avoid any possible embarrassment for making critics to the artwork. The second section of the questionnaire identified how the person attended *Chronica Mobilis*. Participants had to choose in a multiple choice question between audience, online player, street player. From this point ahead, the topics on the form required them to write open answers to expose their thoughts and feelings evoked during their experience.

In a quite generic manner, we required them to list the five most positive and the five most negative aspects regarding their experience. From their answers to this part is that we got the most expressive comments. The openness left by the question allowed us identify which were the recurrent aspects that marked the experience of each category of participants either in a positive, and in a negative perspective. After that, two conjugated questions<sup>356</sup> invited them to evaluate the quality of their experience and the impact of it in relation to the expectations they had. We also wanted to know whether they had ever taken part in an experience/project like *Chronica Mobilis*. Finishing the questionnaire, at the end of the form we gave the project's email in case participants

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<sup>356</sup> See the second section of the questionnaire reproduced in Appendix 19.

wanted to say something more. We also left space for those interested in giving us their email for further contact.

As mentioned, the data collected through the questionnaire enable us to evaluate and compare the three levels of participation we have proposed. We got responses from 5 street players, 9 online players and 21 audience members. We classified the data gathered from the open-ended questions into three main topics. On the cognitive level, we concentrated all the answers that had to do with the feeling and the satisfaction that participants had when experiencing the artwork. On the system level, we included all considerations regarding technical, interaction and usability aspects. On the content level, we reunited the comments participants made about the narrative and the game dynamics. We will present in detail participants' feedback about each of the three categories on the next subsections.

#### 4.5.1 Participant's Feedback About Satisfaction and Sensation

Participants who played on the streets evaluated the sensation and satisfaction they had, qualifying it by using adjectives such as exciting, interesting, original. The mainly referred aspect was the excitement of the discovery of the places in the real city. Some of the street players highlighted the adventure character of the experience they lived in the urban space. Others evaluated positively the fact that they felt as if they were responsible for the mission. There were also the ones who commented how positive was the surprise factor at the end of the experience with the unexpected appearance of the story's protagonist that was under investigation. The ludic dimension of the experience appeared as a positive aspect in descriptions that commented how was fun be running on the streets. The atmosphere set for the experience was another good point mentioned by those who underlined how it motivated them or how it created a futuristic feeling. Exhaustion figured as the only negative aspects listed by street players regarding the satisfaction and the sensation generated by *Chronica Mobilis*.

Who played the game inside the exhibition space also reported the originality and the novelty brought by the work as a great trace influencing their experience. Motivating, funny, exciting intriguing were some of the adjectives employed to evaluated *Chronica Mobilis* in a cognitive level. Online players had a computer-based experience instead of going to the adventure on the city streets. To our surprise, they did evaluate the

experience of the game as being funny, though they spent their time sit in a dark place attached to a computer. Many of the them justified the amusement, mentioning the dynamics of the game, the combination of numerous layers of data and its demand for a collaborative play activity between the group. "It's very intense and motivating with lots of information", wrote an online participant.

Regarding the negative aspects, these players whose role was to guide their partners on the streets, faced problems that directly affected the satisfaction they could have on their experience. Frustration and confusion were the main words used by some online players to describe their sensation. The associated frustration with the technical issues they had, related mainly to the moments in which they lose the signal. Confusion was partially regarding the reported position of street players, and the exhibition of the video memories played every time a street player find a location.

Those people who went to *Chronica Mobilis* presentation just to watch it and not for playing the game, described the experience they had concerning sensation and satisfaction by using adjectives that were also recurrent on the players' report. The audience members also considered it original and exciting. The most commented aspect was how they felt interested in it, mostly due to the different character of the experience and its innovative aspect. Despite who joined *Chronica Mobilis* as an audience did not play any role in the game, their feedback exalted the funny and ludic dimension of the experience they took part. "As the public, I did not expect to have so much fun. I believed that the players would enjoy more, but the public to", commented one of the audience members.

They also highlighted the collective character of the experience. It could even justified why the audience felt it fun. "Unique feeling of participating in a collective experience live", wrote one of them. Other associated it with the memories of his childhood: "It was like being a child again in a game of discovering". When asked about the positive aspects regarding their experience, some people also mentioned what they considered an immersive dimension of the work. "It transports you to another world", said someone who joined the show as the audience. In one of the feedback forms, we even got a more detailed description of how they felt immersed. It reports the following: "We were all sitting in a dark room while archeologists were out. The separation creates the illusion that we are in another time".

One of the recurrent problems affecting the audience experience was the difficulty they had to follow all the three teams at once. The audience reported as a negative issue the complexity of the gameplay and the combination of many layers of information. To some of them, it made the experience something hard to comprehend by who was watching. “There are times that it is hard to follow the three groups at a time”, complained one of the audience members. “A little confusing for those who did not inform previously”, said another one.

#### 4.5.2 Participant's Feedback on Interaction and Usability

Street Players saw as a positive aspect the communication with the team. Many of them considered a great dimension the needed for working together and cooperate. The investigative character of the interaction, the “memory searching” as attributed by one of the participants, was also one of the highest points related to the design of the interactive system. Most of the negative aspects cited were about technical problems they had during the game. The communication delay, the battery, and the connection were the main ones they listed. The limited communication was also a commentary present on street players descriptions. One of them had even complained about the amount of time we required them to interact with the system.

The infrastructure, the preparation and the organization of the exhibition space figured among the points listed by online players as positive. They approved and described positively the visual designed for the presentation, based on the combination of map, video, and chat. The sound installation was another aspect they liked. Regarding technology, participants put the geolocation as a good dimension of the system. A positive issue mentioned on the forms was also the accessible character of the technology used. “Easy technology”, that was the way one of the online players described it. In general, they approved the interaction model designed for the experience, and more precisely the game dynamics. Either the competition and the collaboration strategies got positive evaluations.

Regarding the negative aspects concerning the system, the main topic listed by online players was the geolocation of their partners on the streets. They evaluated negatively the delay in updating the position of street players on the map. There were also complains from online players about the inconstancy of the tracking system, due to the

lag on the connection between the mobile phone tracking app and the map system. The loss of contact with street players was also a problem for those who played the game on computers. Regarding usability, they criticized what was considered an "inefficient division of the operative controls among the online team". They had only one computer for the whole group, even though it has two screens. The issue also had to do with what they evaluated as an "unsatisfactory manner that information was displayed on computers". Another dimension reviewed negatively was the complex combination of many layers of information. Online players observed that it was too hard to keep everything at once.

The audience rated as positive the whole anticipation of the event and the generation of a futuristic atmosphere, what we did through a massive marketing in social networks, especially on *Facebook*, to instigate people about how would be *Chronica Mobilis*. The use of technology was one of the most highlighted topics of the audience's feedback. Some people considered "productive" the use of GPS technology. There was also the ones who positively commented the map with the geolocation of players in real time. Many participants saw as effective the combination of different sources of information, media and moments. In a questionnaire we found an audience member commenting positively "the blend of reality, videos and sounds", in what the person called "a combination of physical and abstract places".

There were positive reviews to the multiplayer character of the interaction as well as to the combination of oral and written communication channels, or to what an audience member called "two-way communication model". In one of the questionnaires it came qualified as "constructive". The sound effects was another high point in the comments. "Music has a very important role, keeps you constantly alert", wrote one of the audience members. Another one considered positive the video aesthetics, probably referring to the initial videos that set the mood for the game. In addition, the feedback forms that collected the evaluation of the audience brought positive points regarding the programming, the rhythm and the planning designed to the interactive experience. The organization of space was also an aspect with good comments.

The criticisms to the system made by the audience were relatives to the quality of the streaming done through the mobile phones and the delay in the signal. While some participants complained about the resolution of the videos, others mentioned the time

they had to wait until street players managed to find the places. “A little too long before finding the treasure”, said one of them. In their opinion, there was a lack of further stimulus between the players hunting for the places they have to find. On the perspective of some people who was just watching the show, they had to wait for a too long-term until the next fragment of the fictional story was exhibited. Some also suggested that the music could be more linked to the events.

#### 4.5.3 Participant's Feedback on *Chronica Mobilis*' Narrative and Dynamics

Regarding the narrative, one street player commented positively the opportunity they had to freely create their own report in an emergent story that raise from their play activity. "It felt like being a documentary, reporter creator", wrote one of the street players. Another aspect street players highlighted was their meeting with the main character of the fictional story at the end of their experience. They did not mention anything about the story content itself, probably because they did not had access to the video fragments they unveiled when completed a step-mission of the game. Only those in the exhibition space could watch it. From what we saw, we believe that online players were so worried in discovering the places and guiding their partners that neither them watched the videos. We assumed this hypotesis because they did not mention the story content on the messagens they sent to their partners on the streets, and also from the fact that online players did not comment anything about the narrative and its dynamics on their asnwvers to the feedback questionnaire.

The most positive aspect commented by the audience was the narrative discourse or the manner they discovered the story. On the feedback forms, they listed the interesting and important role of the gameplay for the storytelling act. They liked “the idea posed as a game”, according to what wrote an audience member. The comments we found on the questionnaires affirmed how dynamic the narrative became to the audience when blended with the gameplay. There was who listed as positive the “coordination between players, memories, and narration”. Whether the content gained complexity as players progressed on their activity, it seems that the own mechanics of the game helped the audience in understanding the manner the story was being told. They also praised both the narrative content, the embedded and the emergent story, saying that it were “very powerful memories”, or listing as positive “the poetry of the fiction”. Many of the audience members evaluated as good the futuristic metaphor we created for the game, and framed

how the enthusiasm of street players had spread their vibrant energy through who was following them on their adventure outside. The audience also mentioned positively the appearance of Valentin with the suitcase in the end of *Chronica Mobilis*.

Regarding the negative aspects listed by the audience, the main issue cited was regarding the difficulty in following the different levels of the narrative. In one of the feedback form, one of them said how sometimes it was confusing the video memories shown and the exact time in the story it had happened. Some people even believed that the narrative lacked an end. The audience also criticized the performance of players. There were those who said players “missed a line in the pursuit of their goals”, and others that believed “they did not follow the paths with a target”.

## Conclusion

When it comes to technology, a reasoning that derives from a modernist ideology commonly puts progress and other glamorous connotations as inherent conditions of technical innovations (Dovey, 2008). The enthusiasm with “the new” is so the first reaction of people supposedly forward-thinking. This thesis attempted to skip from this usual stir around what is cutting edge and avant-garde. It avoided an innocent excitement when answering whether a technological context is stimulating a structural change in the narrative realm. The conclusions here do not glorify a digitalist dominant discourse (Almiron & Jarque, 2008) but ratify a media-aware approach by considering mobile and pervasive communication systems influential in the understanding of the storytelling practices they give support. They are semiotic channels with particularities in their language that do print marks on the content they mediate. Multimodality, mobility in space and connection to digital databases are some intrinsic attributes of the media in question. These properties, together with the monitoring and the assignment of location data to elements in physical environments, are what showed to affect narratives in a syntax and pragmatic levels. They represent affordances and constraints that come favoring the generation of some particular modes to present stories and correspondent mechanisms for participants interact and get involved with it.

This thesis pointed to the effects of mobile and pervasive media in the narrative realm but also accepted the existence of some core logic-semantic principles that remain governing the emergent forms. The conclusion is that such fundamentals are not particular to a determined medium but go beyond media (Ryan, 2004). Time, space, characters and events are some of the narrative foundational parameters believed to prevail independent of the encoding system. This study also indicated story-logic as another core criterion by inferring that narratives represent an essential strategy humans use for structuring their experiences in the world, so it has to create meaning (Herman, 2004). Whether it expresses a seminal condition, the creation of a logical construct does not imply following causal-chronological patterns. This thesis concluded that a narrative does not necessarily have to link a sequence of events in temporal succession to generate meaning. Narrative experiences can be meaningful by different manners. Lyrical and emotional meanings are some of them, that figures together with logic, or more precisely coherence and intelligibility. This study also recognized that, even the

implementation of these core-logic semantic principles will vary according to the particular expressive resources of each medium.

## 5.1 System Level – Affordances and Constraints

This study evaluated how location-awareness, connectivity and portability represent major affordances of mobile and pervasive media to the creation of innovative narrative forms. It exemplified the manner these capabilities come enabling artists to take the storytelling experiences they design out of confined environments and to transpose them to the cityscape. Moreover, it argued that these affordances allow artists to generate a very peculiar diegetic space that results from the integration of real and virtual domains. It observed that these attributes can even facilitate the establishment of meaningful links between digital content and physical places.

This thesis concluded that many of the distinctive characteristics of the emergent narratives becomes feasible with a media that is wearable, that stays permanently connected and gathering geospatial data. While this research validated the relevance of these functionalities, it also observed that the same connectivity, location-awareness and portability can represent a constraint to the experience they support. As discussed, artists working with mobile-based narratives employ navigational technologies to determine with clinical precision people's placing and dislocations. Whether it represents a primary source to the proposal of more embodied interactions, a crucial concern also raises from such surveillance. The worry refers to who stores and controls the spatial metadata retrieved (Holmes, 2004). This research identified also that the monitoring process made by military technologies can represent an impasse when it serves to reduce the Locative Art discourse to a Neocartesianism. It succeeds when the relations artists ground between physical movements and its virtual screen-based representation rely only on a rigid cartographic grid and its coordinate system. When it happens, the context-awareness of pervasive media can ended up creating distance rather than proximity with local context (Hement, 2004a). Surprisingly, this thesis detected that also connectivity can become an obstacle to the consistent engagement of people and place, as an “abstract global connectedness” discourse tends to justify the replacement of social to virtual interactions (Tuters & Varnelis, 2006).

System	Implicit and Explicit Inputs	GPS Wifi Accelerometer Microphone Camera Bluetooth Device display	
	Multiple Outputs Channels	Text Audio Video Image 3D Objects	
	<b>Properties</b>	<b>Affordances</b>	<b>Constraints</b>
	Portability	* Mobility in Physical Spaces	* Restrict Energy Capacity
	Connectivity	* Integration of Digital/Physical	* Over Demand * Low Bandwidth
	Location-awareness	* Contextual Information	* Surveillance
	Display	* Graphic User Interface	** Small Size * Visual Demand

Figure 66: Table with the thesis conclusions regarding the system level.

This study recognized that the constraints posed by both attributes of mobile communication systems are even broader. The connectivity of this media, for instance, can represent a challenge to immerse participants and deeply engage them in the hybrid diegetic space artists create for the narrative experiences. The device that enables people to take part in these artworks can be the same one they carry with them all the time as an extension of their bodies. Whether it is not their cell phone, there is a high probability that they will keep their “personal computers” in their pocket or bag, because almost never a cell phone stays separated from its owner. Such deduction bases on the reflexion that mobile devices are not part but represent the center of most people's daily routines. Everywhere and overtime, these ubiquitous media propose interactions that demand, distract and permanently saturate their users (Townsend, 2002). From the talks with *Blast Theory* artists came the inference made by this study

that this always-connected status can become a problem to take into account in the designing of a narrative supported by these networked media. As the artists stated, one of those constant phone calls, messages, or alerts, when received in the course of the artistic experience, can break in seconds the engagement in the “magic circle” they try to build in the fluid environment of the cities.

Regarding the portable nature of mobile media, this study concluded that it can contribute to determine from the interaction mode to the duration of the interactive section they mediate. As an affordance, this property supports the creation of narratives that allow participants to access and generate data while on the move. As a constraint, the portability restricts the length of the experience that artists can design to count with the computing capabilities of these devices. Their computational power relies on the energy capacity of batteries, what consequently turns into a constraint to mobile experiences. Participants should never run out of charge in the middle of the story, so batteries are a crucial variable affecting artists decisions regarding the extension of the narrative. This thesis also concludes that memory and bandwidth are some other portability associated aspects that can come limiting or expanding mobile media potential as a storytelling tool.

Smart phones reflect the convergence phenomenon of modern communication (Jenkins, 2006), presenting the technological flexibility of acting through several sensory modalities at one. The study discussed how the multimodality property of the media represents a distinctive feature shaping the narratives mobile communication systems give support. The practical experience of *Chronica Mobilis* drove this thesis to conclude that this capability can lead to a variety of approaches in the designing of mobile-based narratives. The same multimodal property of the media can generate, for instance, saturation and calmness. It can create complexity by combining multiple data sources and types, or even facilitate an embodied experience that relies on sensory channels less disturbing to the engagement with location. This research identified two correlated challenges when making use of many, if not all, the several outputs and inputs available on mobile phones. One is to orchestrate the presentation of the content, while the other is to produce meaningful connections between the diverse data sources. *Chronica Mobilis* served to exemplify how it can happen, creating an enclosed information space

composed of different stimulus and layers of data sent or received through cell phones and triggered at once by VJs <sup>357</sup>.

The achievement of a less distracting interaction with the device is another challenge this thesis related to the multimodality of mobile media, assuming that artists should less overwhelm rather than disturb those joining narrative experiences in the urban space. *Chronica Mobilis* investigated such possibility by playing with the creative misuse of defamiliarizing participants to the habit of having the attention grabbed by the handheld screen, or by many multiple sensory stimuli at once. The interaction model designed to the artwork exemplified that it is possible to turn the narrative experience into a collective one as an alternative to have single individuals attached and immersed in the interaction with a mobile device. This thesis concluded, based on the observations taken during the presentation, that participants in the streets lived the space, navigated and explored it centered on a multimodal experience that the complexity of the urban environment itself evoked. The stimulus they had was to look in detail to the environment, report and share with those inside an enclosed space what they saw, heard, and lived<sup>358</sup>. While they had their body senses activated to the interaction with a physical world full of connotative and denotative meanings, they were also producing diverse information sources to engage other participants joining the narrative experience.

## 5.2 HCI Level – Physical Navigation in an Ambiguous Space

This doctoral research investigated the interaction proposed by mobile-based narratives to detect whether it translates the philosophy under the ubiquitous media supporting them. As intended by the pervasive thinking about computers and computation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, context-aware applications should gather data that the system can imply without who is using the media necessarily states (Weiser, 1991). They should monitor

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<sup>357</sup> As explained on the thesis, *Chronica Mobilis* integrated different layers. One was location data collected from cel phones to generate a psychogeographic map with the real-time dislocations. Another were the video and audio recorded and transmitted through the phones. The third one were the text messages with guidance received on the devices. In addition to all these sources, there were also the sounds played according to the playing activity, and video fragments with an embedded story exhibited according to players progress on exploring the urban/diegetic space.

<sup>358</sup> The artwork connected the visual attention of those participants in the city streets to the video streaming they had to send to the enclosed space. On the background, an app running on the device implicitly collect their dislocations and position. While exploring location with a goal, they receive text messages with guidance and report their progress through the video streaming.

individuals by their mere presence in location, tracking and correlating, for instance, physical location and user identity in a comprehensive surveillance (Abowd et al., 2002).

The qualitative analysis of *Blast Theory* projects ratified that the interaction with these off-desktop applications relies on implicit mechanisms to sense participants, to precise their position and dislocations, and to predict the context of their interaction. These artworks also reaffirmed the coexistence of explicit means to collect information in stories enabled by ubiquitous media. Despite the use of these inputs, the interaction proposed in mobile experiences differs substantially from the ones supported by stationary media, which relies on keyboards and mouses. While participants on screen-based narratives engage through the manipulation of an avatar situated on a virtual scenario that they see on the computer display, mobile-based stories require them to perform similar activities but physically navigating the real world.

This study concludes that artists ground their artworks on the pervasive pos-desktop paradigm not to surveillance purposes but to explore embodied interactions that challenge established modalities of experience. Implicitly sense participants constitutes to them a mechanism to suggest a more organic integration between those interacting and surrounding the environment. The experiments *Blast Theory* does with these tracking procedures, for instance, showed it. They do not confine and restrict participants to screen-based interactions in enclosed spaces. Instead, the location data implicitly collected by these portable media supports the formulation of navigational practices in a diegetic space marked by the ambiguity that comes from the merging of fictional and real domains. The British artists invite participants to embark on these narrative experiences requiring them to engagement with their body serving as an interface. Those who join these mobile-based narratives have to perform and enact walking as wandering nomads (Scott, 2002). They have other cognitive and physical demands rather than only to contemplate while constantly moving in this ambulant experience. They actively participate in a liminal state between absorption in the diegesis and attention in the physicality of the real world (Rieser, 2011). The interaction model comprised on mobile-based narratives requires from them all a “non-trivial effort” (Farman, 2013).

Interaction	Implicit Sensing	* Interaction modes based on fixing position and dislocations in physical spaces.
	Exploratory Interaction	* Explorative navigation, wandering or with a goal. * Manipulation of elements in the environment, contributing to associate content to it.
	Internal and ontological involvement	* Enact a character and live the story events in an internal and ontological involvement with the narrative world. * Move the narrative forwards in a telling act that can be external or internal to the story, exploratory or ontological.

Figure 67: Table with the thesis conclusions regarding the interaction.

The present study indicated this performative navigation in an ambiguous space as an essential property characterizing narratives based on mobile and pervasive media. The input information comes from participant's body and the data the system can derivate and infer from it. Artists can extrapolate, creating correlations between these variations and the triggering of the story discourse. In *A Machine To See With*, for instance, the analysis identified the use of participant's walking to simulate the unfolding of a linear narrative with successive and sometimes simultaneously events triggered according to the movement through the city streets. These dislocations operate as a timeline in a function of time and distance. Those joining the experience have to move around to depict events that correlate to their location. The spatial exploration operates as a storytelling engine.

This thesis confirmed that participants interaction in mobile-based narratives fundamentals in, but goes beyond the mere exploration of physical space. As in other interactive environments, participants can establish a reciprocal dialogue exploring, manipulating and contributing (Parés & Parés, 2001). They can play functions when engaging in these navigational experiences that are similar to other digital narratives, for instance affecting the discourse formation, altering the story, or even creating the story on the flow of the interactive section (Ryan, 2011). The qualitative analysis of *Blast*

*Theory* artworks illustrated well such diverse possibilities by showing participants taking roles that varied from exploring the spatialized content, to manipulating and affecting the story and its discourse, to collaborating in the creation of the narrative. The interaction model of each artwork is in agreement with the meaning *Blast Theory* wants to raise with the narrative experience.

In *A Machine To See With*, they play the protagonist character on a revenge mission, exploring the space in a linear guided manner, triggering events that happen in the city streets. In *Rider Spoke*, they are the ones who create the stories, based on intimate thoughts and memories and tagged in individual locations they choose through the city. In *I Like Frank*, they manipulate the elements in the diegetic space with their play actions building the narrative that has two layers of story, the virtual and the physical experience. In *Fixing Point*, they have to find and collect the pieces of a fragmented story, exploring and navigating on a wood area in a metaphoric experience that recalls the idea of digging information to discover the body of a disappeared person.

The analysis of *Blast Theory* projects also conducted to the recognition that participants can operate such interactive possibilities through different types of involvement, being external or internal to the storyworld (Ryan, 2006). When external, their performance has the potential to reflect on the discourse level. They are not part of the story but they perform the protagonist of the narrative dislocations conducting the unfolding of the events through the activities and decisions they take in an embodied interaction. When internal, however, they live ontological forms of engagement turning into a character of the story. As required by *Blast Theory* in *A Machine To See With*, they have to perform unscripted actions answering the necessity to generate and move the story forwards. This thesis concluded that internal and ontological forms of engagement confer an emergent quality to some mobile-based stories that take form on the flow of participant's experience and depend on their activity and decisions (Jenkins, 2006).

The internal and ontological forms of interaction are what most approximate these narratives to the game experience. The qualitative analysis conducted on this research identified a constant use of game dynamics contributing to the engagement of participants. It happens even when they are external to the storyworld. Playfulness becomes a strategy to artists working with these media, letting them act as choreographers who concede to those joining the artwork some degree of freedom to

make and perform their decisions awaiting for the outcomes they will get from that. In internal and external types of involvement, participants' spatial exploration represents the engine that serves to the development of the story or to the discourse formation.

### 5.3 Content Level – Discursive Strategies

The four projects developed by *Blast Theory* also showed a diversity in terms of discursive strategies with the combination of open and closed narrative structures that associates to particular modes participants can interact. This thesis did not propose new labels to classify possible specificities present in the design of these stories, or in the particular interpretative schemes they require from participants. The understanding of this emergent phenomenon followed the same structuring models that describe interactive digital texts (Ryan, 2006) for considering that narratives enabled by mobile media share with them some fundamental communicative and representational properties. They present a modular design as other computer-based objects, what supports the construction of fragmented, fluid and variable stories, programmable and customized according to individual preferences (Manovich, 2001). Mobile-based narratives devote to a participative digital textuality. They employ interactive architectures inaugurated by digital media to let participants perform several operations on the system and to exert some degrees of control in the creative proceedings. They also combine *top-down* and *bottom-up* design planning strategies similarly to what happens in other interactive narratives, negotiating the storyteller's guidance role and participants ability to alter or to contribute to the narrative formation (Ryan, 2006).

This thesis observed that artists working with mobile and pervasive media keep following the digital cult of non-linearity, employing logics of temporality and causality that liberate them from the traditional necessity of connecting the story events in a focus chain. They formulate the accounts like other digital texts, creating some narratives that do not restrict time to linearity and truncation of thought. They subvert the notions regarding plot structure that Aristotle (1932) presented on the *Poetics* book, which became a standard for the storytelling practice (Altman, 2008), and a reference to neo-Aristotelian models (Freytag, 1896; Todorov, 1971). Whether artists seek digital principles to organize narratives, they did not operate a complete rupture with these classic parameters guiding the composition of meaningful stories. The study argued that

some mobile-based narratives remain anchored in old storytelling methods that follow causal relations and chronological patterns to create stories based on a controlled rise and fall of tension. Two projects of *Blast Theory* remarked such possibility of having the unidirectionality of time, logic and causality coexisting with structuring models that presuppose the multilinearity presented on branching schemes. The qualitative analysis of *A Machine To See With* and *Fixing Point* recognized that both have a linear plot built upon reversals involving the protagonist and apparently motivated causes that connect the trajectory of events. Nevertheless, it also identified that their fragmented discourse is fluid, exposing a variability and customization typical of digital accounts.

This thesis concluded that artists explore the specificities of the medium supporting them to create discursive strategies directly connected to the performative, playful and embodied interaction particular to mobile media. These aspects are what potentially add some nuances to the existing narrative structuring models. Whether artists can structure stories in the same classical rigid linearity or in the digital flexible hypertextual scheme, the difference when it refers to stories supported by mobile and pervasive media has to do with the exploratory character of the experience. In *A Machine To See With* and *Fixing Point*, for instance, the linearity principle mold the story, but a performative exploratory navigation gives form to a variable discourse. A personalized narrative comes in accordance to location and movements of participants in the storyworld. The same navigational activities can even resemble and evoke certain moods represented on the fictional universe. The physical engagement of participants in *Fixing Point*, for instance, resembles the real story of collecting and putting together the pieces of a puzzle to discover the destiny of the protagonist.

This thesis presumed that the location-awareness and other aspects of mobile and pervasive media do not narrow possible narrative structures but do contribute to diversifying the existing models of digital textuality. Whether a principle characterizes the design of these performative experiences, it is the merging of open-closed structures, interactive and linear schemes. In the four case studies investigated, the artists define the borders of the experience and let the rest free to participants engage by different means. Whether the initial and ending moments are equal to everybody taking part, the remain of it is open to the customization according to individual decisions. The degree of agency and control varies according to the project and the idea comprised on it. *A Machine To See With*, for instance, exerts an intentional and strict guidance of

participants through their navigation in the city, with a scripted and predefined story that translates the citizens' impotence framed by the story. On the other hand, *Rider Spoke* illustrates an opposite situation. Participants with their bikes are free to explore the urban space, to tell their stories on the flow of their experience, and to decide the connections they want to establish between this content and the place they navigate. The only guidance received comes from questions posed by artists to stimulate the telling of stories.

Narrative	Mystery, drama, and adventure	Fictional and non-fiction stories, most of them involving mystery and discovery.
	Blending of open-closed structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Linear forms of plot coexist with non-linear structures to mold the discourse.</li> <li>* Use of architectures of choice such as network and branching.</li> </ul>
	Meaningful Mappings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Deeply integration of physical and digital spaces, in situated and site-specific narratives.</li> <li>* When in an arbitrary space, it still dialogue with the connotative elements of the environment.</li> </ul>
	Central Prominence of Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Not intermittent, such as cut-scenes placed in between play sections.</li> <li>* Combination of pre-scripted and emergent stories.</li> </ul>

Figure 68: Table with the thesis conclusions regarding the narrative level.

The four projects analyzed showed participants having some degree of freedom to make choices and to plan their activities. Sometimes their engagement approximate to players of role-playing games, placed in a fictional setting and taking responsibility for the role given to them. They are responsible for a structured process of decision-making and sometimes for the development of the character in the narrative context. From games come such openness to plan and live the story rather than to just alter its telling. *I Like Frank* follows these traits with an embedded story having a central and prominent role aligned to an intricate gameplay able to generate an emergent and parallel account authored by players.

Another conclusion taken from this study is that the design of narratives mediated by mobile technologies attain to, but goes beyond the negotiation of these *top-down* and *bottom-up* strategies that generates open-closed structures. The mapping of the story onto the geographic space is a fundamental unifying principle detected among these storytelling forms. Their discursive strategies include this dialogue artists need to establish with a fluid and ambiguous urban environment. They have the crucial demand of finding places that “speak” for themselves to geolocate the story. They have to deal with the fact that cities are a fluid space full of inconstancies. Plus, they have to count with the risks and technical implications intrinsic to this urban setting. Accidents, for instance, is a real issue for this kind of projects that engage people in an active exploration through the public space<sup>359</sup>.

*Blast Theory* responds to these variables by orchestrating participants' experience from behind the scenes, monitoring them to avoid some of the implied risks of immersive gaming experiences happening in the city streets. The inconstancy of the urban setting is also an imperative to the adoption of iterative processes (Sales & Zimmerman, 2003) when designing and implementing mobile-based experiences placed on urban and public areas. The iterations serve to check whether some of the creative ideas are technologically available, as well as to evaluate the variables that could interfere with the final experience of participants. They help, even though there are also some *more* aspects that artists can not completely predict. These are some peculiarities found on the development process of artworks live experienced in the city streets.

The necessity of encountering purposeful locations becomes one of the most relevant parts in the formulation of these type of narratives, what extrapolates standard procedures in the design process of some artistic pieces. The demand for choosing places require a substantial effort from artists, as they need to take into account issues that go from practical and logistic aspects to the interactive and subjective ones. In *A Machine To See With*, for instance, the preparation work done by *Blast Theory* includes finding required sites to geolocated the story, then planning routes across the city to check whether it is an appropriate location. In a positive case, they so rewrite and record the phone calls according to the chosen places. All of this on-site set-up is a core demand of such projects that can have a great impact on the narrative formulation and in

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<sup>359</sup> There are many reports about accidents with *Pokémon Go*, for instance. See: <http://www.ibtimes.com/pokemon-go-safe-death-landmines-accidents-worry-authorities-all-over-world-2393329>

the interactive experience of participants. This thesis concludes that the definition of location in mobile-based projects is important as determining the appropriate technical infrastructures to work with.

Whether the performative and embodied interaction are some of the most relevant aspects distinguishing these emergent narrative forms, the other peculiar dimension regards precisely to this use of the geographic space and its elements as an extension of the story. These storytelling practices with pervasive media come rethinking space and the options for narration, presenting a potential to extrapolates an objectifying Cartography when establishing relations between content and sites. On the *Blast Theory* projects investigated, the analysis identified that artists employ these military systems to create ambiguity rather than a rigid precision that would corroborate a possible Neocartesianism characterizing artistic practices with locative media (Hement, 2004b, 2004b, 2006; Holmes, 2004; McCullough, 2006; Tuters & Varnelis, 2006). In most of the cases, what they propose are critical or reflexive incursions in the city, that resemble the processes Situationists engendered with techniques such as the *dérive* and the *psychogeography* (Debord, 1958). Even with the similarities, this thesis share with Ju Row Farr<sup>360</sup> the denial to the idea of a technology-enable Situationism moving the narrative practices supported by locative media. As she argued, rather than processes, the phenomenon investigated are structured artworks.

The qualitative analysis identified different approaches regarding the interrelations of space and content, some phenomenological and others annotative (Tuters & Varnelis, 2006). While *A Machine To See With* and *I Like Frank* trace the action of participants in space, *Fixing Point* and *Rider Spoke* virtually tag content to locations. A common aspect unifying these approaches is the link they establish between physical and digital data, between real and fictional elements. *Blast Theory* converts the city into a diegetic space, integrating connotative and denotative meanings. They turn this lived urban area into a storyworld loaded with elements and content that motivate participants action, mostly directed to search and discover. Their adoption of game strategies leads to the conclusion that the artists turn the city into a “free roam”<sup>361</sup>, in which participants can

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<sup>360</sup> When interviewing Ju Row Farr, one of the differences she pointed was that Situationism realized processes instead of a structured artwork as *Blast Theory* does. The transcription of the personal interview with Ju Row Farr is in Appendix 3.

<sup>361</sup> See: Harris, John (September 26, 2007). “Game Design Essentials: 20 Open World Games”. Gamasutra. Retrieved on 2016-05-25.

explore moving with a certain freedom to reach an objective assigned to them. The space they configure can serve for this nonlinear navigation and also to a more structured exploration with a guided or restricted motion through the environment. Whether *A Machine To See With* illustrates the latter, *Rider Spoke* exemplifies the former.

What most got the attention when analyzing *Blast Theory* projects is the possibility of using locative media to create site-specific or just context-aware narrative experiences. In the case of the British group, this study detected a certain constancy in creating artworks that are aware of the context rather than intimately tied to it. It is possible to establish meaningful relations even when employing an arbitrary instead of a situated mapping. To do so, artists have to previously identify connotative elements present in the area where the narrative experience will take place and then explicitly incorporate it into the experience. The adaptation turns into a matter of finding the essential contextual requirements needed to create the ambience evoked by the narrative. From the analysis conducted on the four projects, the conclusion is that such degree of mapping will vary according to each project and the location found by artists to transpose and link the story. Whether the context-awareness do not generate narratives that are specific to a site, building stories for neutral spaces minimize the restructuring needed when touring with this type of artworks. It became evident that projects designed to neutral spaces have an easier transposition to different contexts.

## 5.4 Cognitive Level – Playfulness in a Collective Experience

The study pointed to the fact that mobile-based narratives privilege individual experiences rather than collective ones, taking as a reference the four projects of *Blast Theory*. When inquired about this constancy<sup>362</sup>, the artists called the attention to the large collective activity participants involve when taking part in these artworks. They also confirm the hypothesis that a possible explanation to such design option resides on the characteristics of the supporting medium. Mobile media function as a personal computer. Whether these communication technologies operate connecting people, the everyday circumstances of their use represent atomized social situations. By taking it as

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<sup>362</sup> The transcription of the personal interviews with Matt Adams, Nick Tandavanitj and Ju Row Farr are respectively in Appendix 1, 2 and 3.

an affordance, individual experiences can enhance the possibility of immerse participants in their interaction with the narrative world.

Contrary to this individual immersive tendency, the design of *Chronica Mobilis* investigated the effects of a collective experience on participants. The result was a celebratory ambient generated by putting many people to engage and share the same narrative “mission”. The collaboration was also one of the essential strategies given to the experience, what would allow participants to solve the story reuniting the fragments collected by each one. *Chronica Mobilis* had a game dynamics, but there was no winner, or better saying, everybody would win in the end. Despite the collaborative dimension intended to print, the game principles are so intrinsic to people that the competition mood gained the same, if not more, prominence between participants. The competitive dimension is intrinsic to games. The observation of some participants coming at the end of the presentation asking whether there was a winner certified that. They could not conceive something that looked like a game but that everybody won.

The playfulness character of the experience contributed to this celebratory ambient, also representing a motivator for the “nontrivial effort” of participants (Farman, 2013). As some of those joining the experience reported, the game dynamics has the potential to evoke sensations and rescue memories of childhood, based on play and fun. Such possibility comes strongly to who actively engage in the interaction, but do not discard who stays in a contemplative reception mode. This finding represented a surprise even to some audience members, which revealed that they thought they would not have fun as the ones playing, but that, in fact, they did have. With *Chronica Mobilis*, the thesis concludes that the game mechanics represented a decisive strategy to keep the attention of participants in a collective experience.

In mobile-based narratives, who takes part interacts through an active engagement moved by the necessity of taking decisions and the desire of recognizing their agency in the effects it generate (Murray, 1997). Even this active interaction with a computer-based system has variations potentially correlated with the type of involvement. The study centered on investigating the existence of differences between a virtual and a physical, a screen-based and an embodied interaction. These two modalities came represented in *Chronica Mobilis* respectively by online and street players. The former sit in front of a computer following many layers of information to take decisions. They

acted as God in the guidance of the latter, which lived the play experience in the urban, converted into diegetic, space. *Chronica Mobilis* also proposed another participation mode, discussing the possibility of a classic audience take part in these kind of experiences based on mobility. Attending the idea, the artwork integrated active and contemplative modes of participation.

The intention was not to restrict the audience to a contemplative mode, but open to them the opportunity to observe from close and perhaps engage in the play activity, moved by a desire to help players on their mission. Even though in the place there were chairs for them to sit, no one said anything regarding how they should behave during the presentation. Despite this openness given to them, all the audience members stayed on their chairs, or stood, but none of them went close and joined the group of online players placed on a computer just in front of them. The conclusion inferred from this behavior is that people have this contemplative character internalized when they think about attending a presentation as audience member.

Nevertheless, such involvement and reception mode seem inadequate to a dynamic narrative experience as the one created. Watching instead of physically engage compromised participants understanding of the embedded and the emergent story comprised on *Chronica Mobilis*. Even with all their attention and senses directed to observe, they had difficulty to follow the intricate combination of multiple layers and to connect all the data sources. They did complain by saying that it was hard to them at certain moments to follow the three groups at once. Their comments lead to the conclusion that the complexity of a dense and instigating multimodal experience generates an intense cognitive demand that can create interpretative confusion. This study deducts that the audience members complained more about the comprehensive requirement of a multimodal and fragmented narrative discourse, because they had to follow the three groups of players at once. It would be different whether they dedicated their effort and attention in one collective team activity, as happened with those playing the game online that had same intense cognitive demand of those in a contemplative reception mode. They even had another active requirements, apart from paying attention and putting together all the information in a comprehension process.

Another conclusion taken from the feedback forms is the innovative character of these narrative experiences functioning to motivate the engagement of participants. Whether

the interest increased with the technical possibility of “watch”, surveil and guide people, the “avant-garde” character of the project and the media supporting it generated technical and usability issues. The evaluation of *Chronica Mobilis* supports the research finding that 3G connection represents a fundamental problem to narratives based on mobile media. The team already expected it to occur during the live presentation. The solution came in a design that combined so many information sources. Whether the streaming stop working, for instance, participants following the presentation could engage in other of the many layers available to them. Connectivity was the big deal, generating a delay in the communication of computers and mobile phones. That affected the actualization of the map tracking the position of participants on the streets. Such inconstancies of the tracking were also due to the lag on the *Self Hosted GPS System* app adopted for monitoring participants movements. Despite the adjusts done after some playtest across the implementation process, it still represented a limiting. In *Chornica Mobilis*, the 3G network serve to send streaming from mobile phones to computers via *Hangout* application. Street and online players of the three teams lost contact during the section, but it was not difficult to reestablish their communication by a video call. The low bandwidth was a problem for the streaming of the videos, which in a low frame rate constantly dropped.

Experience	Audience	Online Player	Street Player
	Sensation	* Intense * Cognitive * Demand.	* Frustration * Urgency * Excitement
	* Satisfaction with novelty and playfulness.		
Usability		* Interface and connectivity affecting the experience.	
Content	* Interpretative Confusion.	* Attention to the emergent rather than the embedded story.	* Retelling of play experience.

Figure 69: Table with the thesis conclusions regarding participants' experience level.

Regarding the navigational experience in the streets, the conclusion was that even when guided, participants can feel a sense of agency that comes motivating the engagement in the experience. The comments of street players exalted the role they played and how it made them feel as reporters. Their participation was the most demanding in physical terms when compared to the other three modes of involvement proposed by the artwork. They had to spend a considerable physical effort to keep one hour walking through the streets holding a phone. When they went back, their faces let clear how they were tired. It also came expressed in the questionnaires, by comments that employed the adjective “exhausting” to qualify their experience. On the cognitive level, their mental activity was in terms of orientation through the ambiguous space, instead of a comprehensive exercise resulted from the combination of multiple information sources. While navigating, they were not just walking, guided by the messages they receive on the phone. The demand to them referred more to an attentive exploration, in which they recognize and memorize landmarks and details of the cityscape that could help them in their orientation through the labyrinth of streets. Rather than strictly follow the instructions given to them, sometimes they had to decide and plan their movements in the finding of the narrative locations. This thesis also draw its conclusions about their experience pointing to the cognitive and interpretative effort they had to employ to distinguish the boundaries separating which elements and situations were part of the diegetic space and which ones were not.

## 5.5 Experimental Methodology

This study finishes reaffirming the importance of a complementary process as the one conducted in this research, that associated experimental production with theoretical reflection. Practical approaches at the Ph.D. level are still something rare, what became evident when presenting the proposal for this study. Some of the commentaries regarded particularly to the extensive objectives of this project, which contemplated bibliographic review and applied theory activities. The tribunal members also inquired about my background, professional interests, and skills that could enable the accomplishment of the goals envisioned to the practice-based stage of this research. The explanation to the evaluation board in that opportunity was that the development of a mobile-based narrative would have a significant impact in the investigative process about the creative use of locative communication technologies and the kind of experiences it generates. Now, this thesis evidence from a more concrete perspective the relevant inputs that the

experimentation with mobile and pervasive media brought to the conclusions presented here.

Apart from the practical experiments of this study, *Blast Theory* long-term partnership with the *Mixed Reality Lab* at the *University of Nottingham* illustrates well the benefits of integrating art and research domains. They reunited their expertise in a multidisciplinary team and conjugated scientific and artistic inquiries and agendas. Sometimes through European Projects, they created awarded artworks<sup>363</sup>, as well as relevant outcomes in the field of Human-Computer Interaction<sup>364 365</sup>. With *I Like Frank*, they investigated the interface, the properties and the boundaries that separate an electronic and a physical space. The inquiry served as a pivotal concept for a piece of art that explores the possible relationships between people who are online and those who are in the city streets. With *Rider Spoke*, they researched location-aware means to detect the movement through space using the Wifi positioning fingerprinting system. At the end of the long genesis, they came with this artwork that explores the particularities of the cityscape and innovates in the interaction model as well as in the authoring of content.

The innovations resulting from this dialogue between an academic research and artistic groups resonate until today, especially now with the launch and the international stir around *Pokémon Go*. The Arts & Humans Research Council, for instance, claimed attention to the contributions *Blast Theory* and the *Mixed Reality Lab* gave to the field of geolocation-based augmented reality games<sup>366</sup>. Recalling the artworks developed through this collaboration, they argued that both groups were already discussing the ability that this kind of games has to engage people in an active exploration through the public space. To the Council, *Blast Theory* and the *Mixed Reality Lab* has contributed to “laying the ground”, as they referred to, for the success of games like *Pokémon Go*. Since 2001, they have been researching, playing and developing the concepts and technologies involved in location-based immersive gaming experiences.

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<sup>363</sup> *Blast Theory* gained, for instance, the prestigious *Prix Ars Electronica Golden Nica* award for *Can You See Me Now?*, a location-based game they developed with the *Mixed Reality Lab*.

<sup>364</sup> See: Flintham, M., Benford, S., Humble, J., Tandavanitj, N., Adams, M., & Row-Farr, J. (2001). *I Like Frank: a mixed reality game for 3G phones*. submitted to *IEEE Computer Graphics And Applications*.

<sup>365</sup> See: Giannachi, G., Rowland, D., Benford, S., & Price, D. (2010). The documentation and archiving of mixed media experiences: the case of *Rider Spoke*.

<sup>366</sup> <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/research/readwatchlisten/features/capturing-the-research-behind-pokemon-go/>

Before remarking that the academia had a vital function in shaping guidelines to the innovations that game designers have benefited from now, the Institution remembers that the groups were ahead in the thinking about how artists might work with scientists. Whether the academia played a fundamental role, their researchers also got a valuable contribution when working with an artistic group. As Nick Tandavanitj mentioned, talking about this long-term partnership<sup>367</sup>, the academia had the opportunity, for instance, to do massive experiments outside the confined and controlled space of Laboratories. When *Blast Theory* conferred the art status to the projects, they also gave an exponential visibility to what, in the University realm, would probably turn into prototypes tested in a restricted community. The evaluation of Ubicomp in the Lab has the potential to capture aspects related to usability and human behavior. Nevertheless, when these probes happen in-situ, there is also the possibility of examining the context of use (Rogers et al., 2007). Considering all these points, the collaboration between both groups let visible to us how promising can be the association of experimental production with scientific reflection.

Close observation of *Blast Theory* and the qualitative analysis of their projects had a fundamental value to both dimensions of this Ph.D., the theoretical and the practical one. It let approach the theory and understand the phenomenon I investigated from a less hypothetical point of view, while contributed to informing the creative act involved in the development of *Chronica Mobilis*. The two first stages of this study deeply influenced the design of the mobile-based narrative and the interaction model gave to it. The whole implementation process also had orientations coming from what I saw in the period I spend in *Blast Theory* studios, observing and taking part in their day-to-day activities. The references went from the recognition of the different active roles participants can assume in a mobile-based experience, to the artists mentoring me to invest in an iterative process when designing my experimental project. While volunteering with them and checking the infrastructure they had, that also directed me to infer how interactive experiences of this nature, mediated by mobile and pervasive technologies, pose significant demands to the development process.

Now, this research points that the most relevant requirements refer not to the need for a set of “cutting-edge” equipment and software that can vary according to the proposal of the project. The crucial aspect relates to this dialogue between practice and research. It

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<sup>367</sup> The transcription of the personal interview with Nick Tandavanitj is in Appendix 2.

has to do with the necessity of involving an interdisciplinary team that connects artistic and scientific knowledge. *Chronica Mobilis* ratified the existence of such demands, answering it while pointing to the possibility of alternative models to the development of mobile-based projects. The solution to the technical and technological infrastructure requirements it generated was to use existing applications, count with institutional support<sup>368</sup>, and go down the route of collaboration. The practical activities gathered artists, researchers, and technologists interested in the topic. They joined an interdisciplinary team to work on an artistic project with a scientifically structured process guiding the practice<sup>369</sup>.

The experimental production aligned with scientific investigation resulted in a detailed comprehension of the phenomenon studied. This thesis concludes presenting the understanding, creativity, and insights about: I) physical navigation and embodied interaction in mobile-based narratives, II) strategies to map the diegetic space onto geographic location, III) performative and participative modes of engagement, and their correlated experiences. The transference of this knowledge can be useful to inform and to contribute to future research and essentially to professional applications in the field.

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<sup>368</sup> *Hangar* supported us with the equipments and space required for the development and the presentation of the artwork.

<sup>369</sup> I had a series of research questions and objectives addressed to enhance knowledge about the problem under study, what made the development of *Chronica Mobilis* follows my research agenda.



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## APPENDIX 1. Interview with Matt Adams from *Blast Theory*<sup>370</sup>

### ***1. Could you introduce yourself briefly?***

I felt in love with theater when I was 13. I went to see a play that changed everything, how I thought about the world. I decided to be an actor. At university, I started to direct plays, and I became interested in creative authorship theater. I became critical of theater as a traditional art form. It is obviously encrusted with its historical ways. When I met Ju, her background she had made some performance work. We started talking about making work that was kind of hybrid work that had some elements of live performance but trying to engage audiences in different ways. That is what we are trying to do: invite audiences into a piece of work and test that and explore what kind of possibilities exist. To try. To take risks. To stretch it as far as we can.

### ***2. You started essentially as a multimedia performance group and have been working in the last years with mixed reality games, mobile and locative technologies, digital broadcasting. In which point of your trajectory and how it was that, locative technologies, mobile phones and games became the primary interest to you and was integrated into your artistic practice and discourse?***

It really springs from interaction and thinking about how do you make a live performance that feels as truly live and present in this particular moment as possible. We felt that was true interaction, which you could find new languages for an audience to interact in real time. You create something where you are fully present within that. So the first works we have made were promenade performances, heavily inspired by club culture where the audience move around and watch things. But already there was technology in the very first piece of work we ever did because it is a tool for interaction. As we began to explore that, we were also aware that we were in an era of massive technological change, this is even in the ninetens. Even before that. Even just the rise of the personal computer, there was a massive change. Even before the Internet and the World Wide Web became widespread.

But the PC, then the Internet, then mobile and the whole range of other things, like GPS, other technologies, all came true in a rapid section, and it obviously changed everything, uncarefully. And so we realized we were in a really great position to try to think about how art might use technology to create new forms of interaction and how to engage with the big social changes and political changes that these technologies were bringing. So, how do we as artists deal with the fact that people are now interacting with strangers all over the world? What does that mean? What does that mean for the community? What does that mean to the social organization? What does that mean for political organizations?

It is worth remembering, in the 90s the internet was very utopian space. It really was a space of possibilities. Those of us that were there relatively earlier, we want that earlier, but people were there relatively earlier. We felt that it was a whole new thing we were in from the ground floor and that we were shaping it, making it. There was a button-up process. Any large corporations were really cooperating; big companies were Internet Explorer, browser companies.

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<sup>370</sup> Adams, Matt. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 14, 2014.

**3. Has the introduction of these technologies alter the way you create your projects, especially regarding content, narrative strategies and modes of audience participation? Would you say that the ways to explore the role of the audience and the ways in which you can establish a dialogue with them have changed or enhanced as you introduce these technologies to your work?**

In works like *Gamevil3*, *Chemical Wedding*, *Stamped*, we already have the audience moving around, not sit. In 1994, we made a piece of work called *Invisible Bullets* that used industrial space. The walls were open. The audience came and looked into space. Then we made *Kidnap* which was entire out in public space. *Kidnap*, that was in 1998, really changed everything because it was the first time we made a piece of work for multiple audiences rather than “an audience”. It is the first time we make a piece of work online. It is the first time we make a piece of work where we were on streets in a very large way. We used video streaming for the first time. We make a piece of work that is a very unusual construct. It is a lottery. You invite people to enter a lottery. So that changes a huge amount. And then, of course, you are right to say that the first true sort of outdoor work, that has come to sort of characterize our projects is *Can You See Me Now*, in 2001. And that was all about the wise mobile devices. About in 1999/2000, I went to talk at a conference about the wise third generation of mobile phones. I was like: “Wow, it is amazing. Phones connected to the internet... this is crazing. This is a really mutable opportunity”. So it feels quite natural this gradual transition. The other thing that is important to mention is that in 1999, we have made *Desert Rain*, which was the first game. We discovered game as language with interaction. Of course, as the big big influence caused, it suddenly was like: “Oh it does not have to be an avant-garde, strange and unusual thing based on audience participation. It can be just a game. Anyone can play. Anyone can also know what the rules are”. So suddenly there is a whole new way to invite and engage audiences in our work.

As you increase the level of audience interaction, as you invite audiences to have more and more control over what is gonna happen, how the story is unfold, a narrative unfolds in a very different way. *Can You See Me Now* is a very significant work on that aspect because it is the first time we make a piece of work where the meaning of the work is really to do with the relationships the work creates. There is no team as such, in *Can You See Me Now*. There is no story, nothing. What is it? It is a work about a very simple game of chase played by people who are separated by long distances. They are closed to one another and distant from one another at the same time. So we realized that this felt very powerful. *Can You See Me Now* was a game that had no content. We were just interested in how would feel like to be settled on your PC and be chaise by someone on the street. And then we realized it has this really emotional effect. So the work came a little bit about loss and absence.

All of our works is very iterative in terms of how we develop it because only by trying something you can know what you have. You need to build something very small and try it, test that, refine that, because it is impossible to conceive these works separate from the audience and separate from the public interaction.

**4. Blast Theory is a hybrid group and technology seems to be a key aspect in the projects you make. How do you work the multidisciplinary in the process of creation? How do you deal with this technical demand on your practice?**

The first thing to say is that we are a multidisciplinary group from our genesis. We all have different backgrounds and skills when we first came together. There were 80 people who came to the very first *Blast Theory*'s meeting and from the four people who

were the core *Blast Theory* the first couple of years, Ju and I remained. Nick joined in 1994. So we built the language from the very beginning. There were different people bringing different skills, finding structures and neighboring different possibilities to co-exist. On of the very first shows we ever did, we invited an artist to make an installation in the building, a band to play; we had a club night, and that was there for four months. We were all interested in the mixture of different elements.

The technology is really about... it is just a set of tools so we can bring to bear our work. It is a way of thinking about the kinds of relationships we can create between us and our audience. I am often thinking about it as platforms rather than technologies. The mobile phone, or the internet, I think these are new cultural spaces, or new places where artists can make work. So we were interested in exploring those things. And some of those technical skills we needed to do, that we have between us, some of those things we taught ourselves. But more often is through collaboration. We collaborate between ourselves. We have our associates. And then we have our long term collaborators: the *University of Nottingham* and so on. We have this whole set of nested collaborations and nested sort of discussions that are moving backward and forwards in the group, and sometimes we employ free announces. We bring people who come to provide very particular skills.

So, the way I see it is: a movie director would need to have a good understanding of what he can or can not do, but they do not have to be an expert on how the camera operates. It is the same with us, what we need is to have a good understanding, a clear understanding of the affordances of a given technology or platform, but we do not necessarily need to know every detail. It just means, if you want to go deeply, you will then be working in a very particular domain all the time, because you can go deeply every time and then move to another thing, move to another thing. There are some technologies we have been really favor, but must of the time those decisions have been made for artistic reasons. So, for example, in early 2000, we were working with quite high technology, with a quite high level technology at that time. GPS was still a specialist thing. When we first start working with Wifi, we installed around Wifi networks when we toured because there were not wifi networks. So we were buying equipment. Buying equipment for our projects would cost thousands of pounds. Then, around 2005/2006/2007, that was the period we decided to work with the simplest mobile technology: SMS and voice. That was a completely artistic decision, to move away from the complex technology that we were using, that to sort of set up a dedicated platform. And we were like: "why can't we do it with text messaging and then any phone on earth can be used? And our audience can use their own devices". That kind of decisions. You know, now we have been doing quite hard in video streaming projects in the last years, and that is again quite expensive. But what I want to say is that all of those decisions have to be made by artistic reasons. You know, what is the most interesting space we can operate, where is the possibility for us to do something really deep and special rather than based on our skill set. We try to balance in that way.

**5. You worked for a long period with the Mixed Reality Lab at Nottingham University. What were the biggest contributions coming from this partnership? What are the challenges of this dialogue between scientific research and artistic practice?**

Steve Benford that is the professor is a remarkable man. He had the ability very early on to see why working with us would be a good idea. We were a very small and little-known arts' company when he first invited us to work with him. He is probably the same old great influence on my professional practice outside of *Blast Theory*. He really has been an absolutely critical figure. And that is for a number of reasons. One is that he

has mentored us. In some ways, it helped us to develop our skills in some ways, in terms of thinking about research, engage with universities and thinking about scientific practice. And encouraging us to think about how you learn from the work, and develop that knowledge, and share that knowledge with other people. The *University of Nottingham* had a massive impact on our work in terms of accessing skills. We would never work with GPS, for example in 1999, if it was not for them saying: "there is this technology, and this is how it works, and this is how you can do it". We would never make a work in Virtual Reality, like *Desert Rain*. And they would not be showing us their virtual environment software and saying: "look, you can do this here". It is also about resources, where we have access equipment and money, and through the partnerships with the University of Nottingham to access other organizations. We would never work with *Sony*, or *Nokia*, or *BBC* if Nottingham had not brought those relationships.

**6. One of the key features attributed to Locative Art is the fact that its aesthetic is fundamentally political, with most of the projects being interested in subvert or criticize these technologies in which they are built, addressing issues of control and surveillance. There are also the ones which advert that Locative Media artists occupy a less critical position, masquerading as art, what in essence was a military weapon. What do you think specifically about the critics regarding the direct collaboration between Locative Media Art with industry and government?**

The hardest attack we have had was from people on processing this question about locative-based media as a form of surveillance, tracking and so on. My answer is: "get used to it because there is no way to resist that". It is completely pointless to say: "oh, this is bad, and therefore we will not do locative based media". Forget that. That is an absolutely impossible point of view, in which all technology are bad so let's resist it. Not to say that those are not really important questions, but the issues are how us as artists and citizens engage with these technologies and ask questions of "an" end, adapt them for our own uses. No technology is neutral. All technology has an ideology built into it by the designer of that technology. We have accepted that these technologies have a world view designed into them but that does not mean that they have only one possible use, they can not be adapted and developed.

In term of the kind of corporate partnership, some of them have been bad. We have drawn from them. We do not hesitate when was not working for us to say: "ok, we are out". It is almost a little bit like musicians working with record companies. We could say, in an ideal world there will be no record companies, there will just be musicians and music, but that is not the real world, and actually most musicians are quite happy for other people to take care of other things. I mean, it is not the direct analogy, it is proper a personality analogy... but in terms of us working with those companies, the positive side has been absolutely massive. We have learned a huge amount.

*Rider Spoke* project was developed with *Sony Net Services*, a division of *Sony* in Berlin. That was supposed to be in a *PlayStation portable*, but that was not feasible, so we switch quite late on to the *N800*. We chose the *N800* because *Nokia* was also a partner on this project.

The difficulty with all of those restrictions is the idea that the art is completely independent, outside of everything, that there is no relationship with any societal or political context at all. They just do what they do, and then they just bring us their artistic work. This is bullsh... To pretend that any visual artist is not aware of the visual arts market and how they work operating within that market is absolute rubbish. To

pretend the kind of work we make is not bound up with systems like higher education, government funding, state funding, local politics in Brighton and Southeast, is nonsense. Our work is entirely bound up with those things. It is not situated outside of it. So, my point of view is to say: what we are trying to do is to create work which is complex, and intelligent, and that positions core questions about society. And there are many different ways to achieve that. I am not saying you can not be compromised, but I am saying you can be, and it is totally acceptable. We have made a piece of work for the *Science Museum* (London) about energy. That exhibition was sponsored by an oil company, and it absolutely had an impact on what the *Science Museum* would allow being on that exhibition. These forces are out there. But it is equally wrong to say: “oh well, if you do not get involved to any of these things you are pure and creating work with no compromise, and over here there is a work that is compromised. I do not think you can be quite simplistic about those decisions. Everyone is in a negotiation with the market, even if it is to do with your life. It is a really rich and interesting set of discussions.

***7. Have come from your proximity with the Mixed Reality Lab the idea to work in your pieces with the relationship between virtual and real worlds?***

The Lab was called *Mixed Reality Lab*, and when we first met them, they were looking at the boundaries between real and virtual spaces. So they were a massive influence on looking on that question, thinking about that question. Then Steve Benford invited us to work with him for the first time when he saw a piece of work where we were video projecting into sheets of water spray. We had this bars with very fine spray falling, and then we were video projecting, and then moving through the screen. That is from where *Desert Rain* came from, but we were just exploring what we could do. He said: “oh, you have made a mixed reality boundary” and we were like: “oh, really? Great!”. But of course, once we started to sort of thinking about that, we begin to work and then think: “oh, this is such an interesting interface between the real and the “virtual”. Because this is "The Golf" as well, you know, "The Golf is people are being killed... is a war of images, a virtual war. Even with your Facebook. Once we started to look at it, we became very very interested. It became a very common thread in most of the projects we have made because at some level this is also a discussion between technology and the body. It is also a discussion of political realities. There is a whole set of questions to ask people in there.

***8. Pieces such as “I Like Frank” and “Rider Spoke” were created in this partnership with MRL and were part of some research programs with specific research questions to be investigated. Regarding the designing process of these pieces, would you say that it was driven by the interaction rather than by the content/narrative? I know for instance that one of the objectives in "Rider Spoke", or on the Iperg (Integrated Project on Pervasive Media), was demonstrating the potential of a commercial positioning device – the Nokia N800 – for pervasive games. In other words: when you start to think about a new project, are you moved by issues in the research field of Human Computer Interaction or it just come as a result of having interaction and technology as subjects?***

*I Like Frank* and *Rider Spoke* were developed in partnership with the MRL. Part of the set of this collaboration is to close the loop between artistic inquiry and research inquiry and to close the loop between technical possibility and creatively desirable. As we became to work more and more deeply with the MRL, we became to understand more

clearly their research interests and engage with them on our own turn. I mean, obviously always interpreted in our way. And so then, when we were creating ideas, they were informing the influence by those questions. I would say these works (*I Like Frank* and *Rider Spoke*), are works first and foremost where we were always focused on it: creating a distinctively and powerful experience for audiences. We never had concerns to follow a particular agenda, in terms of research, in terms of technical possibilities, in terms of funding. All of those things are secondary.

*I Like Frank* was a piece of work we were invited to go to Australia and make a piece of work for a 3G test pad, one of the first place in the world where they had working 3G. We became really fascinated by the idea that we could do that. We could take some of the structure of *Uncle Roy All Around You* and make it for 3G phones and make a wonderful piece for Australia. And then, *Rider Spoke*, as much as anything was influenced about how we could do location without GPS. At that time, there was a great interest in location based works, but GPS was very rare. It was not on phones. It was not in game consoles. The *Wii* handheld at that time did not have it. The *PlayStation* portable did not have it. We looked how we could use Wifi to do location and think about the system of wifi finger printing. And that then influenced how we thought about the work.

*Rider Spoke* has a long genesis. Originally it was commissioned for Los Angeles, to be done in cars and then that fell through and then we go back in the UK, and we were like: “wow, work in cars in the UK means something very different from a work in cars in Los Angeles”. So we decided we wanted to make a piece of work for cyclists. Then we were thinking about what it means to move through space, what it means to make a recording here as opposed to making a recording there. Why would I be here or why would I be there, or why would I be sit in a gallery or in a museum or a theater. Why are you making me move around to make a recording? We were trying to think about the particularity of the city. That is just around about the way of seen it. I think they are all connected.

***9. You follow an interactive process when creating your pieces. How does your creative desire is influenced, in a positive and in a restrictive sense, by the technological possibilities?***

That is one of the dialectics in the work we have being making. It is backward and forewords around exactly of those questions. There are times you try to take technology and really shape to your artistic ambitions and you try to make it very complex and pushing hard at the limits or adapting it for new uses.

So *I Like Frank*, we were doing something very very basic with the 3G handset. We tried to put a map on that with many uses, where you could interact in real time with the map. In 2004 that was an extremely difficult thing to do. That was very limited. The menus were a constant trouble. Then, at other times, we were just saying: “ok, no. We just take technology as it is and we will make something entirely there, in that way. So they are usually supported by the software in the background. A work like *Day of Figurines* is all about people sending text messages and receiving text messages, and that is it. So it is different, at different times. As I say, we went through a phase going: “now we are gonna make stuff just for voices and SMS because we want to work on the very simple technology everyone has”. Then there are possibilities emerged as we do that because everyone has the same kind of tech, you work the same way, anyone can use their own device. Now after few years about, we have then decided we wanted to work with video streaming, which is then pushing again very hard at the technical

limits. Can you stream high-definition video from an iPhone over a network? You know, that is a very tough technical challenge. So I think it is a constant backward and forewords.

***10. Regarding Interaction Model, most of your projects can not be experienced as a group. Is there an explicit intention in giving priority to the individual experience rather than a collective one?***

It is not something that I think we particularly set out to do. At a certain point, we have realized that this is always going on. We have not really sort of resist that. I would love to make a work for crowds because a crowd is a beautiful thing. But what is important to say, I think, is that in so many of our works you may be participating alone but you are in a collective. In *Rider Spoke*, you cycle alone, you make recordings alone, but when you are listening to others people's recording, you are aware that you are part of a large a collective activities of making recordings and listening to recordings. There is a collective there. There is a group of people who have done this and a group of people who have not done on that. In *A Machine To See With*, you have this moment where you are doing it alone and then suddenly you arrive at the car and then now there is someone else. And then now is like: "oh, is the two of us".

There are lots of aspects of collective practices in the works we have made. But I think one of the reasons that we ended up making these works... there are a couple of reasons. One has to do with how technology operate, which is that, when you are one a phone call, you are on your own talking with someone that are there on the line. When you are updating on *Facebook*, you are on you own, or typing messages to everyone else. When you are sending an email, you are on your on. When you are using your computer, you are on your own. These actually are very social, but they are atomized social situations. The other side of it is that, if you are trying to get someone to interact in a really strong way, if you are with a group, even if it is just two of you, there is a little sort of social world between you and me. And if you get something I am asking for you; you will be like: "oh, let's talk about it. What shall we do". This little social group is by far a dominant thing. It constantly knocks you out of the deep immersion experience, and backing to: "I am here doing this thing with my friend". There is a kind of level of self-awareness that is very active. Whereas, if you are on your own, you have this ability to, like in a novel or sometimes in a cinema, where you go deeply in something, and it becomes very much about you and this world. I think we just found at so exciting as such a rich share of possibilities, that people can go out and find very different thing when they are out there.

In *Rider Spoke*, you hear people crying while they are making a recording, and we know that would not happen if someone else was there. You ask them a question about their father or something that gets them nerve, and then they are lonely in the city, at night, on a bicycle doing this thing. They are on their own bubble, they are in their own moment, and that felt very very rich. Of course, when we are doing that we are losing other things, we know this. Hopefully, I learned to do that. The fact that we did something for a group of 1000 of people in the city, once all in one big plaza, maybe we can do something really different and amazing that way.

***11. Representation in your projects is kind of replaced by a directly lived experience. What is the significance of the orchestration work that happens behind the scenes for this kind of narrative based the on live play?***

Some works are heavily orchestrated. *I Like Frank* is massive orchestrated. *A Machine To See With* is not at all. *Fixing Point* no and *Rider Spoke* not really. In *Rider Spoke* we are deciding which recordings go back into the system after a while, so we are constructing what people might find, or filtering would be a better way. It is one of the beauties of the construction of *Rider Spoke*: anyone can cycle an area and make a recording in any location at all. In *Like Frank*, we are there, walkie-talkie on the streets, scouting people, saying: “yes, I see Vanessa. She is walking down that street towards that bicycle. She is going to find the postcard”. And then someone else in the walkie-talkie saying: “I’ve seen Dan. He is lost definitely. I could see he walking in the wrong direction. He is not looking at his map”. And someone else in the backup base says: “ok, I will send a message to Dan telling him to turn around to go back the other way”. What we found is that the more you try to orchestrate everything to be perfect, the more responsibility you have to make everything perfect. It is worst, worst, worst. We are trying to look after people. So I think, in the more recent projects, we try to say, “we just push you out that door and say ok if you go”. It is also to do with social changing. In 2014, everyone knows how to use a touchscreen, how to use a button, and an app, and a map, and a direction finder, and a message system. There are some exceptions, but generally, these are the ubiquitous skills.

We do not really control their behavior. It is more about guiding people through, trying to ensure that people have a minimal level of good experience, and it is not ruined by their misunderstanding. For example, in those days you would get someone out of the venue with a map on their device and they had it the wrong way up, so they immediately walk directly in the opposite position because they have not realized that they put the phone in the wrong way up. You could build lost things in software and try to deal with that and interpreted misunderstanding and correct it, but in reality, we did not have the budget to do that. In reality, it is easier for someone to talk to them.

So it is like really super things on that. There are some interactions, the end of *I Like Frank*, a performer interacts with you when you arrive this sort of office area that we call future lands. One of us will be there and see you going and sit there on the bench, and talk to you. Out of site, but we would be able to see if he go there. Some of this has to do with great and rich interaction, but that (control) is not really the purpose of it.

***12. Situationism is frequently claimed as a precursor of the Locative Media movement, in the sense that these artistic projects recuperate some concepts and practices such as the dérive or the psychogeography. At the same time, there is also a long artistic and avant-garde tradition of participatory projects and projects taking place in urban space. How much your work is influenced or inspired by these artistic movements and participatory or navigational practices in urban space?***

I was suddenly a huge fan of Situationism. And the *Institute of Contemporary Art of London* had an exhibition about Situationism, in the early nineties. I saw it, and I bought a catalog. So suddenly I was very aware of psychogeography, dérive, all this key kind of situationism terms. They definitely influenced. I would say as much as any of that, is to do with an awareness of cultural traditions going way back. Cultures used to happen in public spaces. The word specialist, the idea of a dedicated theater is 500 years old, perhaps. Of course, you have the ancient greek venues. You have lots of lots of theaters that happen outside of a dedicated building, and that happen in public space. Songs happen everywhere. Storytelling happens everywhere. Looking at it one way, it is only in the 21st century that really creates specialist venues or specialist channels for culture: the tv, the cinema, the gallery or museum. These are all 20-century inventions that someone owns it, and controls it, and disseminates it outwards from a central point.

It made some work of genius, and then it stood dedicated wide queues all over the world from space to space. This is a relatively novel idea.

They are not a direct influence, but what is an influence is about where culture takes place. Thinking about where might art exist. In 1999/2000, the idea that art could exist on a phone was quite unusual. Most just did not understand, why on earth we were talking about it. Even Netart was a radical subset of our ongoing practice. It was fashionable and discussed in a very narrow community. Visual arts, for example, had no idea what Netart was, and no interest. In the theater world, when we first started working online in 1997/98/99, people who work even in performance or live art, even in the more experimental way, they just do not even registered what we were doing. We really felt out of all discussions with theaters practitioners, performers, live art practitioners, in 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003. They had no real connections to that world, or whatsoever because none of them registered what we were doing, in my view. I am maybe overstating it, but that is the way I felt it.

***13. As in Situationism, Locative Media Art aesthetic seems to be fundamentally political. Do you have a particular political agenda or tendency when choosing the thematic of your works?***

*Rider Spoke* and *A Machine To See With* have political connotations. *A Machine To See With* is strongly political because it is about finance, it about impetus in the face of the financial crisis. It is not co-actively political, in a way it is a kind of defeat work, because it is a work about impetus in the face of the financial institutions. But the whole turn off that work really comes from my rage. When capitalism completely crushes and even the most ardors applicants of the free market system had to admit that something was profoundly wrong. Suddenly, in England, you hear the conservatives talk know as if no bank had nothing to do with that. It is insane!

They way I see it is, some of our works are more political than others, but all of our works take no particular point of view. Even *Desert Rain*, even *Urike and Eamon Compliant* advocates for a particular point of view. For my point of view, I am completely uninterested in artworks where I know where the artist's point of view is, about a particular subject. If I am going to see a piece of work that is anti-globalization or in favor of immigration, I found it very dawn and uninteresting, because I do not go to artwork to have some of policy outcomes. I go to artworks for complexity and problematic situations. What I want is an artwork that captures something that is not previously being expressed. In the way, I talked about collaborations with industry and decided as an artist to never be outside the system; that is what really fascinates me: I am deeply implicated in the system. I have no outside of position. Like most people are not a brave, lone campaigner for change. Like most people, I have formed ideas about some things, vague ideas about other things, but when it comes down to taking act... A work like *Urike and Eamon Compliant* is a question about action. What would you fight for? - that is the question. So all of our works are really about trying to capture the full complexity of our situations.

***14. Many of Blast Theory's works attempt to tie stories to places. They are context-aware but not necessarily site-specific, what also allows you to present the same piece in different parts of the world. Why design narratives for neutral spaces rather than play with the specificities and peculiarities of each city, or area?***

I supposed we have learned from doing it in a way. *Uncle Roy All Around You* was entirely site-specific to the West of London. We spent a year or eighteen months

knowing we will be there, and thinking about Whitehall, Saint James Park, Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square. All the spy films that have been set around there, all the embassies that are based in that area, all the gentleman clubs that are traditional aristocratic institutions that were there. The Royal family, the parks, policy, the Libyan embassy is there. Then, it worked very well. That was very deep. It was highly integrated there. Then we need to be in Manchester. Then we said: "oh, now we demand some things that are equally thoughtful the location in Manchester". We worked with a bunch of partners, with the Corner House, with the students there, with digital summer, a whole range of organization to do the same level of research, to trying to have the same depth about the specific area. The IRA bomb the centre of Manchester, a massive bomb destroying a huge amount in the center of Manchester. We tried to integrate that and so on. But, we went to Manchester, and I did not know those streets with anything like the same depth. I think it worked well but not as well. Then, we went to West Bromwich, an area that I know even less well. Where we had less time and it works even less well. Still, a strong piece of work and many people loved it, but to me, it does relate as deep in a scale it was formatted. So I think we then had a decision which is: "ok, maybe we do a work just once, in just one place, just at this one moment and never tour it ever again, or you find a different relationship to site and to place. And *Rider Spoke* is really the classical example of that, which is like: "ok, I could try to learn about this city and what Barcelona is like. Or, Vanessa is from Barcelona, she knows everything about this city. She really knows, her personal map and geography are there. Why I do not create this work that in some way activates her personal geography?" That is the decision we took.

We have to adapt the narrative in Manchester, because in *Uncle Roy* your goal as a player is to find Uncle Roy's office. In London, his office was a very grand, large space. In Manchester, it was the first floor of a fairly ordinary office block, and it was a number of small connecting rooms, they were a bit shabby and warm. In London, he was a kind of grand publisher, perhaps who made lots of money and set up this game as a result. In Manchester, that narrative did not really work, so we wrote key elements of the story to reflect that.

***15. How is the creative process in terms of choosing the places, defining the routes, tying content to physical space? How to create sufficient relationship between physical location and content when developing the game design?***

It is very diverse. For *Fixing Point*, John, who commissioned that work, invited us to go to the mountains, which is right in the countryside in southern. We made a piece of work there, so we went there, we walked around there. I was looking for where within 10 minutes or 15 minutes of the building could we do something that was interesting. So literally, we walked around that area and found this scrabbly bit of woodland, and Ju and I said: "oh, this is kind of interesting, this is a weird sort of place. It says a lot". We thought of buried bodies. So that really, within the whole work that sprung from that. Around that time, I think I came across the story of a disappeared in Northern Ireland, these people have been killed, and their bodies have never been found, and this idea of looking for a body. So slowly that worked from that.

*Rider Spoke*; the Barbican is the very first place we have shown it in London. That came maybe only 3 or 4 months before the premiere. We have already done a lot of work here in Brighton. And then: "so, ok, it is going to be in that part of London". But we already knew we wanted that work to tour, so it was much more a different way of thinking about location, the city as a sort of network of stories.

**16. In general, what are in your opinion the implications in designing a narrative that has the city streets and the physical world as diegetic space or as a game board?**

It is chaotic and uncontrollable and contested. People fight all over these places. They are shared as well, but there is also this element. Private developers are trying to get hold of public land. Demonstrators are trying to demonstrate, while the authorities are trying to stop them. People are trying to treat the street as a place where they live, and they owned it, while other people are coming into that area from outside. You have got immigration even as a huge issue which is: “whose streets are these? I have been here 30 years, and you have been here 6 months. This is more my street”. All of these sorts of questions are played in the city. And then you just get random of this. You are taking part in *Uncle Roy* or in *I Like Frank* and a police officer walks up to you and says: “oh, can I just ask what have you been doing?” Suddenly, you are thinking: “why is he asking me? Is he a real police officer”. You have got all of those random things. That even before you acknowledge or sort of seek History that is settled on those streets. This kind of narratives we all have about cities, how we knew it, how we know it, why we came to it.

One time I felt very procreative about London, my city. I have lived in London for many many years, and now I realized more and more that I am a visitor to London, I am a foreigner there, it is not my city. That is changed. It is always shifting its material, so it is a fascinating place for making work. We tried really kind of draw our stuff out. It is also deeply imaginative space. Filmmakers use the city all the time because it is: “the place of 1000 stories”, “the city that never sleeps”. All of these ideas are all kind of active in our minds. We know that we are walking past murderers, rapiers, bank robbers, politicians, prostitutes. We know that these things are all in the city. We know that they are all around us although we may not identify them.

**17. A live performance that uses the city as a setting include some risks, like someone getting lost, disconnected, or having technical difficulties? How to you deal with the risks, do you try to predict and control the chaotic nature of the urban space? Do you improvise or the narrative is to be strictly followed by the audience?**

I think what you are trying to do is – all those properties I have just described to you – trying to make all of them assets. You can not resist them. In *Uncle Roy*, there is an instruction, I can not remember exactly what it is, but it is something like, you are stood on a bridge, in the middle of the park, the bridge goes across the lake. You come to the middle of the bridge and then it says something like: “wait for the woman with black hair coming across the bridge towards you. Turn and follow here”. It is the simplest trick in a book, which is just you decide who is the woman with black hair and you turn and follow her. And all of what you want to do is get him walk back that way again but it just deliberately activates your imagination. Some people see straight through that, and some people are like: “oh, my God, there she is!”. Either one of those works.

It is a resource. It is the stage in which we are playing, so you want to make all of those things work for you.

**18. The audience plays an important role in this kind of interactive projects. They not just enact but also play as coauthor of the story they experience and bring into being. In your projects, how much is the level of the participant's creative input in the narrative construction? Do the participants play an active role in determining its progression? Is the narrative structure open in some sense or the orchestration try to bring the appropriate and expected responses and behavior of the audience?**

*Rider Spoke* is unique among those four because in *Rider Spoke* I do see the public as coauthor of that work. Clearly, the interface is really important. Ju's voice and the opening text that she wrote and recorded is fantastic important. The music is really important, but it is a work about the recordings that were made and left. The first 20 or 30 recordings really had a massive impact on everything that comes after, because they set a certain tone.

Whereas a work like *Fixing Point* is really quite tight to turn it. You walk in some woods, you listen to some recordings, you may get some and miss others. That is it. It is much much tighter. It is much more like watching a short film or something like that, where it follows a certain track. Maybe a short film with the scenes in a random order or something like that. It is much less open to audience affect, to audience control.

*Rider Spoke* is not linear, whereas *A Machine To See With* is linear. It says: walk up until the end of this street until the signal from you partner and then turn left. So it is absolutely constructed. I walked the route and then I wrote it down and then I walked the route testing it. And then two days later you come, and you walk the same way I walked. They are all different approaches.

**19. The more open the interactivity is, the more space the work provides to its audience to affect the narrative. Do you believe that openness in interactive terms can bring to much chaos and compromise the audience to achieve meaningful experiences? How do you define how much control you will have over the dynamic?**

It is an artistic decision. It is a design decision. Clearly, for each project, there is the sweet spot in terms of control. Even you look at the cinema. You can direct a film where you control the gaze of the audience, every frame, and every shot. Or you can create where there is much more openness where the audience might look. You have a scene with six, eight characters in one shot, and they are all talking, and you got room to observe someone in the backgrounds. It is all decision making. Clearly, in *Rider Spoke* you can draw a 10 miles radius around the venue where *Rider Spoke* begins, and you are aware that in that 10 miles circle the work can be happening, the people can be engaging. Then you get a work like *A Machine To See With*, where if you got a bit wrong you lost it, you are out. Some people give up because they get a bit confused, they do not like to redo it. People get 20 minutes through, and they never go any further.

**20. Mobile and Locative Narratives require considerably more effort from the audience than the traditional linear narratives or even hypertext narratives (turning a page or clicking a link takes far less effort than moving through physical space, enacting a narrative and identifying narrative elements and understand the story itself). Which kind of participation strategy seems to be more effective to engage the audience physically? Rewards seem to feed their desire to keep playing to reach a closure of the narrative. Does it explain why you often use game strategies in your projects?**

No doubt, an audience feedback is essential. For example in *Uncle Roy* and in *I Like Frank* we had a strategy. We had a system called the red spot. Just, the very first thing that you ask them to do is a completely meaningless task. In a grand scheme of the work, it is just a formation that you know what you are doing. So it basically says: "you just get out, walk over there and sit in that chair". And when you get out, walk over there and sit in that chair, we say: "well done! You sat on the chair!". It is just for you to go: "oh, cool! I did the right thing". Just to give you a platform to be forwarded. To us, we can go: "Vanessa has got the red spot, she is ok". It is like training. Of course in

games, these techniques are thousand of years old. It is like fully understood. We use those of techniques.

**21. *“I Like Frank” combines two different kinds of audience: one online and the other in the city streets. Each audience is in one location and with a set of different interfaces and technologies. With all this complexity, why use a gameplay that merges collaboration and competition? Does it work as a mechanism you use to unify this very divergent sets of experiences?***

The basic reason is because the two groups, the online players, and the street players, exist in such totally different spaces. People online have arrived through clicking a link. People on the street have made a physical journey. People online are playing for free. People on the street have bought a ticket. People online can leave in a second without anyone ever know. People on the streets have often come with a friend, and they are now both committed together to do this thing. People online can be in any time zone on earth. People on the streets we know exactly the time zone. We could go with this huge list of weather, all those things, all these properties. People online are anonymous. People on the street are really not very anonymous, they are visible and can be identified. Then, what we have tried to do is a great piece of work where you, in somehow, allow these people who are in totally different worlds to come together and share space. So then that is why they have these very different properties, is to try to make the best strength out of those things. So for example, the online player could be helpful, or they could be quite annoying or difficult because they are anonymous, and they are online. They can bullsh... They can pretend. They do not have to be cool to account for their actions. So then what we were trying to do was making that part of the work, which is: “do you trust the online player to tell you where to go?”, to then bring the ideas of trust. Very much in *I Like Frank* and *Can You See Me Now*. Both of those works are very much more about trust in strangers, online communities, and what that might mean and so on.

**22. *In the description of “A Machine To See With” you say that it is a film where we play the lead. But it is not more about being guided by a kind of “invisible hand” through the city, in the sense that all the actions you are supposed to do are pre-programmed, and you necessarily do what the script asks you to do?***

Those lines about being the leader in the film, they are so motivated by narrative concerns, which is to activate the cinematic imagination of the city, because we all know that the city is the place for thrillers, and romances, and bank robbers. It is to activate this kind of cinematic imagination. At the same time as really situating your omnipotence, to really make you feel that you have this kind of central role to play. What is true. *A Machine To See With* is all about you, what you are about to do in the next 45 minutes. You are not a member of a collective. You are a sole agent. But the idea of building you up in this way is so that, when the bank robbery goes wrong, and you dump out of it, your impedance and your inability to carry out the bank robbery is really more accentuated. And of course, this also works as a comment in interactive works themselves. We are a very solipsistic society. We are a society that wants everything orchestrated around us. The driven position of a car is where all the devices, everything is within reach. My buttons are everywhere where I need them. This phone is not the same. All my needs are orchestrated and personalized for me. I have my apps and my messages on. So the works are in some way comments in this kind, the idea that interactive artworks are personalized zones of control somehow.

**23. You aim at engaging as wide as a possible audience, not just the youngest generation interested in technology and games. Based on the feedback you have from your projects, and thinking more about the audience that is used to consume narratives in traditional media. Do you believe they can understand and play effectively with the dynamic of interactive works like these? Do they become engaged and willing to expend the necessary effort in these playful experiences? For instance, how was the reception of “A Machine To See With” in Sundance?**

In *A Machine To See With* in Sundance, some of the public thought they were coming to see a film. They booked at the central book office without realized it was an interactive piece of work and not a piece of cinema. I think our work over demand our audiences, and it is not for everyone. Lots of people choose not to take part, because they think it is going to be, either very demanding or it is going to expose them in some way. Especially sometimes critics and the press, they hate it! They hate it because they have to show themselves. In *Rider Spoke* we had some terrible reviews because a theater critic who suddenly have been told he had to record something, and he was like: “no, no, no. I am here to see the artwork. I have not booked it to make the artwork”. It is different audiences. Sometimes we really suffer, because for the games people it is not enough like a game. For the visual art people, it is too sort of pop cultural, mainstream. Sometimes our audience is a challenge, to find that audience who feels comfortable with all those different things that are going on. But as far as I am concerned, these are contradictions of a position in which we are making our work and making it really strong. The fact that it is not even one thing, nor the order.

**24. Do you believe you could use location and game strategies in projects without using these technologies?**

You can certainly make locative work without any of these technologies, but they would be very very different. It is not that you can take *Rider Spoke* and do it with people writing messages, it would be a very different work. The act of writing something down is very different from the act of speaking something aloud, for example. One of the things I think we focus on very carefully is the particular aesthetic properties of performing a technology, of a device. Like the very specific thing. Like what would you write in a text message that is different from what you would write in an email? It is very different. But, what? What is it about a text message that is so specific? So, for example, a text message is a much more kind of flirty kind of media than an email. I would send a sexy text message, but I would not send an email like that. It is a different thing. So why that is very very different? I would probably send a sexy picture if I text messaging but I probably would not attach it to an email. This is just like one tiny example of all of these particular differences of these platforms. When we are trying to make a piece of work, we are trying to make use of all of those elements. If you then start to switch it, even *Rider Spoke*, if you go from N800 to an iPhone, that would be a big difference. It is a very different thing because, for example, everyone thinks they know what an iPhone does. Anyone knows that if they hold that button down, it will quit the application, and you could see what else is happening, for example. So there are all of these things, people will know how to operate the volume, etc, etc.

## APPENDIX 2. Interview with Nick Tandavanitj from *Blast Theory*<sup>371</sup>

***1. You started essentially as a multimedia performance group and have been working the last years with mixed reality games, mobile and locative technologies, digital broadcasting. What are the key concepts or terms for talking about what you do recently? Did you come to discuss and define a discourse area in which you are most interested throughout the years?***

At the time I met *Blast Theory*, we were working with interactive media, which basically mean interactive environment, interactive projection. So, using set pads to trigger audio samples or to trigger video samples, using kind of live camera and that sort of thing for projection. That was partially because we wanted something which felt really I think contemporary. That was able to make reference to contemporary culture and feel very kind of present. I suppose we were also referencing things like dance culture, live culture and projections in night clubs, and that sort of spaces where technology was being used in a much more kind of playful way, and not in the theater. It was pulling those kinds of references and those skill sets, and those languages into the theater. But I suppose there is a turning point in terms of mobile technology. There is a project called *Kidnap*, and we had been working in a number of intuitions of projects around the pleasures of giving up control. So we did a number of projects where that was a kind of studio-based, or theater based and performance based. We did a couple of work in progress; that was ok. And then Matt had an epiphany, that we should just take it out of the theater and make a kind of contract with an audience, that we had not made it yet. We would all kidnap you. We will ask you to give up control to us. We will not gonna do it in context, in a tactical space, we will do it in the world. Can not think about space in that way. So, it essentially exploded space. And those kidnappings sort of cheating happened simultaneously. Doing *Kidnap*, it immediately changed our understanding of space. The space the performance was taking place were an influence from the point that people arrive, to the point that people leave. Everywhere in the world. From the point people heard about it, to the point people stop hearing about it, or stop thinking about it. The landscape for where the work was taking place completely transformed, and the landscape of the audience completely transformed, from the sense of the work being for an audience that we could see and touch. They started us giving a point in time. It became more to the audience.

We started working with the *Mixed Reality Lab*, in Nottingham. Working with virtual environments, the boundaries of virtual and physical environments. At the time, virtual environment refers to immersive 3D virtual environments. Matt has done this meeting. In that book, he taught about the virtual has not to deal with the sort of technology of Tri-Dimensionality and virtual 3D spaces. He talked about the virtual as having to do with the mediation of experience through technology, our kind of shared experiences or feeling that we have shared experiences, or the feeling that we were involved in something even though they are entirely mediated experiences. It kind of opened up this kind of landscape as being kind of potentially a space.

As we were saying, *Kidnap* sort of open the box of the space from the theatrical box. It also opened up that sort of way of thinking about what media spaces where and their meaning was. *Kidnap* is 1998. And then our first collaboration with the *Mixed Reality Lab* happen in the same sort of time, 1999. I think *Desert Rain* is the first project that went public. I think that was in 1999. So then it served as a kind of key concepts around

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<sup>371</sup> Tandavanitj, Nick. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, March 20, 2014.

technology. I think technology then was always enabled by a sort of discussion that thinks about the kind of spaces. It happens as a way for us to start looking in at the ways that we could engage with space. In a very simple level, it is like being able to mass produce or fly poster sort of things. It is sort of how do we actually contact an audience. It is like to setting up little events. In that case was then building a website because there was not physical space that we could invite people to, that has to be secret, that was part of the principle of what was going on, so we had to have remote access to a location. There are other things that are kind of tactical about this new topography, the kind of space that we were working with, and technology was a facilitator really, for us being able to work in those pieces.

We all have that kind of classic kind of break level of thing, not break but just sort of chubby twelve key mobile phone that everyone has, that shows 3 lines of text messages. In terms of locative media, they are particularly in the late 90s. So literally it was in the turn of the millennium, the start of thinking differently about mixed reality. Virtuality switches effect to almost entirely looking at electronic devices or electronic spaces that were enable by mobile devices or enable by ubiquitous computing. That was really amazingly for us to be in that relationship with the Laboratory (*Mixed Reality*) because we sort of saw a sort of cult warning from the last twenty years. We rethink about what mixed reality was. There was a kind of key workshop. They were involved in one of these massive European five years research project. The phase that we were in was called "City Wide" and we were an invited consultant. This was I think 2000. There is a key video we made. We did some workshops around, sort of telematic. We were looking at telepresence, and all kind of metaphors and wireless could mean. They were quite playful, and we were also looking what kind of social impacts that would mean in terms of surveillance and paranoia, and those sort of things. We were referencing in the 1950s. I think we have got a kind of key, like a mood. And we get all the films we thought were appropriated and interesting related in terms of locative media and that kind of things that was quite feeding our way. We did not know what it was. But now, I think we still describe ourselves as an artistic group in terms of what technology is and what it means. It feels like, because that begins in such people's kind of interest in mobile experiences and technology based art, with festivals around it. I do not see ourselves being sort of technology lead. I still have that sort of sense of technology is facilitating. It is kind of feeding us because there is a kind of drive us for experiences in our everyday life. Like so many of the experiences that we have are determined by whatever is now happening on things that are on your mobile device or whatever, or how are you watching tele. That is kind of feeding us, but at the same time, I do not feel like we are exploring technology at all.

We are mixing things together. We like something novel and unusual that is really rare, that we will do that with technology. We are much more kind of thinking about: "oh, these are the kind of things that we are thinking about in terms of our relationships. That is not always true. Some of the projects have actually being facilitated by research projects where there have been 10 partners, and they said: 'here is a bit of technology. Play with that, or think about it'.

***2. You said technology is not necessarily the main thing in your projects and in what you create, even though it helps you to talk about some social, cultural, political issues. Since the beginning, you were using technology in your performances, such as video, computers, graphic projections. Which role technology plays in your works nowadays? Has it influenced the way you create your projects, especially in terms of content, narrative strategies and modes of audience participation? Did the proximity***

***with Mixed Reality Lab make you experiment more with technology or think more about how it could impact your practice?***

I don't think we use more technology because we were working with the Lab (*Mixed Reality Lab*). The technology we have used is probably more ridiculous just because they do some work and experimentation with another kind, that is a kind of kid in technology. Things like *I Like Frank* just would not have happened because we would not have had enough of that expertise and the skill set. First to sit down and work with us in the experiment with mobile phone networks. Yes, this is the point: mobile phone development, working in Java. In terms of language handling and that sort of thing. We would not have been able to do that, but we probably would have been aware of mobile phones at this stage. We might have used mobile phone, but we probably would have done it in some other way, not using a programmer. With *Rider Spoke*, again, we ended up using a quite eccentric *Nokia* platform which now is dead. It died in that year we were actually adopting it. It just disappeared, and that scared us pretty much. But that was because *Nokia* was a partner, so they get work back done hopefully at the end. But it was also easy to program for. It fitted the certain specifications of things that we were interested with other partners. It was running on a version of Linux. It was a preference for the developers work with it. It might be an alternative to the *Playstation* portable, which was exactly the opposite in terms of platform.

In terms of that process, in terms of the construction of the narrative with technology, I think it immediately happened. I think it happened not because of the technology but because with technology we started making work which takes place now in different spaces. Previously, when we rehearsed or worked in something, even when it was in a theater you would hire a space. You would work with. Whatever it is, you do it physically. You would bring in the projectors, bring in the computers. You would experiment with those things within the space. You would have a sort of coherent particular time frame, a physical space to build stuff, and make stuff in. You would rehearse for 2 weeks or 3 weeks and have a share at the end of it. Because there is a process of working in spaces that are in the city, or that are located, or in mobile. You do not have the same sort of physical space to kind of construct stuff in. To test something, actually you have to walk outdoors, so there are a lot of the kind of hypothesize, or there is lots more kind of imagine things that do not exist yet because you do not get to see them. In the process, you imagine those things, and you sort of ended up imagining software interfaces, or you imagine software systems. It becomes a process of making those imaginatively systems, what those systems might be and how those things might work. Then having someone build enough of it, that you can walk out the door and have a few people walking around, and they come back, and we get what is interesting about that. So that becomes a bit more of less fluid in a way because becomes a bit more planning. There is a bit more of imagination, kind of procedure about how you have to think.

Software development has things around it which you can not improvise with it. People obviously have to get the code in a couple of days, but for anything that is sort of more complex sort of system. It is kind of getting that balance right between sort of trying things out in a way that is a quite improvised. But also sort of building knowledge and also trying to push it quickly enough because that can be also slow and very time consuming in terms of developers or like relationships. You kind of try some balance, try to get enough knowledge that you can build something that is testable and usable, and you can go on to the next one and try to see what the next one is like. I think in a way it is not so much the technology, it is almost like what the end experience is for the user. That is the theme which determines a lot about what you test and how you test it. Because you could make things that were phone apps. But one is essentially a sort of

casual game that has all to do with like pushing things around on a screen, that you would never need to walk out the door. But then the other one is about collecting jewels from all the major capitals of the world. Obviously, you need to geotesting process to test if they go around the world.

Also in a theater, you have that kind of classic role, which is the director. He sits in the middle of the auditorium. He is the proxy for all of the audience. He has to see the show. He is there, like a knowledgeable audience member. He is kind of getting the: "oh, I do like, that is boring", and he knows that at this moment he needs to speed up, is missing intriguer. And they can of get the perfect sort of sit in a way, but they are like there. So you are able to have that really quick feedback loop. Often the difficulty is that we do not really have that role in the process. We have had opinions individually about how we think things will work. Actually, because of the context. Even if we are controlling the context of what the user experience will be. In part, we know the location, we know what time of the day it will be. Still, we need to actually physically go there and do lots of it in that location to get the sense of what it actually is. And often, you are completely surprised about what is is. Whatever the real thing is, somehow it all feels kind of complete as a moment. You can work out how you construct that moment, and then you just try. And then often it is not gonna be like you are expecting. You might just find something surprising. It is actually what you have to do in it. They will tell you something that is not what you have expected.

***3. Blast Theory is a hybrid group. What are the technical skills of each one and how you deal with this technical demand on your practice? How do you work the multidisciplinary in the process of creation and execution of your pieces?***

Internally, I suppose that anyone has programmed or pre-scripted things. Dan does some sort of web development stuff. Matt does *Final Cut* and all video editing and audio editing and that sort of things. And Ju does more in terms of user technology. I suppose in a way she is our sort of engineer to someone who is the outsider. She is not an expert. She got that kind of conversation like: "why if we were doing it like that? Why do not we use that?" The voice of reason, because she has no interest in how elegant is works from behind the scenes, or what the technology is doing. She wants to know what it is doing in our hand, what is she facing. So we have sort of slightly different sort of array of skills. Individually we all have done different experiences of sort of managing software processes and development processes. The last couple of years we are trying to invest a bit of time in learning. But we, none of us internally does much development at all. It essentially is all about relationships with other people.

For a long time, that was working with a group of friends who all graduated from *Royal College of Art*. The first couple of years they were running the multimedia course at the *Royal College*, in the early 1990s. All of them, technical designers. *I Like Frank* had an interface for the online players, and that was the thing I built. But then, after the *Royal College*, it was working with the *Mixed Reality Lab*, and they did all the mobile development. They did a lot of the server site development. Over the course of the years we have worked with probably like 3 or 4 generations of their developers, and then as we have tried to sort of work more independently, or sort of find different modes of working, we have then started to work with freelancers, with a couple of development agencies here in Brighton.

***4. Blast Theory had a long-term partnership with the Mixed Reality Lab at Nottingham University. With them, you made "I Like Frank", mentioned as the***

*world's first mixed reality game for 3G phones. Before that you have made "Can You See me Now" (2001), that are also mixed reality games but that use handheld computers. How do you evaluate this proximity and dialogue between scientific research and artistic practice? When you started thinking about these projects, were you moved by issues in the research field of Human Computer Interaction or it just came as a result of having interaction and technology as subjects?*

*I Like Frank...* the 3G was actually for phones that were on a test mobile network. It was like before 3G was really probably deployed anywhere, so it is one of the few testing networks in the world. So there was only one random phone that actually works on it, that was not totally made for this sort of events. There were a bit of worry when we were making it. As I remember, they had one phone for about the first two or three months of our residence. How few phones they would have and how late we will be receiving the phones? It was quite nerving. Because the phones arrived just in May. *I Like Frank...* it could be those kinds of things that can work both ways. You can get the best of everyone involved, 3D designers or developers. When it works, it is really nice, but it can be a bit tricky sometimes because those relationships do not always work naturally. Sometimes they are awkward, and there are lots of missteps in terms of your aesthetics, or missteps in terms of how you understand, missteps in terms of communicating and like all kind of protocols that you have of how you work. The hardest conversation I always find are the aesthetic conversations. So those collaborations are really tricky, I think.

In the initial relationships that we had (with *Mixed Reality Lab*), they said: "here is a bit of technology, here is a bit of this software that we had that done this. Is that interesting? Do you wanna come in? Do you wanna have a game with it?" Then as we established this sort of strong relationship, we then were able to get our concerns. "This is why we think mobile phones are interesting, or what we worried about it, what we think was gonna happen in terms of..", those kind of things that we should be thinking about mobile phones. I guess our relation to *Mixed Reality Lab* is worth. They are a time friends in that sort of quite large research projects which happened over 4 years, 3 years. Within that, there will be kind of small goals. Even a small goal would be like over 1 year. There are ambitions in terms of what is going to be delivered in that time. One of the amazing things about working with the *Mixed Reality Lab* has been how they were up for making work in public. They have not done experiments in public. It is like testing in the real world. Steve (Benford), who is ahead of the Lab, was like completely up for it. That for him was the most interesting. To make technology, it is not at all interesting. To make a technology and then to put it in the hands of like 50 sort of teenagers walking around in the middle of Nottingham is far interesting. So I think in some understanding it kind of temper relationships in terms of the process. There is some periods that he will just find us a kind of common interest which might be a number of months.

The project like *Day of Figurines*, that took about over two years just to make it into its final form but then we wanted other things. "We just got invited for a commission for a such and such thing. We think we wanna make this. Does that interest you? Because we think this is very exciting". And I go: "Ok, then". And then they worked out quite quickly how we were gonna fit into their research team.

I suppose one of the key concepts in *I Like Frank*, *Can You See Me Now*, is that relationship between people who are online and people who are on the streets. The original *Can You See Me Now* just kind of preside. All of these projects was originally most fated by us. It was the early turn of the millennium and we were going like... Well, I suppose the idea that on the internet there was a delivery format for entertainment and

culture was just... there was net art. It took shape as a delivery of pop culture, for performance. That is why we have made *Can You See Me Now*. We wanted to make a performance. People have been doing somehow streaming performance. But we were just like: "this does make die a version of performance you have experienced. It is like, going to a web page and seeing this thing. It is so drained. There are not any kind of sense of lightness and excitement". So we wanted to make something that includes just a trigger point. You can make something that felt like performance and felt exciting alive. But essentially you are sitting on a website. We just wanted to see if that was possible, and that is why we did *Can You See Me Now*. That kind of relationship was then our kind of driver. We wanted to make online experiences which have the concepts of being driven and excitement. But that has a sort of more elaborate history to tell or we are able to inflect them with different kinds of emotions rather than just adrenaline or exoneration, that sense of competitiveness. I suppose that was the kind of arc of those projects.

But from the last point of view, I think their (*Mixed Reality Lab*) research agenda was still around. "Oh, what is this interface between...". I think they were looking at it: this interface between an electronic space and physical space. One of their key concepts of the Mixed Reality boundaries was one of their research concerns. Like: what is the boundary between a physical and an electronic space? What are its properties? So they have used paradigms from theater to distinguish and kind of try to explain what those boundaries are, talking about a sort of entering of those sort of thematics circles, how to enter into spaces and leave spaces and their kind of grammar. About how start engaging with your phone and like hang up that engagement, or you kind of give yourself permission to separate yourself from physical spaces that you are engaged with. So they have a lot of that kind of language from the theater and theatrical theory to kind of talk about what are the kind of pleasures we give ourselves. That is kind of why this sense of the city as diegetic space kind of comes from. It is actually space where we are kind of negotiating with each other about how we are using space.

In terms of the research agenda, they had their addresses, which I think was of interest to us because they actually inspired a lot of works we have made. They also had a secondary set of interests that has to do with interestingly, which I still do not kind of account for fully. Their interest was really in the sort of background in theater, like the mechanics of staging it, and like how do we work as a group, how do we actually make these things happen. Then there is a whole sort of kind of classic papers in our projects about orchestration.

***5. Do you rely on GPS or do you use any other source of information or game design strategies to sense the audience location and respond to a possible GPS inaccuracy?***

The only two works that use GPS are *Can You See Me Know* and *Fixing Point*. *I Like Fran* and *Uncle Roy All Around You* use self-reporting positioning. Essentially, one of the tricks is that when you look at the map, you turn looking at with the middle of the view based on where you are. You center your application. So that is what we do. So we just report what parts of the map you are looking at. We have a mechanism saying: "yes, I am now at this location". But it is based on you placing your pin on the map. With *Uncle Roy*, we had this thing with the red spot which we used in *I Like Frank*. It is basically a kind of test for us just check on you, to make sure that you understand how to use the technology in the first two or three minutes of the experience. Essentially, you will keep front door. Fifty meters away there is a fountain or a specific location. So you have to go there and when you get there, click on your map to say that you have arrived, and then you get your first message. Basically what you have to do is scroll the map and

look where you are on and then press: "I am here", and it will draw a map pin, and that is your task. You can not do that if you have got confused, have closed the app, you have done something, or you just do not know how to use a mobile phone in some ways. A lot of people did not do it at that time yet. Touchscreens were a novelty. So we definitely do construct the narrative around some kind of strategies. That is kind of like a tutorial level in a game.

**6. *"I Like Frank" combines two different kinds of audience: one online and the other in the city streets. Each audience is in one location and with a set of different interfaces and technologies. Before that, you have done "Uncle Roy All Around You" that also has both kinds of audiences. Which strategies do you use to unify this very divergent sets of experiences?***

With *I Like Frank* and *Uncle Roy*, we were just quite naive about what the experience of the web, because it was quite novel. One of the things that they have in common is the context of the Festival. I think that is very important for these kinds of works, for the works we made at that time. The Festival came as a sort of narrative about how people understand their participation in something. In a Festival, you look at a program, and you see what is on, you plan when you might go see something, and you see things in the calendar. For us, that were quite naive. We just thought: "oh, in the calendar you might see such and such zone, and it is online, and then you just go to your computer at that time and date and play". Some people did. People would look at the Festival program and do that. We had reasonable online audiences. The whole population of people who came and did that on the street, in a way was looking at the entry point. Often, that was broadly people that will come back to play online. In a way, we paid a lot of attention to the arc of the experience of the street players, because that we tested, and rehearsed, and worked with performers actors. There was a lot of investment and logistics to commit that work. The online experience is something where, actually, you can test people within the game to see if people at computers go on and play it all through. But actually, in the reality, in the real world, people experiencing the narrative online are much more in a kind of fluid. Especially these days, people are spending more time online. They can jump between things. They have kind of much more divided attention. But I think in a way, we were just quite naive. We thought, if people come to our website, they are sitting and playing on the website. At least 15 min, 30 min, that is how long it takes to accompany someone experiencing *I Like Frank*. And some people did, but I think we would not approach it the same way these days. In *I'd Hide You*, we designed it entirely around a different kind of attention for online audiences. There are no expectations that you want any play for 3, 4 minutes. There is a very particular kind of attention that we are trying to be more aware in terms of online attention. In a way, it is very similar to mobile devices now. One of the more recent research projects we were involved includes iPaq, which was for *Rider Spoke* and for *Day of Figurines*. We love the sense of liveness and performance, that kind of synchronicity with a moment in time and space. It is difficult to achieve online because people might need to close their browser, or leave, or something.

**7. *What are the challenges of bringing your work to the city streets?***

It is constantly striking when we make some work that takes place out in the city. You can be standing in a center street corner, and that is it like two mates meet each other. One experience can be entirely about humor and fun, and then two minutes later you feel threatening, anonymous. When we make stuff, it is constantly making work that takes place in real space where people's inhabit spaces in such different ways. That is

the personality, and the moment may have to kind of cross through that space, and you have happened to be there when there is like someone that is very drunk, chattering on the top of their voice, and looking threatening. So if you are trying to kind of structure someone's experience as a narrative through space, often you can not say, if I am getting them to go along a particular route, that you are going to give them a certain narrative. It is kind of saying, you can set up things in like intend. You can not get that they will get on the route even if you are giving the clear directions. When we did *A Machine To See With* they ended up in another part, in a completely different car park, but they had a really great time.

Everything is diegetic. It is a sort of reward performance. It is a self-consciousness we are doing this. In a way, that is one of my favorite things about *Rider Spoke*, is that is quite open to people finding. It is actually the most fun that people have. Then people can tell when things are actually happening in a way that is sort of improvised, chaotic. Generally, we have a sort of different feeling about that.

**8. Does the narrative plays an important part in your projects and in the creative process? In general, the design is more content driven or interaction driven?**

I think our creative conversations are nearly always around some sort of ideas rather than about technology. It is not that we do not think about technology because technology is just stand up and so constant sort of awareness. It is a constant kind of conversation. We can talk about an app that we put on our phone, or we talk about things that happen on the interactive tv, or in tv formats. Surfing quite just through what is out there. In a way, much more around the kind of cultural forms, rather than “here is the thing that has got these technical properties”.

*A Machine To See With* was prompted by the Commission, and then the Commission was for locative cinema. We talked a lot about what we thought the expectations of the Commission were. We expected that they would want something where people will be playing video on smartphones, and we thought that was already done. Then we talked about what would a site-specific cinema be, and what would a site-specific film be. Then we quite quickly were done. There is a quote from Godard which is: “my eyes are a machine to see with, my ears are a machine to...”. And then there was his talk about his experience of being in the city. You know, everyone when on headphones everything comes more choreographed, more poetic and more filming. That just felt like immediately a resonant simple experience. That felt like joy. Everyone has that moment. There is a property that we have called on a lot in our previous work, that is *Something American*, that is all about how we use our familiarity with cinema as a way of navigating our personal lives, and thinking about ourselves, and our own situations. There is this guy who imagines himself to be an American cop even though he is nothing, but it kind of gives him a way to explain who he was, and what were the problems in his life. All because he could fit more into that kind of narrative as hard-bitten of an american cop. So it was about that experience with cinema. Well, a mixture of that. That was kind of prompted. Then we talked a lot we wanted to make a piece of work about the financial crisis. We talk about that, then making a heist movie, and then robbing a bank. This is almost like a revenge drama. Then Godard again, he made this film called *Made in USA*, which mixes genres like a gangster sort of genre to make a political film about it. So there was that sense of stealing other's people ideas.

**9. Would you say that the narrative of these works is a combination of pre-programmed and entirely improvised content?**

*A Machine To See With* is very linear, and it is quite prescribed. It is very navigational. It is partially because it is actually not that interactive. Essentially it is six lines through the city, and you do not really deviate. You do not choose to go: “oh, I will turn like this”. There is one point where, around the bank I think, it gives you an opportunity to go one way or another, or I think it presents it as an option, but actually you are not going. You get maybe two or three minutes of freedom just to leg it in any direction you want because it tells you something are gonna happening. But essentially *A Machine To See With* is very linear, it is very structured, and that is partially due to the technology and also the intent: we did want to make something that felt cinematic, that you were being like walking through a film. We wanted that kind of level of detail. You are looking at the city as if you were a camera. That was to build the protagonist. So in respect to that, it was to deal with the driver, with all we wanted in terms of being very linear. And also there were some constraints with technology, with branching telephone calls. You can make a branching system. In terms of navigation, it is just like difficult to manage content. In a way, it was partially to do with this. We also a want it to bring this sense of the typical Hollywood hero, that somehow are being in control of their destiny. So, we kind of present it as if you were a hero, but actually, you have no control over where you are going. So that was our intent, the whole piece is about a kind of lack, of missing in the face of the financial crisis. So that was kind of very convenient.

*I Like Frank* has an end point, but there is like a big pipe or something in the middle. It is like a big sort of balloon where you get your one place where you go. So *I Like Frank* and *Uncle Roy* were the same structure. You go to the one point, the red spot; and then essentially you are free just to explore that. I think with *I Like Frank* were actually four spaces where you could pick up postcards.

***10. Still talking about “I Like Frank”, there is a mixture of competitive and collaborative elements in this piece. Isn't it a too complex rule-based structure for the gameplay?***

That was the other mechanics. There are online players kind of giving a task to have a street player to retrieve something for them from the city, and they do not know what it is. It is a postcard. They basically search the virtual environment to see if they could find locations where there are postcards, and then they become people who are interfering in the game: “oh, can you go to this place on this street?” They have to collect one. If they collected a single postcard, they then got directed to go to the kind of end space, which is stood on the street corner. Someone would call you, and invite you to this almost like a secret garden. In the middle of the city, there was a courtyard in the middle of an office block. You have to walk through walkways to find it in the middle of this office block. At the same time, the street player was invited, the person who they pick up the postcard for, online, they were invited to go there as well, but in a kind of virtual version of it. The whole virtual world sort of transforms into a blood red world. In *I Like Frank* probably half people actually make it.

***11. Which kind of strategies you use to engage participants in your projects?***

With all these ones, it is just like giving people time for completing things. Even if you do not specially say a time, you say: “you got to get to such and such location”. You are often sprint. You know people. The sense of time being, people approaches in a very different ways. Actually one of those kinds of issues with how you kind of engage people or keep them moving is just trying to managing that sort of framing, so you can set your clock in a similar way. With *Rider Spoke*, you have got a voice in your ear all

the time. That is very easy. You do not have to do anything to hear the voice, to have the instructions heard. Ju's text sets the tone. I think it does an amazing job. People relax immediately, and this is great. With *A Machine To See With*, we talked about it a lot, to kind of set people and their expectations. Some people come into it thinking it is a game. Originally, they came in thinking: "oh I is gonna be a game". They did not expect the sense of like being ledge through the city. You have to, I suppose, set people correctly so that when you set them off and let them go it is not kind of grinding gears with them in terms of their expectations. But then, I think is like you set a time and kind of let people. You know, you can leave people alone. You do not have to hold them all the way, but you kind of give them an intent. So you say: "you need to find the person that is wearing a red hat or red tie". There is also the things that you can give people as a task or an intent.

But then, *A Machine To See With* there is actually very few of those things (tasks). There are more in works like *I Like Frank*, where it is more playful. I think that in *Uncle Roy* we did things like: "you have to look for that person to coming walking towards you on the pavement and follow them". That is any person. They are just sort of inventions. In *A Machine To See With*, the pleasure is actually being guided by the hand. And you do not know where you are going. You do not know in the next time seconds where you gonna be asked to turn down anyway or stand behind the bin. And there is kind of pleasure in that as well. We ask you to kind of stand in the street corner, and you do not know where you are going and what is gonna happen other than that you are gonna be in a heist movie. That sort of suspense really is the thing which kinds of drive people because they do not have to make a decision in that. For the most part in their experience, they just have like to obey exactly. Yeah, they have to just listen and follow. And it is almost to the story. You make it works by actually walking.

But it is interesting, one of our experiences in terms of how people respond physically and how you motivate people physically has often a lot to do with the kind of audience and the kind of context. We showed *A Machine To See With* in the Edinburg Festival, which is clearly, definitely, a theater festival with a much more clearly theater audience, is not a media art audience. People do expect to have everything served to them and give to them. They do not expect to act or initiate anything themselves. Although there are few points where you have to even just call back in for make the next thing happen in *A Machine To See With*. People, in the early test with *A Machine To See With* in Edinburg: "You have to call it back when you arrive that such and such location. Did you do that?". And it was like: "Oh, I did not realize I have to do that". Because of the expectations, there wasn't that sense of initiative where the audiences are completely unlike to. Also, the thing went wrong, and they constantly called back. They did not try to work out what they were going to do next because it is a puzzle they want to solve. And it is a different approach to what detain your engagement. And that has a lot to do with the culture of the audience.

**12. Do you think which kind of public you want to reach when designing a piece? I mean, you target a specific public for each piece?**

With these projects, I would say we did not really. Not, if I am honest. I suppose we have knowledge about our audiences. And we have a hook about how we might expand that audience. But I would not say it is very methodically thought through. Obviously, we should. There is a lot of it in Ars Council in terms of funding about how you reach the audiences. In a way, one of our motives is about the audiences all the time, because I suppose one of the archive key here has to do with accessibility. It has to do with making a work not accessible as in terms of disabled users, but the sort of work with

users, cultural accessible that uses popular culture, or uses technology that people are used to but in another context they are familiar with. For example, with *Rider Spoke*, we actually designed it probably thinking about us as cyclists first, and then we thought about who the audience or other people that we knew as a cyclist were. And then we thought: there are gonna ways to find them, there is also some cycling festivals and cycling clubs, and also some organizations that are interesting, who are hosted by cycle clubs in Athens where you can have everything, that is amazing. And they basically fix peoples bikes as they came to do the show. I suppose that any dangerous for us is to make work that causes people block, and is intimidating, which I think *A Machine To See With* actually was quite difficult in that aspect because is quite high to take part because you do not know what it is. People do not really understand what it is. Like, *Rider Spoke* was easy enough to explain as a sort of cycle tour around the city, even if people hook they were going in a big group. There is modeless to what that might be. In *A Machine To See With*, it was much approachable, and people thought is was a walking tour, or a kind of audio tour around the city. That all gone off. It is a heist movie. It was quite difficult. Actually, the best time that actually worked was when we did it in a film festival and people generally got to thought they were going to see a film. And they were completely shocked when they knew that they will be using a mobile phone. But then they would come back having completely understood what the idea was, and the experience was. Because their expectations were a film and that was also our intent as well. So that was the best time, it works the best in a film festival.

***13. Most of the projects you can't experience it as a group. Is there an explicit intention in giving priority to the individual experience rather than a collective one?***

It is in terms of maintaining a sort of mood, or a sort of sense of narrative. Pushing to something like *A Machine To See With*. Like *A Machine To See With* definitely tries to set a kind of frame around your experience around the city. So it is very easy for you to meet someone you know. That would be broken because the one you meet, you go: "oh, let's have a chat". We deliberately set up, so you do not need someone. We expand so long, in so much agony to try to make that relationship works as the same as you are talking to one person. That is not conversation exactly. You got their ear so you can not have a sense of what that relationship might be. As same as you talking to two people who you can not see at somewhere in the city. You do not know what they are doing, so you become like the third voice in that conversation because you do not take priority. It becomes a much harder to imagine, or to know what is going on.

In some cases, like in *Rider Spoke*, people were sent to have it individually because it is an act that the whole thing is about reflection and naturally going where you want to go. But you could bump into people along the way, and it did not break it. You could share experience and say: "oh, I have listened to a great recording in that part". Although it is designed to be an individual experience, those kinds of interaction would not break it. I do not know. I think there is something we have talked in the early days about a lot of projects, about this sort of sense like that it comes with a sort of certain tune. You know, we would really love to make work where it was collective and sort of celebratory and use this technology. We just have not found a mood for making it yet.

***14. The interactive story's structure employed by you is, in general, open or closed? How much is the level of the participant's creative input in the narrative construction? Do the participants play an active role in determining its progression?***

In *Fixing Point*, it (the narrative) is an interview with the sister of one of the disappeared. She talks about her brother, from what they were like when they were kids, and when they were very young, and what he did for a living. Through it, there are his parents and what happens along time to his parents, and then everything is gonna happen. It is quite a big time frame that the interview kind of covers. I suppose it is intended to be something that is exploratory and fragmentary, so you do not necessarily learn everything in a specific order. There is one very specific piece of audio that you hear in the very beginning which introduces us the whole theme. When you walk the wood, you are asked to walk along a path, and the path triggers a single piece of audio. When you come back, you walk along a path which triggers the close piece of audio. But once you are in the woods, it is kind of you piecing together a puzzle based on the fragments that you can find. And it is a bit intended to be that sort of sense, you trying to sort of recovering something that is lost. You are trying to put together something. I suppose that making it physically enacts something which is a process that the sister is going through. She only has kind of memories of her brother, and you trying to search, like learn about the fragments what actually happened to him. In a way, that has a kind of point that you pass through to start, and a point that you pass through to finish, but the rest is, again I think, exploratory.

I suppose then the most sort of exploratory in terms of space would be *Rider Spoke*, where the structures I think that are 12 questions, which everyone does the same first question, everyone does the same last question, and the remained questions are sort of stats in their level of intimacy. The most casual ones happen, I think, there are tree layers. Asking your name is the first question, and then you do a casual question that is chosen from a selection of two or tree, and then you do some slightly intimate question that is chosen from a selection of two or tree. You then are invited to answer that kind of intimate question from like four of five, and you can answer as many of those as you can at the time, before you are asked the end question, which is the one that has no answers. It is a kind of weird sort of thing, but there is no connection to physical space. It is just the way you answer those questions. It is entirely determined by you. I suppose is the way you go, and how you answer those questions. We just give them some kind of guide. These things like, find a place where you have a view of the sky, find a place where you might remember your father, find a place where you can see you through the window. It is just kind of prompts that give to people a sense of the very concrete thing I am doing. But once you got a concrete task, that gives you license to think about the thing that is the actual questioned, I suppose. They combine the act of cycling and looking for the place. You have to actively time. You have to give yourself to think about what you are gonna say. That was one of the projects that were quite painful to go outdoor to test it, and that whole mechanics like ask you a question, then you cycle around, then find a place to record it. That came quite late. We had a team that would be cycling around to find something. That kind of temper, how plays out, was an experience to quite a long time to fix.

***15. Representation in your projects is kind of replaced by a directly lived experience. What is the significance of the orchestration work that happens behind the scenes for this kind of gameplay narrative based on a live play? Do you try to control things to ensure a meaningful experience to participants?***

Yes. It works differently for different projects. I think *Uncle Roy* and *I Like Frank* it was real, especially the first time we did *Uncle Roy All Around You*, I think we had, that was ridiculous, we had like 20 people in an hour going out as street players. We probably had as many people working on backstage. We have at least 4 people in the

controlled room, we had 2 people running the office, 1 person in the office, 1 person riding a limo(sine), 1 person in the car, and then we have all other people who were essentially on bikes or on foot looking for people who just got completely lost. In a way, that became a role within the whole thing. We look for people lost or who technology was broken. So we often kind of folded it in. So when people were walking in the wrong direction, someone you may have never met before were walking up them and go: 'you are walking in the wrong direction. You need to go back. The direction is over there'. Then we will just turn around and walk away. People were like: 'oh, my God! How the hell.. someone I have never met before, in the most dizzies part of the city was come up to me and told me where to walk!'. For many people, that was the highest point of their experience. It was when the technology broke, and we had to send someone to point them the right direction or someone would call up them and say: 'hey, excuse me, I have a message from *Uncle Roy*. I think we need to have your device'. And then we go. We are gonna restart the device while pretending to be like doing some secret thing. It is actually, that we are resetting the whole thing. And then we come back and say: "ok, Uncle Roy said you need to go that way".

It really had that. For the whole thing, we had so many people working on it. They were able to do that, and that is where are the pleasures of having that. You get it in like one to one kind of theater, kind of context where you can really have that sense of: "well, the amount of attention I am gaining is amazing". I just make it somehow kind of more accelerating. Anyway, that whole sense of what technology is doing or would allow us to do is actually part of what the narrative of *Uncle Roy* is actually all about. The idea of Uncle Roy being a beneficent, kind of patron who is involving you in something that you do not know what it is. But actually, there is a sense of oversight. *Uncle Roy All Around You* is that sense of not being watched necessarily. Who have been watching it is sort of friend, a sort of father in a way.

Yes, we had people walked out of the crowd, and that sense of trust in crowds, trust in people in the streets in the city, and all those relationships where it can actually work and fit amazingly. *I Like Frank* has almost the same orchestration as Uncle Roy. We had people on bike sort of walking around, sort of testing out people. *Rider Spoke* has no orchestration. *Fixing Point* has no orchestration. *A Machine To See With* does, but we try to do it so that there are no people in the street. We basically try to infer problems by looking at the interface and go: "oh, we think such and such is happening". Often trying to make it better, making it actually works. If the worst come to us, sometimes we call people. I think we have assumed a thing that we do not say to them: 'we think you are lost', but we ask people where they are. With *A Machine To See With*, the first thing we do is: "Hello, this is *A Machine to See With*". People often think this is a recorded voice as well as when you start to talk to them because they have been listening to a recorded voice for so long.

***16. Many Blast Theory's works attempt to tie stories to places. They are context-aware but not necessarily site-specific, what also allows you to present the same piece in different parts of the world. Do you believe that the place in which we tell a story can affect it?***

I think we treat that kind of relationship with place differently in different context. *Uncle Roy*, the first gig we did was in London. It was in the western of London. The character of *Uncle Roy* and the world of *Uncle Roy* was entirely inspired by that kind of sense of western kind of gent. It was a particular kind of post-war character. British sort of spy culture is a home. But it is also a home to Soho in the West End and that kind of city sight. So it was entirely kind of colored in terms of who *Uncle Roy* was, and what

the story was, and what his relationships with the city. That had transformed a bit when we moved it to Birmingham, and to Manchester.

And then *I Like Frank*. *I Like Frank* we conceived as being... Frank was a baby at that time. I suppose that was conceived as being a child and that recollections of childhood. And we worked with people who grown up in Adelaide, so it was much more not a fictional Adelaide, but people's recollection of their childhood places they hang out, that kind of places. It has that kind of relationship. That is from where the story from *I Like Frank* came from.

With *Rider Spoke* I guess it is a system, where in a way it does not ask you to talk about a grandfather clock to be in relation to your personal experience because on the other hand is potentially to people. They can not cycle until their neighborhood and tell you about all the places they grew up and all the things that are most personal to them. Well, some people did. In London, some people cycle like the way across London to Brixton because there was where they grew up, and that was the place they wanted to talk about. In general, it is slightly more than a 10 years relationship. It is about a sort of personalization. I suppose in a way we have a license to do that, because in a way our experiences is part of cityscapes, we kind of carrying around our sort of personal lives in a quite private space. That take it out, and start pinning it onto things that are actually alien to us, but that resonate with some personal memory. It felt like a valid thing to do. It feels like it is a re-pinning people's personal lives onto physical spaces, even that is entirely virtual. So, there is not a kind of relationship.

And so there is *Fixing Point* that is entirely about the atmosphere with space. That is why we chose it. It is about the physical activity and that sort of sense of, not speak exactly but like slightly desolate. It is about it and the atmosphere. It is not really to do with any historical relationship. It has to do with the kind of atmosphere properties of that physical location.

They (the projects) were slightly different approaches to how we kind of use place. Especially *Rider Spoke*, a lot of de design and the approach to that use of space and place has to do with actually making it tour-able and usable due to the amount of effort it takes. *A Machine To See With*, for example, to tour that, there is another work it takes different from *Rider Spoke*. It is normally different because *A Machine To See With*, although is much slighter fit it in terms of physical device, every single phone call has to be tight to work along a particular route and with particular directions. You have to go and setting call and see a particular view. Every call is really kind of hand made every time to fit a location. I guess the story is the same. A lot of the text is the same. On the other hand, to make tour a piece of work is quite shocking.

On the other hand, in *Rider Spoke* in terms of managing all of those devices and managing batteries for them, this is: "you do on your phone, and it is your fault if the battery runs out". There is kind of very pragmatics concerns in terms of the design. You have to kind of find ways to make it happen. But I suppose we still intend to have some sort of sense of place in each of them or to have a relationship with how do you use that.

### ***17. How is the process of designing a context-aware narrative? How do you get to know the place?***

With *Uncle Roy Around You*, we worked with local people from Manchester. They were students from the local university. They did lots of research about locations in advance. They knew the city better than us. This is a kind of relationship we have been working in. So initially there is a kind of conversation with them. We talk about the kind of spaces we are looking for, the kind of atmospheres, and they come back with ideas.

With *A Machine To See With*, it is actually quite demanding, because in a way the biggest constraints with *A Machine To See With* are that the mechanics of it require rigidity in terms of how we set up. We need a bank, we need a parking car where we can park a car, we need public toilets. Everything then starts with a hit list, the first thing we need to decide. We normally set the Google Maps and the people that are on the ground kind of say: 'here is all the banks, here is all the public toilets'. It is very pragmatics in that way. So we do not have some freedom with the very beginning when defining locations, to try to inflect what is the different atmosphere of the city. It is kind of done in order to make it tourable. We are trying actually to make it very kind of concrete and very tangible. So it is like 3 toilets, 1 car park, 1 bank. Or with *Uncle Roy Around You*, it was a place for an office, a place for the red spot, and then beyond that it is just to find an interesting area and some corners in the city.

### ***18. How long to develop a project?***

In normal circumstances... *A Machine To See With* I think we required for a commission in September. We probably heard about it in the new year. We probably started to work on it March/April alongside to other projects. Then we did a sort of residence for three weeks in August, and we launched it in a Festival in September. That have been 12 months from hearing about the Commission to the premiere.



### APPENDIX 3. Interview with Ju Row Farr from *Blast Theory*<sup>372</sup>

***1. Which role technology plays in your works nowadays? Has the introduction of locative and mobile technologies alter the way you create your projects, especially regarding the thematics, the narrative strategies and the modes of audience participation?***

How we got there in a way, from my perspective of what we were doing was much more multimedia or promenade based performance with multimedia in it, as a part of it. It was not an element always in there. But we made a piece of work, *Something American*, in 1996 or something, where we had a desired to sort of control the frame of the work. We want it to kind of be able to see the picture, to be in the picture, but actually to sort of notice it or be able to sort of judge it or critic it as almost like as a two-dimensional image in a way, because we thought was kind of hard to do that. At that point, we went for this kind of big room to kind of beast to this kind of things. It was a good moment to notice what was going on, notice how we compose images, notice how we compose stories and all sort of things, and what was going on between us and the audience. It kind of separated us out. I think after that point... I do not know if it is sort of definitely significant, but it seems that we went from this kind of broad rooming thing inside the space to this contained frame and then after that, there was *Kidnap* that suddenly burst outside the building. We did this weird kind of final out of the building. It almost kind of came through this window bizarrely and through the neck of the Internet and out onto the street. We have always been deeply interested in the audience. I think we have always felt that we are not the experts. We are in a discussion. We are making propositions or structures. Even from the gap, go where we were trying to work things out about an idea, about living, about being people and the best way to do that is to do it with other people. So I feel like that are some of the intentions behind our work in the very start. We never had this sort of sense, that we are the authors, and we have this great wisdom. We are not especially interested in mystifying the image of the artist. I think it is, in fact, the opposite. And I think that comes through both in how we are and the work that we are trying to make. I think it is very important. It is political, a sort of way to operate in the world. We are trying to discuss, and improve, and change, and live through our lives together. How can we do that differently? In some way, this is how, I suppose, to making the works, to make these moments of expression or containment for that.

I think when we made *Kidnap*, it was a major significant piece of work for us, in term that all of those things you are talking. Gradually, we realized what audience meant to us or with us. And with *Kidnap*, the audience became the central protagonist or performers. We became an audience. They became layers, and layers of audiences which we consciously kind of played with. There were also some surprises in there. We hadn't realized first of all that we would be the first audience. We would be the primary audience. That brings what an audience is or could be, really kind of expanded within this quite complex piece of work.

At the same time, we were looking at the Internet and how to investigate that and explore that. We had never use anything like that. I know it is not locative exactly in terms of technology but I think with this work it meant that the location of the work could be distributed to other people, and people remotely could be in a different place and experience this thing, and sort of control what they were looking at. We wanted to

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<sup>372</sup> Row Farr, Ju. Interview by author. Personal interview. Brighton, May 22, 2014.

do something where we used the internet intelligently for people to have a window into this world, to question this whole area or thematic. It was a big shift for us in terms of using technology. At that time, there were like chat rooms and stuff like that, where you could go in and talk about themselves, and we were just like: "so boring!" I mean, to like: "Hello, my name is...". You know. We just thought that it was not very well explored. So that was our root into the Internet, and we so respond to that to give people voice that was maybe more interesting.

So *Kidnap* was really significant, and I think from the audience's point of view, from the technology point of view, and also the thematic, I suppose where the theme and the audience kind of merge completely, form and function met perfectly for us in a way. I think in terms of layers of space as well. I was almost like a private dancer performance just for us. Then there was a psychologist watching us, watching them within a sort of secret location. And then there was a public press coming for us at the end when we released them. And then we had a party the next day for everybody that was on a short list. Like the layers of space did this strange thing. Maybe all of the complexity that we have been trying to hold in a promenade environment – like: "this is happening here, this is happening here, and this is happening here", suddenly I think through that work, and through the technology, and through the thematic and through the relationship with the audience – all of those things kind of expanded in a different way through the space, through the technology. It would be really a turning point for us.

I think in relation to sort of location based work, I think it is obviously not what you are talking about, but it was a work where our kind of sharpness to what is possible and achievable through technology and location was kind of opened in a way. And at the same time we were making *Desert Rain*, which again is not a location based piece of work, but the research that we did around both projects, we were really investigating the layers of spaces, and technology, and audience. And I think at the time we have these quite crazy diagrams with things crossing and meeting in the middle.

## ***2. What were you interested in when you decided to move your work from clubs and place it in the city?***

Within the black box spaces and theaters, it felt maybe in isolation from the world somehow. So it was a dissatisfaction with what those spaces could offer. There is a certain way of operating which meant that the work catches a certain shape at the start and the ending, something like that. What is people's expectation of the work? What would be in a certain context? When we started, we didn't know what people are making. We had a high literacy, I suppose, in sort of theater, dance, visual arts. We had sort of strong understanding of those things. Partially we did not want to be constricted by that. Not in a kind of anarchistic way, but like the frame, and the context and the contract of your experience is kind of set. It felt to us the work started to be on the edges of frames. Of course, you can say: and then that becomes your frame. But it does not have to be that wiser. Once again, the tension between not organized or disorganized, or chaotic, I think between more about a pure discipline and a cross-discipline that we all brought together, where is not one of them that is particularly dominant, but we bring a set of disciplines. Our disciplines, and how you approach an artwork, how you approach a piece of theater, how you approach a piece of music, they all kind of sit on the top of each other. We do not all come from a theater background, we do not share that sort of training, so we naturally question the frame. I think the frames were already blurred anyway, but people just like things in an easily digestible chance, because they know what they are going to do.

It partially comes from our disciplines, plus some interests and backgrounds, and a disappointment with the settings and opportunities for work. We did not feel the right opportunity perhaps for our work, or the right frame for our work. It seems to make sense in that perspective. When technology came much more central to our practice, I suppose we were looking, and had always been looking but we were much more close and looking at our audiences, or our key groups were doing every single day, on the streets, in their lives, what their behaviors is, and the way through they use technology. We were witnessing and more gradually out on the streets and urban spaces. Primarily because there was where we were working, and noticing how there was a change of behavior, or we thought there was a change of behavior. We thought that we should be doing it out there in this kind of fluid space, trying to allow that sort of behavior in a way to make it feel comfortable to people, and I know our work is not easy for people, it is not comfortable for people to take part. We wanted to do it out and say: "you can do it out on the street because there is where you are a lot of your time", or "you can do that in between your home and your school, because that is the journey that you make and that is sort of cultural opportunity, that is the gap". We were looking for playing fields, or zones, or opportunities that felt comfortable for us as makers and, I think the street just did.

A part from what people were doing, part because they use technology, part because we have never done it before, and were interested in games or are interested in games. We just felt like in one hand it could be an expanded sort of game structure, it could be a big board or a big playing field. Partially our interested, I suppose, in popular cultural as well, like we really, really love films and music, and the city, this very urban dynamic you can not control in some ways, the shifting. We have been really interested in all those things. And actually, that is the world people operate in, we can see they are operating in. Of course there are private spaces but it is where we exist in some ways. I think the relationship to the what is private, or private spaces, kind of see intentions with something which is supposedly public and the immediately question to what is private. All of those things are interesting to us. And the lines between what you do, and do not do something, between you are a stranger or intimate to somebody. What is the subject that is something that you would not discuss in public. All of those things were shifting, all of the private phone calls on the landlines in a whole way. Suddenly, we are out in the bus and you could ever hear them. So all of that intimacy were there in turn, people became exposed and available.

***3. In general, what are in your opinion the implications in designing a narrative that has the city streets and the physical world as diegetic space or as a game board? What is the significance of the orchestration work that happens behind the scenes for this kind of gameplay narrative based on live play?***

It is challenging. I believe that when we design or make work for a space which seems to be controlled or controllable there is also something going on, which are kind of masking what is really going on, like distraction and lack of interest and not being working for audience, but we do not really see that because it set in the dark and you can't. They are watching a dancer because they got good body and not really interesting in anything else. The success or the work working in a seemingly controlled environment is not exactly, I think, what is going on. And probably anybody who makes work in that environment, I would hope, would recognize that in a work. Often you do not experience it in a controlled environment. That dissatisfaction, or the things not working, or the narrative break, the fictional drop, or the audience engagement falling off a cliff somewhere in a critical moment. As a performer or maker in a traditional space, I suppose you do not really notice those things. You do not feel it so keenly.

Maybe in a bar afterwards, the people who are happy might tell you that they enjoyed it. The people who want to discuss something or sometimes are up for it, kind of get stuck in. But most people disappeared, and you do not know what they think. I think one of the differences of doing it at the street, you know, we are trying to control it in a bigger space that is probably less controllable for also some reasons, and you feel that very keenly as a maker or controller. We care very deeply about the audience staying with, and experience it in a very possible way for us, as long as they can. But we recognize that from work to work in a number of levels, people do not have to get it all in the same way, all at the same time. Possibly, for do not mind to wander off and come back is a part of piece of work working. For somebody to be doing a piece of work out at the street and need to go to the toilet and come back. Their phone will ring and it will be their friend and it could be that it kill it because you have to go somewhere and have to leave what you are doing. There is always a kind of pedestrians humans' needs. Sometimes when we are making a work out on the streets, we very consciously take people's phones. Often to try to minimize that, to try to contract or contain the narrative, or the fictional, or the game as best as we can. Sometimes we take them both as a means to kind of try to control that, and also security for taking the technology risk. It predominantly to keep people at the moment. Although we have not done that for a long time, I would be very interested to know what people's reaction would be for that today. We are trying to make work even not on that level, enabling people to use their own phone so that they know how to use the device, which is better than give someone a strange device and go out at the street and use it. So, it is a challenge for performers to introduce the public to the device. So, to try to bring it to the comfort of your own phone. It is important. Device could be troubleshooting. It is trying to understand what things might go wrong, what things could go wrong, what things could make it work better. So, automating software in the background, watching where people are on the map, or seeing their phone calls going through, or somebody at the streets checking if person has got to that lamp post, that is us troubleshooting. It is us trying to take care of them and their experience. For a while, there is a real kind of cultural obsession, probably in Europe, about surveillance. For a while, some people were certainly saying that we are observing people, or surveying people when they are in our work. I have always refuted that, it is actually a desire for the work to work. It is a care for them and their experience and not a need to watch and stalk. There is not a kind of malevolent intention in doing that.

***4. Do you believe that openness in interactive terms can compromise the audience to achieve meaningful experiences? How do you define how much control you will have over the dynamic?***

We have talked about a lot in past. We are not interested in that because we recognize our understand with a person making that frame, making that experience, and even within that there is an interpretation that could be false, things can go wildly wrong. We have talked about a lot, we would never go to that point to make it purely audience based choice because they are not making the frame, and if they were I think for us it would be a totally different work. We are quite controlling it. We are controlling it, we have to be controlling it to try to get the original thematic or the intention through in some ways. What the city offers is an opportunity. It has through the ability, perhaps if you are writing, to embedded yourself into the work, and suggest things. You can draw people's attention to things that are around them that seems to be there but that are not there. In the center of London, the Queen's House, for example, for us to be optimistic about helicopters flying around and snippers on the roof, for those things to give the work the flavor that we have intended, or for people to see things that are not actually in

the work. It gives the work a rich resonance so you can consciously play with that, and unconsciously things will stare on people's mind in the journey, or in the narrative. Are just there an interpretation of how feels doing these things, walking through this particular straight. You might go out that, if that was not important, or they might decide that is important. Both can work.

***5. Many of Blast Theory's works attempt to tie stories to places. They are context-aware but not necessarily site-specific, what also allows you to present the same piece in different parts of the world. Why design narratives for neutral spaces rather than play with the specificities and peculiarities of each city, or area?***

Each work is obviously different in lots of levels. In a work like *Dial*, we are trying to bring that person right in that kind of moment in History, but in these days. Whatever you happen to live or experience, that happens to be in the frame. You can be anywhere in the streets, it does not need an specific navigation for the work to work. That is how it feels to me. It does not need a certain street corner. It needs a certain view of people, it is about people. It is about identity, it is about you identifying with other people, and you can do that in any city. Obviously, its kind of a political, social relevance is going to shift with what people bring to it, I suppose, if you could say there is a dominant kind of audience in different countries that has got different social economic values and backgrounds. If you so generalize. We know, when we are going to Dublin, it is not Northern Ireland but it is going to somewhere close to where that subject is a bit more present. It feels more charge to us, I do not know why but it feels charged to us. I think that work in particularly is about you identifying with a person, maybe that idea of people watching on the street, which people take off pleasure or interest. Maybe we all learn from looking and watching. It is about the process of what you can see in other people, what you can be among other people, and judge them, and review them. You can do that in every street corner.

I think in one sense it is more about the human behavior than the city itself, but I think it is also about playing things out. I guess I do not really know where there is this outcome of change. I do not actually honestly know that every place has a story that is deeply significant. I am not sure if I believe in that. I am not sure that I believe everyone has got an interesting story to tell, that every corner tells a story, I am not sure that I believe that.

*Rider Spoke*, they tag content to location. It is non specific, they need to be in a very specific location, it could be any location. They are asked to do that. But it is more kind of revisiting thinking in their head, revisiting moments in their lives. It is giving places a kind of significance, which maybe they do not have. Marking them with their own story, or their own thinking about a moment. It is like maybe going on holiday. You go to a strange place, and you have not market it. It is like a dog that have not sense that area but then forever after that moment, if you went back through that beach or under that tree, it suddenly got something. By being somewhere it has meaning. Not the place itself but being there. It has meaning, not in another stuff. The way you interact with that space, it has meaning. Without it, it is not important in a way. If you go to visit somewhere you are dreaming to visit, like the Pyramids, let's take a really classic example, with old things you have view of the Pyramids, with the old things you know what is going to looking like. Probably, I have never been, but I know it is smaller then I think it would be because I know people who have been there. I am not saying that stories in places are not important, that there are not memories, and History, and connections to places. I think it is really important. But I think when people take part in there, they are maybe remaking history, giving significance. Of course there are not

things that happen there. You can go into a place in a such microscopic detail. The story could be about not just this street, or this building or this room. It could be about the world that is inside, the cut on the piece of wood. So it is a micro level you are focusing at. It is really important. I keep thinking about city-based pieces being anywhere, anytime. That is partially very interesting to me. I listen a clock, and think about things we can not leave room, and you can talk of go through a pinhole and expand it into a suburb. Imagine what did you have exposed, what does that mean. Yeah, because there is also worlds within worlds, stories within stories. It is partially what you bring to that. That is partially how you control. It is not just looking at that place, it is really looking into yourself and maybe that place in opposite. That thing where the magic really happens, I believe it is somewhere in between, on different days, on different times, according to how you feel.

***6. How is the creative process in terms of choosing the places, defining the routes, tying content to physical space? How to create sufficient relationship between physical location and content when developing the game design? How do you pick a location? Do you pay attention to context and what that offers in an ethnographic sense?***

In the creative process of choosing location that is specific, we know that there are key stages, or markers, or moments that have to be reached. For example *A Machine To See With*, we need between two or three public toilets. We need a car park, a bank. We need an end point, where some sort of exchange can happen with a completely strange that has nothing to do with the work potentially. I suppose we are also looking for a scale of location. The work has to work within a certain time frame. It is about, I think, 45 minutes, so lots of things on that happens, like where it has to start. That all makes difference. We mark things out, we map the length of walking trying to predict an average speed of waking between locations. We choose six start locations, three toilets, so we know between those two places it needs to take x amount of minutes. We are constantly looking, and we might change start locations if the toilets do not match. It might need to go and pass the host venue art center, because they want to see people out on the streets. Sometimes there are some exterior constraints on it. Each node which needs to be reached is mapped and a route will be then configured according to where the opportunities are, also where the people will see each other along the route. Mostly, the script does not change according to what they find on the streets. We do not change the order because it has such a massive implications for the script, like the competing script not the writing of it, and there need to be a sequence of people. That in the creative process.

The way that we work, the logistics of the creative process, the technological development is part of the creative process, to some extent. We try to separate them out sometimes, particularly the technological because it can have such impact on it. We never reorder, unless there will be radical reasons to do that. But it would disrupt. It would disrupt in script from the technology quite dramatically. It would be able to disrupt the key moment of people arriving in the car. There are six people going out in 15 minutes, so there is a need to orchestrate or organize that on the street. If you start pulling one thing out, and pulling it in somewhere else without testing that we do not know what is going to happen, and we would not risk that. That have to be a really good reason to put it before, and we will do everything we possibly can. We would change start locations. We would change where the toilets are. We would maybe get out of two toilets, and not three, or one, and stack people arriving there. We would maybe make the start location further away so that person gets there later. If they all have to go to the

same point, we would stack that somehow. Yeah, we would not change the order. Partially because of the script. So it is a technical level, but partially also because it seems to work, so it is the dramatic level. You know, two turns, or tree courses of the way through the work. There is this sort of fail bank robbery that is a dramatic, so that is almost like a classic drama structure, and it has to be there, otherwise...

***7. I've seen that you follow an iterative process when creating your pieces. How does your creative desire is influenced, in a positive and in a restrictive sense, by the technological possibilities? Do you write and try to implement it?***

I think we do, but you can not do it in isolation with other stuff. We possibly, at that point, have a good idea of what platform is going to be on, so we write having in mind that it is going to be on a phone, for example, in a very simple level it might to be on a phone. We write knowing what the platform is likely to be. So we do not write and then apply technology secondarily. Or we do not write and then go to the place. It is kind of a mixture of different projects and different ways. With *A Machine To See With*, for example, it was commissioned, and the Commission almost briefed and dictated some stuff to us. We knew what they wanted to explore, because it is called locative cinema. We immediately had sent after some initial discussions with them, how we would approach it. It would be on the streets, as a cinema. Everything was not filmed, everything was fake. That was our view straight away. We knew when we wrote, that we had to write that in.. that had to be in their consciously. If you are holding a phone, which we knew, we probably knew that very early, in fact when we wrote the application, it has to be very simple and it has to be to lots of people. We can not afford giving the budget of the work to somebody be there orchestrating, watching every single person. That is not economic, it is not necessary. So it has to be some sort of automated system, almost like ground level application writing little things. A lot of things have sort of worked out before they even almost do anything. But then the writes kind of dictated, but it does not dictated.

When we did *Fixing Point*, it was a site visit that dictates the work. It was partially briefed because it has to be a collaboration between digital artists and electronic musician, so that was partially in there. But it is on location that we would respond to quite precisely when we first made the work. We went there and research some history in the area, near they have some sort of British military area, and that was very desolate, very beautiful, and it felt like contemplative. It felt like, maybe a sort of about memory or lost. I suppose our natural curiosity is about sometimes political or social difficult situations, so we started to think about people who disappeared. Then I found a disappeared website of Northern Ireland people, who disappeared and had never been found again, so it went from there. It was a combination of evolving the technology, thinking about how we would collaborate with a musician, me trying desperately to get an interview with a sister of a man disappeared, getting more and more panic, because that was not happening. That was going to full the basis of the writing. We were getting near and near to go to the place making the work, showing the work, and we did not get the writing. It all kind of came very strangely, not back to from but not ideal at all. Almost like the process became part of the work. Phoning, and emailing, and saying "I fly out tomorrow". All of that became part. That was the moment which we ideally do the writing, we were negotiating. But the process feels like part of the work, like searching somebody. Yeah, it was a search. Why should somebody who has a very tragic personal situation be approached by an artist to make an art work? Why should that be ok? I had to be very persuasive. I had to be very thoughtful. I strategy every email incredibly carefully, and checked it with Matt several times. I checked what I was going to say on the phone when I speak to her. Everything, everything was checked. It

was a very rigorous process. The writing, and the writing is very simple in a way. We had a window opportunity when we got some email responses, and that had to be worked with. They (the family of the disappeared man) had never heard it. They have never also seen it. I wrote to them afterwards saying where it was presented. The woman who did the recording is obviously an Irish woman but she totally understood where this person would be from, and did a local accent. So it is not her.

**8. Lots of your projects are based on the voice call or audio recordings. Would you say that in “Fixing Point” it plays an important role in creating the climax, intimacy and the immersion of participants in the storyworld?**

I think it is really important. I think it really gives a kind of atmosphere. We can not also say how it would be without that music. We have talked a lot with him (Clark) about what the story would be, or what we were trying to get the story to be, what it is about. And then we walked around together in this location. We have been there first, then we meet him. It was four or five days walking around, playing music, wandering around, playing out there. It was a really pleasure process. We collaborated internally. We worked obviously with technologies and the associated artists. We do not really collaborated right at the very core. It is the tree of us who collaborated, if I am completely honest. We know what we were trying to do, and the others came to play with us after it was pre set. With him (Clark), it was the same. We knew what we wanted to do, but we did not know how the music could work actually. We knew that we really like his work. We knew it needed to be no text or voice in work. We approached Aphex Twin before, and he was not interested on it. Then we approached this guy. It just feel easy, it just felt like he got it. For some reasons, the two things work pretty well, and I liked his process. We would talk. He would go out often to make sounds in the building, and then go and make sound outside, listen out there with the text. It felt like a very kind of natural process. It was very easy to work with him, which was wonderful.

*Rider Spoke* is a classic. I have read things people said about my voice. I think it is very purposeful. The voice, I suppose, it comes back to some sort of interest in acting, in understanding, but that does a lot to evoke the right mood for people. We understand in a desperate way that the tone of voice can change the situation, I think getting people in the right frame of mind in *Rider Spoke*, to do something in a way which is very simple. Actually it could be quite challenging. In part it is challenging because you are cycling around. We thought this very important to try to get people not worrying about the questions that were coming out, but to just think. We are going to the subconscious space, even though you are in the city and it is even more critical to trying to get in there because you are doing this, like worry about the traffic and everything. So it is really important, I think. In a way for a work to work really well, everything should be almost invisible and help each other work. The voice should help the cycling, the cycling should help the thinking, technology in *Rider Spoke* should be not geek, it should be quite charming and gentle. It is trying to get things that you do not notice. You almost do not notice the voice. You want it to work and take you there. It is like a blend thing. I think with the audio, we have using any kind of technology, that is almost like a personality of the device, kind of the language around that device. You have a device that is usually used or meant to be used. When we talk about audio with kind of phones, there is the voice, there is text, but there is all of the other set of audio around it. For instance, there is like the hang up, there is the dial tone, there is the recording tones. All of those things. There are layers and layers. Just sets of things that need to be considered. Like in *Dial*, I have realized that the audio for hanging up or when you are recording was exactly the same. I think it is wrong and it is not clear. It is meant to sent

a signal like: "now you record", "now I hang up", and it needs to work. That audio message; that has a power, and it is associated with movie style espionage, a kind of language which we are trying to bring to it, and it needs to fit in with that. I think it is important. I think maybe we are not sophisticated with sound or skilled with sound as we could be. I think we are intellectually sophisticated but I think we do not have... I suppose we are not sound people, but we try our best interrogating what does that sound mean. When I recorded *Rider Spoke*, I recorded it in here (in a room on their studios), 10 o'clock at night, and I recorded it at once.

***9. In some games, the narrative is more about the retelling of the playing experience; in the sense that the way you interact is more relevant than the content itself. A lot of your projects involve game elements. Which game strategies do you use and how do you incorporate them into the projects?***

*I Like Frank* is a game. *A Machine To See With* is a game. *Rider Spoke* is not a game. *Fixing Point* is not a game. Obviously we are aware of that kind of feedback loop that is constantly played in games. There is audio feedback, success sound, or whatever it is, like "well done! Keep going". We think very differently about it in Blast Theory. Matt is much more kind of like: "let's put in 'tataram'". Almost sort of feedback sound, because we know that it works within games. But I think that in sort of social context, it needs to be a bit different sometimes. I think we know that the effort is best asked for, if there is some sort of game play reward or narrative payoff or event development, or interaction high point, or whatever it is. That is the idea that is not always going to be like that. I suppose we go along in a journey in a piece of work. It is a trust involved, and you do not have to get a sort of patted on the back and well done every step of your way. It is actually you taking part in very meaningful situations that is important, and you have probably done well. If you look at traditional theater, the reward for an audience maybe is the story concludes in a certain way, but then you clap yourself at the end for having it. So that is a kind of a reward based mechanism, in a way. One of the things that we do in some of the projects – I think we did it in *I Like Frank*, we have tried to do it in *Rider Spoke*, and the other two (*A Machine To See With* and *Fixing Point*) not so much – but we try to do things where at the end when they come back there is a kind of space where people can talk about it. It is a kind of space where people can almost like recall the experience and share the experience and sort of congratulate each other in a way. It feels like, if you play the board game or any kind of game, afterwards you want to talk about it. What happen, Who won, How did it go. So I think that is part of the work as well. After the work, a story ended, there can be something which needs to be understood for us, that is like a debrief. I think in those two pieces of work particularly that is true, and it is kind of built into the work in a way. It is partially a game sort of mechanics, it is partially an understanding, when we experienced things that we have not experienced before. You wanna talk about the stuff you have done, you just wanna talk about the stuff you have done. You wanna sort of say to somebody what you do and how you do that at this point. That is a very natural kind of need or desire of telling. It is sort of locking it in, and checking yourself out. Checking how you are, and how you have done it right, or ok, or better than somebody else. That space is very important.

***10. Does the narrative plays an important part in your projects and in the creative process? In general, the design process is more content driven or interaction driven?***

Thinking about those projects (*I Like Frank*, *A Machine To See With*, *Rider Spoke*, *Fixing Point*), I think the thematic is important in all of them, and the narrative structure is important in all of them. I see there are some parallels between narrative and game structure, and they are both useful in thinking about, when you are making a piece of work. In game, you might call it "call to action". I do not know if we would call it "call to action", but we call it "call to action" in interaction experience, like clearly knowing what you are intending to do, or you are asking somebody to do. I think it is important, so it is almost then. You do not necessarily get the world set, but you get them operating in a certain frame. There are clear rules, but they are perhaps more apparent or explicit. I found it very hard to kind of separate it: "oh yeah, it is from a narrative perspective, or it is from an interactive perspective, or it is from a game perspective". Each work obviously needs to address for what it is trying to do. Often that is thematic, very often that is the narrative. But the narrative would be written, or considered, in the same tone as the interaction. One does not come first, and then the other. It is a very iterative stag process sometimes. Maybe the idea. If the interaction might not be stronger, then the idea for the story.

*Rider Spoke* perhaps you could say, obviously the way to interact with that work is very unique and distinctive. You have to do it on bike, and you have to stop when we do the questions because it is safer. There are some things that you ideally have to do. If you look it as a narrative, you can kind of say: "it is questions which go from the past to the future in your life, from the broad to the intimate, but that is not exactly a narrative. That is the structure of it". I would say that *A Machine To See With* has the most strong obvious narrative among all of them. *Fixing Point* has possibly the strongest sort of thematic in a way. All of them have, perhaps the way of behaving that are clear in our mind, and not necessarily in the audience's mind. All the structures, I would say, there is enough information in the beginning for you to know what you need to do, which is probably true with lots of games and is probably true with lots of stories.

When you do not know where you are going to end up, and it surprises you, I think that is what we are interested in as well. But I think you can have other structures. You can know what the subject is about, and you can think you know where you are going. I do think one of the things we are specially interested in is just when you think you know where is going but we turn it in a different direction. I call it "pulling the cup out". I have talked about that. It has to have that. We respond to it almost like a drama, or a sudden change. I think some of the best works have that kind of unexpected or surprising element to it. So I think even when it is a game, or a narrative, or both, that is critical in a way. It might be a small thing. It might not be a big "oh my God" sort of moment. It might be: "now they want me to make a promise, and I would loud it to the air". It would be the moment when you think you know what you are doing and then it changes. In *I Like Frank* they will suddenly be recording, and it is suddenly like: "oh my God, it is a sort of video recording now". It is a kind of: "I do not expected that at all", and then suddenly you are called into a different intimacy. In *Fixing Point* it is a moment where you realize you are in the wood, and the last place where he was seen was in a wood. Maybe it is not a "oh my God" moment, but it is that moment when things are hopefully align in the work. So I think that is very important.

I suppose all we want is that people have enough information that they can take part, whether that is for have a clear set of rules, or for understand: "oh, you are expecting me to do this". Within five minutes using the technology, you are comfortable using it. There is an introduction sort of moment in most all of our works when it comes clear to you, it comes clear to us if you are watching or orchestrating. We know how to do it. If you do player board game, or something, you do the first round and that is where you are sort of learning. You sort of know the rules, but you have not quite of dominated it.

You know it, but you have not still done it. I think a lot of our work operate in that level, even if there is a narrative. We need to know you know how to get around the city with the phone, and we will do something very simple in the beginning before you can start.

The other thing which happens in games which we really like, and I think it happens in interaction, it happens in games: people will do things which are equally surprising and there are emotional behaviors, things people will find themselves doing we did not expect and they did not expect. The most enjoyable moments in our work is when people do things we do not expect, because we know we try to expect a lot of variety. In *Can You See Me Now* people would use the work as an opportunity. People came lost and that actually became a part of it.

***11. Would you say that participants engage more in projects in which their creative input in the narrative construction is high, for instance, Rider Spoke?***

In *Rider Spoke* we had different color marking, we did not have orchestration. I guess because you can go anywhere. We look after them literally. People think there is a GPS and that they are tracked doing that sort of things. It is interesting to know that you can not do it because it is a very old technology. It is an internet tablet.

Regarding engagement and open structures, I do not know whether they feel more responsibility, or the level of engagement is deeper anyway. What I believe is that when you ask people for their contribution to something, if it feels like you are being asked almost personally, or almost individually, that people are more interested to respond. For a lot of us, we are our own favorite subject if you like that stuff, the chattering is a go in our head, are the things that occupy us a lot. And when somebody takes the time to say: "can I interview you? Can you tell me an answer to this", whatever it is, I think we respond to that, we respond to questions and I think we are interested in that. I think people enjoy that. Of course we are with our own twittering in our heads all the time, but it feels like this is a moment for you and maybe somebody is interested in this moment for you. And that is not that conscious I think in our work, or it is not a vert in our work. I think that kind of works. In RS specially I think it works specially because the structure is that you can listen to other people and other people encourage you perhaps inadvertently to go further what you are saying more. So it is not just talking about yourself, it is hearing other people saying important things that will make yourself vulnerable. It is an exchange that makes you sort of safer and it feels like: "yeah, I am doing this thing and I can expand my view of myself", or "I can be somebody else", or "I can say something I would not normally say. I think it is more about that. It is not necessarily more responsibility but it is intimacy, really. I think it feels it is made for you or we are interested in you then you will be interested enough to kind of give back I suppose in a way. And obviously that does not work for lots of people at all. Some people are completely lost and they will not to do it. Very private and protective so they should be. It does not work for everybody. It is not like a magic intimacy kind of device. I think that is one of the things that is going on anyways.

***12. You aim to engage as wide as possible audience. Based on the feedback you have from your projects, do you believe audience, essentially not the youngest generation, are prepared and can understand and play effectively with the dynamics of interactive works like these? Do they engage in these playful experiences?***

I do not think it is necessarily generational, or obviously that is a generation that is comfortable with technology. I think it is about intelligent moves on whatever you are

trying to or asking me to do. You know, interactive theater when they jump and ask me to do something. I hate it! I hate it! I feel like I am being used for the entertainment of the crowd. I do not feel like I am being considered as part. I think there is not intelligent interaction on this like cheek lazy link interaction in whatever form it is. There is a whole divide between us. I think these are forms which obviously there are certain traditions, or traditional forms, or traditional contracts, that you may expect with certain kind of works in certain places. Often these works are not in those sort of certain places.

They loved it (the presentation of *A Machine To See With* in *Sundance Film Festival*)! They loved the fictional world, the opportunity. They liked it actually maybe because they were watching screens all the time and they wanted to be out. They were some of the most adventurous people taking part. They challenged the rules. They waited for people to come through again, and so stage things for people. They kind of really got into it. Maybe that is the context. Maybe it has to do with what they had just be doing. Maybe is the type of people who goes to *Sundance Film Festival*. There is a certain kind of set of people. I think it really really depends. Young people who are more knowledge about games, for example. If you look at that group of people, if you can clamp them together in some group. Some of the things that I found with some of those kind of people, specially tech game, I suppose, is that they come to some of our work and they think they know what it is gonna be. *Rider Spoke*, lots of people came thinking it have GPS, then is like: "It is GPS, I know how it works. I have done this before. Blablabla..". We do not get to say like: "No. You are wrong. It have not". But they are wrong, and they come with certain game expectations. So it is not like they would not mind because they are young, fresh and crazy. They actually have narrative constructions, and expectations of what a work is or should be. Sometimes, you know, there are those new forms overcoming traditional forms. Sometimes people are like very surprised because they are not over minded, that is not that you get closed minded if you get older. They think they know and they got it like this. And they kind of almost.. in fact people around them go: "oh yes, it is a GPS". And they are like: "Yeah. Yeah. Cool!". You know, they got it for a certain way, because they are completely miss on the thing, or they do not like it because it is not what they thought it is gonna be. I think that is about, that is across the generations. Yes, in fact, younger people just, you know, it is quite right probably, when you are old you do not want to run around on the streets for 45 minutes, perhaps. I do not know. I think it is a sort of intellectual journey that you go on.

***13. Most of the projects you can't experience as a group. Is there an explicit intention in giving priority to the individual experience rather than a collective one?***

I do not know if that is a priority but I think that is kind of evolved that way, if I am honest. That is partly, I suppose, because we did go from promenade stuff with lots of people around all the time to try to focused that on individual experience, and it kind of ended up that way. But when people do go out, they are mostly.. I think people are surprised when they come to our work and they can not go out to do it with a friend, and things like that. And it is a sort of challenge for us. It is a concern for us sometimes, that we can not make work with different kind of numbers of people, or combinations of people. But I think that is something that we are looking at much more with the *Karen* work, and broadcasting to bigger group of peoples. I think there is also some reasons why we do it as well. Maybe we work collaborative view in group all the time, and we actually are looking individually for a bit of individual time. It is possibly to do with things like that, if I am honest.

It is also to do with, obviously, with technology, and how you can use the technology. Phones are still for one person at the time, even if you might do something social with

that phone, which you can. We can make a piece differently. I think it is about kind of getting your head, it is really about getting you on your head. When you put headphones on, and you listen to music in the city, it is just like walk alone, isn't it? It is a sort of thing that is an interesting tension with technology being social or being intimate, you moving some sort of privacy and offering more privacy. I think there is just a good way to contemplate. Cycling.. it does not prevent people from going of in a certain direction, and I know people do this sort of things that I know. In *A Machine To See With* it is almost impossible. *Rider Spoke* is kind of possible. *Fixing Point* it is not, they can see each other so there is a sort of social aspect on it, but it is almost like being in a train station with your headphones on, and I see that other people with their headphones on are doing the same thing. Maybe you knowledge that you are in a kind of secret society. I think we like that. Ideally you might notice other people, perhaps doing it, perhaps not doing it. I think it is sort of, it makes me kind of think of who is involved, and who is not involved.

***14. Situationism is frequently claimed as a precursor of the Locative Media movement, in the sense that these artistic projects recuperate some concepts and practices such as the dérive or the psychogeography. At the same time, there is also a long artistic and avant-garde tradition of participatory projects and projects taking place in urban space. How much your work is influenced or inspired by these artistic movements and participatory or navigational practices in urban space?***

I suppose in a way. We are very keen and aware of Situationist dérive and psychogeography. We are super aware of all of that stuff. I suppose it informs in some way, or it is the History of where we are. Perhaps, you could sort of say that this is sort of technology-enabled Situationism. There are also some sort of differences. I think a lot of those practices as processes and not structured work. For me, their feel about the random, the unexpected, the sole place, what happens with often not operative thematic or structured. So I think there is a big difference, it is not just technology enabling Situationism. That is all from a particular era in History bar, when I suppose happening things like that. It was about very exploratory, adventure sort of open mentality, and I think that actually were quite controlled and closed in a way as a group of makers. We are aware where we sit in relation to that. But we are clear aware in relation to performative art. The future is, the vortices to know those people are aware or influenced with the innovation of technology. In print, and what that impact have on people. There is the big period of time where the work that we are making, or the way that people are behaving in the world is part influenced in the work that we make. We on some sort of trajectory communicate with each other. I think that is where we sit at the moment. Maybe, it feel like I am on 1960s, 1970s tune. Maybe we are doing that but I think maybe often when we have political responses or social responses. For us, it feels like, it needs to matter to people. I think even though it is playful or game like. I think there are our concerns and their concerns, they are different. They both operate in a sort of interior exploratory form. I think we are trying to really work things out, maybe they are as well.

I think we are as much influenced and inspired by people like this kind of theatrical productions towards a very structured and layered, more sort of these people. Our connection to them is the city in some ways, it is about the city. it is more academic than practical it is more conceptual. It is very important.



## APPENDIX 4. Public Lecture of Matt Adams in Adelaide<sup>373</sup>

### **Adelaide Thinkers in Residence Public Lecture**

**Matt Adams, Blast Theory**

**Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> March, 2004, Adelaide Town Hall**

When I was 14 years old a visionary visited my school. The man was a pioneer in new technologies and he had come to announce how the world I was growing up in was on the verge of radical change. He brandished a VHS tape, and announced that television was going to be transformed for ever. Using the power of VHS everyone would make their own TV programmes. Instead of accepting the bland output of comedy and drama from the existing networks we would simply take control ourselves and become producers as well as consumers. TV stations would close, corporations would fold and a new wave of creativity was about to be unleashed. To me it seemed like impeccable logic and the scenario he described seemed inevitable.

Over the following years it became clear that what he had predicted was certainly not coming true and I began to think of him as an idiot. Someone who was misguided and over confident. He had failed to understand that people are essentially passive, happy to consume what they are fed.

Then the internet happened and I became less sure. Suddenly there was exactly the kind of explosion that he had seen. Instead of making their own TV on VHS people were making their own comedy, drama and documentaries online. It was impossible to foresee the impact that the internet would have and yet, in a way, the VHS evangelist had done precisely that.

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The ideas I am going to present tonight have been developed collaboratively with Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj from Blast Theory. I have spent more time with them than with anyone else in my life and together we have shaped each other's ideas and identities. As the big mouth in the group I get to speak at intimate little gatherings like this, but the ideas are shared and have been developed through argument and discussion with Ju and Nick.

I want to show some of our work and talk about its relationship to mobile phones, games and new technology. I want to explore the relationship between art and society and how culture is being seen as increasingly important in economic development. And I want to talk about how new media has blurred some of the boundaries between science, art and commerce. But first of all I want to go back to our beginnings...

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<sup>373</sup> File collected from *Blast Theory* digital archive (Source: *Blast Theory* server).

We chose the name Blast Theory in 1991 from an anarchist fanzine who in turn had stolen it from the British artist Wyndham Lewis. The phrase that made such an impact was "Blast Theory, Bless Practice". Against the backdrop of post modernism and a Thatcherite recession we set out our stall to be about doing, making and taking action. Nearly 15 years later our artwork is still the place where we can fully express ourselves. It is only in that context that our personal fears and our public concerns can be fully expressed.

For this reason I would like to start by showing a piece of our work. Uncle Roy All Around You was made in London last year. Like "I Like Frank in Adelaide" which we have just shown as part of this year's Fringe it is a game in which players online in a virtual city and on the streets of the real city are searching for someone.

[SHOW VIDEO - 3 mins]

This work is a hybrid of games, theatre and mobile technologies in which social interaction is the governing principle. But most importantly it is a work about loss and absence. Uncle Roy is never found, he is permanently missing. The internet, the mobile phone and virtual worlds all serve to create people who are both there and not there at the same time. The voice we hear in our ear sounds next to us but the person may be thousand of miles away. We are not cheerleaders for new technology. All three of us have very mixed feelings about these new devices but we are fascinated by how they are changing our society.

I would like to talk a little bit about why we have chosen to work in this area.

As mobile phones have reached near ubiquity in many developed countries, they have attained a distinct position as pieces of new technology. From the VCR to the home computer, from the Walkman to the internet no other technological development has reached so deeply into the social fabric. Mobile phones have become established within demographics such as pre-teenagers, the poor and rural dwellers who have traditionally been excluded from or resistant to new technologies. According to one study in the UK mobile phone usage was higher among the homeless population than among the general population because of the increased importance of a mobile communication device for those without a fixed address.

As artists, we have become fascinated by this seismic shift in how we talk to one another. While some outcomes – which are easily measurable and have revenue implications for telecoms companies - are well understood and frequently discussed, such as the rise in texting, what are the marginal or

invisible shifts that are taking place?

For example, social arrangements among high users of mobile devices have been profoundly altered. It is now typical in my experience for plans for a group of friends to meet to unfold in a new way. In the days of fixed phone lines friends would ring each other to arrange a time and place to meet a few days in advance. Subsequently the group would converge at that rendezvous. Now, the entire process proceeds on a contingent and ad hoc basis with many small communications between the group in which the members of the group, the time and the location may be revised on the fly up to a few minutes before the designated time. What does this do to our sense of friendship or our understanding of place?

Most shockingly on September 11th 2001 it became imprinted on our consciousness that the mobile phone collapses the distinct zones of communication that once existed. As relatives received their final communication from their loved ones in their cars, on buses and on trains during the morning rush hour, the appalling contrast between the banality of their location and the impact of what they were hearing added to the horror. On a more mundane level, users in many countries are now familiar with the juxtaposition of private, intimate conversations with a secondary, inadvertent audience. What does it mean to have an argument with your partner while simultaneously being aware that you are being overheard by acquaintances or strangers?

And with the advent of the third generation of mobile telephony these profound changes will take on a new dimension. 3G promises a constant connection to the internet, a high bandwidth (enabling live video calls) and ultimately, location based services. For example, TV news could be playing on your handset while you call a taxi which already knows where you are.

Combined together this means that the internet spills onto the street and so do many of the social anxieties that the internet has brought with it. If you only consumed the mainstream media you could believe that the internet was entirely populated by paedophiles, neo nazis and cannibals. This enormous sprawling world is, in my experience, an endlessly complex, subtle and fascinating place in which a ten year old can have a better home page than a multinational corporation.

Attempts by governments around the world to control the most fundamental transformation in publishing over the last 500 years are as unedifying as they are impotent. But they may not remain impotent indefinitely: behind the rhetoric of protecting our children and saving the helpless multinational recording industry lies a concerted attempt to roll back the free spaces that new technology has created. Attempting to make Internet Service Providers responsible for the content

delivered on their servers is the equivalent of making the telephone companies responsible for the conversations on their network. It is a regressive, restrictive step driven by a relentless overstatement of the dangers.

At its heart this is an old school battle for the control of information. Let's be under no illusions that the changes in global media ownership over the last two decades have restricted choice, undermined independence and inhibited the plurality of voices heard. If these are replicated online they will have profound and long lasting effects.

This is not to say that the internet is a paradise of free speech and democratic values. There are many legitimate concerns about the reliability of information that is distributed and about the potential abuse of the innocent. And in our work we try to explore these issues. In Uncle Roy All Around You online players and street players are asked whether they will make a commitment to be there for a stranger for the next 12 months. If they agree, they swap their email address or phone number with another player in order to activate that contract.

When we presented this work to a group of teachers here in Adelaide there was some unease that we were encouraging young people to trust strangers in direct opposition to current educational practice. But in a subsequent seminar with 120 students aged between 12 and 16 we found that at least 60% of them had pretended to be someone else in an internet chat room. It is not enough to take a "Just Say No" attitude to young people and the internet. They are already exploring these spaces for themselves and finding out for themselves that in the vast majority of cases the risks are very low. There is a tremendous challenge for educators to learn about what is going on out there and to engage positively with it. Sites such as Habbo Hotel provide a template for well managed, beautifully designed social spaces for young people.

But it is games that are the biggest driver of these changes. The cliché of a lone teen in a darkened room, shunning nutrition and social contact while pretending to be a wizard is long past its sell by date. Well, except the wizard part. That's worse than ever. But you can blame The Lord of the Rings for that. What has changed is that games are becoming social spaces. Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Games are huge. These games such as Everquest, Lineage and America's Army involve virtual worlds in which you build up a character through your interactions with other players as well as by interacting with the game. Driven by the adoption of broadband this genre of gaming is growing fast: Lineage has over four million players, those playing Everquest spend an average of 20 hours a week in the game in return for paying a monthly subscription.

Alongside this there is a burgeoning interest among artists in games. As the first generation of gamers from the seventies and eighties has matured they have not stopped playing games. Instead they are looking for new ideas and new challenges beyond the fantasy and sci fi genres which have dominated mass market gaming. People are taking games engines - the software used to describe the world of the game - and making modifications for their own purposes. Machinima is the emerging genre in which movies are made using virtual sets taken from games.

911 Survivor is a modification of Unreal Tournament in which you are a victim trapped in the World Trade Center. Sometimes you can escape down the seemingly endless staircases, in other games there is no way out. Escape from Woomera, which is currently under development, invites players to play the role of a refugee escaping from a detention centre and poses many questions about who we identify with and why when we play games. At the moment, games such as this often attract opprobrium for combining games with serious issues. They are seen as trivialising important political questions. I see this in reverse: they bring a long overdue seriousness to games.

When we compare these tentative steps to the emergence of cinema as a bone fide art form 90 or 100 years ago the parallels are striking. Here is an industry that is making money (lots of money), that is seen as low brow and unworthy of serious comment, that generally sticks to tried and tested combinations of sex, violence and dazzling effects. In other words here is cinema in 1914, just before DW Griffiths, FW Murnau and Sergei Eisenstein between them created The Birth of a Nation, Nosferatu and Battleship Potemkin.

When we combine games on the internet WITH the internet on mobile phones WITH artists working on games we have the preconditions for a profound cultural shift. These are particularly reflected in the general move towards greater mobility. Whether it is refugees travelling thousands of miles, the number of cars in circulation or the rise of personal organisers, we are surrounded by evidence of the increased movement of people and objects. In this environment static things have less relevance and less purpose.

And I would now like to talk about how these changes have influenced my thinking about artistic practice.

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My background is in the theatre. At the age of 13 I fluked the audition into a professional production and found my passion. At the same time I saw a production of An Inspector Calls and realised that

theatre could combine the personal with the political in the here and now with a knock out punch. For a decade acting and directing was everything to me. But it gradually became apparent that the form of theatre was in crisis. As audiences worked longer and more irregular hours, as they travelled greater distances, as their time became more constricted theatre became less and less attractive. When we performed at 8 o'clock in the evening much of the audience would arrive directly from work without having eaten. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century the format of theatre has changed little but our society has changed beyond all recognition.

This is not to say that traditional theatre is finished. But in the same way that painting was transformed for ever by the arrival of photography it does have to change. Especially if it seeks to reach a new, younger audience and to have cultural impact.

In the face of the social changes I have described we have sought to rethink the fundamentals of the performing arts. Given that the essential aspect of theatre that compels me is a group of people coming together at a particular time and in a particular place to engage with complex ideas and emotions how can the art form respond to these social and technological challenges?

Through our collaboration with the Mixed Reality Lab at the University of Nottingham we have explored the ways in which interactivity may provide a new set of possibilities. The MRL is a multidisciplinary team of around 30 researchers with backgrounds in computer science, sociology, ethnography and product design that focuses on the ways in which real and virtual space may be joined. Over the last 7 years we have made four major works together. For *I Like Frank In Adelaide* we have had up to four of our colleagues from the MRL working here with us programming the game engine, programming the 3G phones and developing the game in discussions with us.

What we have discovered is the combination of scientific and artistic approaches is a very powerful way of addressing problems that combine technology with social outcomes. As part of the backstage tours that we gave last week to members of the new media industry I gave an example of how this functions:

Games such as *I Like Frank In Adelaide* rely on understanding the position of players in the city. Traditionally this has been achieved with the Global Positioning System, an American military system that uses 24 satellites to pinpoint your location. However GPS is deeply flawed in urban environments because tall buildings obscure the satellites. We quickly realised that we would have tremendous problems explaining GPS to players of the game. Instead we wondered whether we could create a game in which players indicated their own position by moving a map. Inspired by the observation that

you only tend to look at the part of a map that shows where you are, we then rethought the game so that it would work in this way. We created a game in which if you cheated, the information you received would mean nothing and thus removed the need for any location based hardware. When the Mixed Reality Lab analysed the results of this technique several fascinating conclusions came out.

At first our technique of self reported positioning seemed less accurate than GPS. On closer examination however it transpired that as players came to understand the technique they were exploiting it: they were moving the map so that it showed them at a road junction 100 metres ahead of their actual position. They were doing this because they knew that the system has a certain latency: it takes 10 to 20 seconds for their position to be transmitted from the phone to the game servers and then out to the players on the web. Also they knew that a road junction was a key moment when they would need assistance: it was a more valuable place to be seen.

When faced with the weakness of GPS the traditional route of computer science would have been to attempt to improve the performance of the technology. Instead by inverting the problem we created a solution that was quick, cheap, flexible and allowed the players to use it intelligently to enhance their experience.

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I would now like to talk about some recent changes in the debates about the value of art to the wider society.

As well as attempting to respond in our work to the society around us, we have been making work during a fundamental reappraisal of the importance of the arts. The role of the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao or of Tate Modern in London as tools of regeneration is widely appreciated. What distinguishes these projects is the bravery and risk taking required to make them happen. Frank Gehry who designed the Guggenheim Museum was considered a maverick by many in the architectural community up until that time. Herzog and De Meuron who designed Tate Modern were little known. Both teams were given the support and the scope to create their masterpieces.

These projects have an impact that extends far beyond their immediate roles of displaying art to an enthusiastic audience. They send powerful messages about the values of their culture and have transformed their immediate surroundings. Ju and I have twice experienced at first hand the ability of artists themselves to transform their surroundings. Firstly in Bermondsey in South London and then in Hoxton in North London small communities of artists have changed perceptions of these

neighbourhoods, brought new development, new wealth (and then, ironically, been driven out by the rent hikes that follow). In both instances it has not required large buildings to achieve results. And the rise of a more mobile society in which artists are working in more and more diverse contexts makes buildings less and less important. For the cost of one Tate Modern you could fund thousands of smaller projects for a decade.

In Hoxton a forward looking council and a canny property developer saw the potential created once hundreds of artists migrated into the area. As the column inches accumulated in the press, bars and cafes then restaurants and boutiques gradually clustered around Hoxton Square. By the late 90s the entire geography of the London art world was transformed as White Cube and other major West End galleries migrated East. In the earliest days, grants of a few thousand pounds were sufficient to nurture this process: the Fete Worse Than Death in 1994 was a summer fete in which performances, live music and stalls were created by artists in Hoxton Square. Now a legendary event that features in books on art in London, and which symbolised the rebirth of the area, it was created with enthusiasm and a tiny grant. It is a common misperception to view artists as people who are subsidised by the state, who take money out. In fact, the artists subsidise the work more than anyone. My friends and contemporaries earn many times what I earn. Most artists work for little or nothing in order to fulfill their passion and to make a contribution to their culture.

In education there is overwhelming evidence that engagement with art enables students to synthesise complex ideas, enhance their self esteem, be more confident of their place in a complex world and understand other points of view.

Even on the most narrow materialistic appreciations of the arts they can contribute significantly. In the last few years we have had increasing interest in Blast Theory's work from the commercial sector. Companies like Siemens, Motorola and Nike have approached us and in response we have established a new company - Everpresence - to exploit these opportunities. Having taken modest amounts of state funding in the UK we are now exporting our work around the world and through Everpresence starting a dynamic new company.

In a global economy in which knowledge and creativity is an ever more highly prized resource there is a fantastic opportunity for a small, vibrant and welcoming community such as Adelaide. We were shocked when, upon being invited here for the Thinkers in Residence programme, we discovered that of the six leading creative Australians that we knew around the world, every one was originally from Adelaide. Clearly there is no shortage of fantastic talent here. Equally telling however was the fact that they have all moved to Sydney, London or New York to build their careers.

Over the last 30 years the festival culture in this city has brought the cream of the world's culture here to the obvious delight of locals and visitors. It has given Adelaide a global reputation. I would argue however that in the future there needs to be a shift away from bringing global culture in to Adelaide and towards creating a globally significant culture in the state that is then exported outwards. The episodic nature of festivals may be good for audiences but is not ideal for artists because it leads to feast and famine. Artists thrive in a mixed economy in which there are plentiful creative opportunities at a variety of scales on a persistent basis. In London artists thrive on the piecemeal work generated by other richer industries such as music and advertising. I think it is a critical goal to establish and nurture a community of young artists and recent graduates in this city and to convince them that they can use this city as a platform to international success. For modest amounts of money it is possible to build a very significant creative community.

The generation of Young British Artists who have conquered the world such as Damien Hirst, Gillian Wearing and Tracy Emin almost all came from Goldsmiths College, a small and previously relatively undistinguished university in South London. Portishead, Massive Attack and Tricky are only the best known of a wave of bands who emerged from a tiny community of musicians in Bristol. So it is with the Dogme film makers in Denmark and with fashion from Antwerp. A relatively small city such as Adelaide has huge potential. This is a city of tight networks and informal contacts in which face to face interactions are the norm. That Adelaide is cheap to live in and has a fantastic quality of life provides a fertile ground for creativity. Now that trade is increasingly electronic or intellectual the city's distance from the great world centres matters less and less.

Creativity is widely understood as a vital part of a forward looking, healthy society. At all levels of education and training there is a renewed focus on how innovation is lead by creativity. We have done a range of consultancy work in Europe on this exact area and while here in Adelaide I participated in the Creativity Think Tank as part of the Department of Education's Learning to Learn project. We were also fortunate to be hosted by the Technology School of the Future in Hindmarsh who lead the way in using technology to foster creativity.

Like "Innovation", "Creativity" is a word that you can't argue with. It seems to inherently be A GOOD THING. But I would like to explore a little further what we mean by creativity. In my experience it is not a neat, sunny attribute like enthusiasm. It is often awkward, oppositional, disruptive and antagonistic. Looking at the seminal creative people of the last century they are often marginal up to their moment of greatest impact and, in many cases, revert to the margins soon after that moment. Jackson Pollock is one example of a man whose career was intense, transforming our understanding

of painting but began to fade almost as soon as he came to prominence. William Burroughs and Francis Bacon were unfocused drifters well into their late thirties.

We can all be creative. Expressing ourselves is a critical part of being human and to refine those skills – whether in DJing or in needlework, in our style of dress or in our use of language – is life affirming and contributes to our society. But most of us are fairly tame most of the time: my poetry would make anyone in this room shudder. Most of the time our attempt to be creative is merely aping what we have seen elsewhere. Witness the Sunday painter's crude pastiche of the great artists of the past.

The truly great creative people find their voice with such precision, such depth and surefootedness that we see their individual identity in a way that is shocking and delightful in equal measure. This applies to Woody Allen or New Order, to Krystof Kieslowski or Lucian Freud. Most of us cannot do this. Ironically many of them cannot stop doing it; they are to some extent trapped by their talent.

Britain has a great tradition of producing creative people but it is notoriously antagonistic. We rarely venerate our talent. We attack it, question it and often undermine it. Damien Hirst and Tracy Emin are mocked in the mainstream press with thudding predictability. This creates a febrile, overheated public dialogue with many problems such as a lack of serious discussion, damage to the individuals concerned and a focus on personalities rather than outputs but it also engenders a constant challenge to the status quo. You are no sooner top of the pile than you are being called upon to defend your right to be there. This is in stark contrast to countries such as France where respect for artists and creativity is very high. Their leading exponents of creativity are feted and treated as national treasures. Of course this is a more civilised system: it rewards creative people and respects them for their achievement. But it also enforces and upholds the status quo because those who are venerated stick around for years or for decades dominating the wider discourse. Neither the British nor the French approach can be deemed correct: but they create radically different kinds of culture.

Creativity cannot be corralled or neatly controlled. It doesn't usually arrive between 9am and 5pm. It is unruly and surprising. The very best ideas are often treated with scepticism and disdain. British inventor Trevor Baylis spent many years touting his clockwork radio before he could finally convince someone that this was a new technology that would transform the flow of information in the developing world. Marcel Duchamp's Urinal was seen as an insult, a mockery, childish, stupid, lacking skill and thought when it was first exhibited. Today we see it as important precisely because he saw so much further than anyone previously about the status of the artist and the art object.

All of which shows that if we are serious about fostering risk, innovation and creativity we have to be brave, open minded and intellectually enquiring. The only reliable method of achieving these goals that I know is to search out creative people and give them space, time and support in order to enable them to reach their potential. And in terms of returns for this nurturing, the maximum gains are reached by supporting people early in their career. In effect, we are talking about research and development.

In corporate circles L'Oreal is held up as a template for the successful application of R&D. The fortunes of the company were transformed during the 90s by an aggressive expansion of research and development with a budget in the hundreds of millions of dollars. A steady flow of market leading products began to flow and repaid the investment many times over.

In the UK the funding bodies for Higher Education have long championed R&D but now they are beginning to see the value of interdisciplinary collaborations. The Arts and Humanities Research Board has created an Innovations fund and has created Research Fellowships to support this activity and Nick is currently a recipient of one of the fellowships. The Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council is now following suit. The European Union has a track record of supporting major multi partner collaborations between artists and scientists and companies. Blast Theory and the Mixed Reality Lab are part of a consortium with Sony, Nokia, It's Alive - a Swedish company that has pioneered mobile phone gaming - and five other research organisations that will spend 3 and a half years researching pervasive gaming.

What is crucial in all these processes is that the outcomes are not certain. This is the difference between development and innovation. In development we can plan for the outcomes in advance and measure the subsequent achievements against that plan. In order to innovate we must step into the unknown. This is not to say that the process should lack planning, rigour or careful assessment. This is not about handing resources over in return for a vague promise. It is about calculating the risks, weighing up the options and then taking a chance. It involves being prepared for the unexpected, for the oblique. It requires faith in the medium to long term: results do not come at a predictable time or in a predictable way.

But as many artists have begun working with digital tools their skills have dramatically converged with the new industries of gaming, special effects, web design and so on. Artists who can script, who can programme, who can edit, who can design are increasingly common.

All of this means that the potential for partnerships between artists, scientists, games developers, broadcasters and the wider new media industry are growing fast. Now is the perfect time to take action to foster this process. One of the international tasks that needs to be achieved in order to maximise this process is a thorough overhaul of the Intellectual Property laws. As currently configured they offer scant protection to small teams of creative people: the painstaking lobbying by large corporations is inscribed in every facet of the international system.

Our work *Can You See Me Now?* was commissioned by a consortium of BBC Online, the Arts Council of England, the advertising agency Saatchi and Saatchi, a television production company and a conference. We received £10,000 in cash to create a new work. Professor Steve Benford who heads the MRL supported our idea and through staff time and the loan of hardware leveraged our initial funding three or four fold. We then created a work that ran for a total of six hours to a few hundred people in Sheffield in December 2000. Then it began to attract attention overseas. Then it was nominated for an Interactive Arts BAFTA. Then BBC Interactive approached us to make a TV programme based on the idea. Then the piece won the Golden Nica for Interactive Art at the Prix Ars Electronica in Austria.

At the same time we were creating a range of other works, some more expensive and more high profile. We had no way of knowing ourselves where the most successful outcomes would be. Any funder, assessor or potential partner would have had equal difficulty identifying those outcomes. And it is in that kind of trust and faith that the strongest partnerships are built. Blast Theory has no written agreement with the Mixed Reality Lab that covers our collaborations: we have worked on trust and will continue to do so.

Throughout the early years of Blast Theory's development we relied on the support of a few key funders and partners in order to survive. It was only after nearly a decade of promise and incremental development that we found our voice and widespread recognition.

Part of the key to our success was the fostering of regional and national funding agencies. The Arts Council played a key role in brokering relationships with the BBC and with universities. Key officers at the British Council helped us to build relationships with foreign promoters and curators.

I believe that the kind of strategies that I have outlined:

- fostering a vibrant, local creative community through seed funding
- government support to build relationships between art, science and commerce

- exporting Adelaide's creativity around the world
- creating a broad commitment to innovation and creativity in the widest sense

have the capacity to build a thriving new media economy, arts community and research environment in South Australia.

We have had a fantastic three months in this city. I want to express my gratitude to all the partners in the Thinkers In Residence programme who made this trip possible.

Thank you very much.



## APPENDIX 5. Excerpts of *Fixing Point* Plot<sup>374</sup>

### Fixing Point

#### Excerpts

##### Starter/ender

You couldn't say Seamus was one type of person. He was a different person to everyone who knew him; I only discovered that after his disappearance.

1

I was in Paris in April 1985 with my school's French trip. I taught in a girls secondary school for 23 years. Seamus met us and came onto the coach with us. He was able to help the driver to find his way around Paris. We went to Rue St Denis and we sat and had a glass of wine and a glass of beer together. Another teacher took a photo of me and Seamus.

2

We went up to Sacre Coeur Church and then I went and stayed with him in his flat. He was in great form and we chatted about home and the family. I was the youngest of a family of 8 while Seamus was the youngest boy. There was only 1 year and 6 months between us. He did not show any signs of stress. He was employed as an English teacher and was loving it.

3

Seamus was a member of the Irish Republican Socialist Party. Before he left Ireland in 1984 he resigned from the party. He went to Paris to start a new life without politics. He was followed to Paris by members of the Irish National Liberation Army. They were not happy that he had left the IRSP and they believed that he had some information which they needed concerning arms dumps. He did not have this information

4

We were going to visit France and see the clothes. They were the same ones as he had been wearing in his last photo with me. The INLA member at the meeting looked at me and told me I and my family would be shot if we went to France. He then pointed to my brother Sean and told him the same. We would be killed if we spoke again to the press. I got courage and said I would be still going as the clothes were my brother's not a member of the IRSP.

5

The family have always maintained that we are looking for him as our sibling and nothing else. We never spoke to the press for at least 20 years. Silence is one way of keeping fear in people. That was the worst thing.

---

<sup>374</sup>Idem.

6

Seamus was of average build, about 5ft 6" with dark brown hair. He had a beard, although in springtime he sometimes shaved it off to leave just a moustache. Under his glasses he had the most beautiful blue eyes. He was 33 years old when he disappeared. He was the youngest boy of a family of 9. He had 5 sisters and 3 brothers. He lived in Newry. He was a very intelligent fella. He was an expert on world politics and he was always involved in politics. He was a member of Peoples Democracy during the early 1970's. He loved traditional Irish music. Thin lizzy, Rory Gallagher, The Chieftains, The Bothy Band, Aretha Franklin were all his favourites. Seamus always had a smile on his face and was well known in Newry and Belfast. I was always with him as my sister said we were like two peas in a pod if you seen one you seen the two of us.

7

We need new information as soon as possible. The forensic team is finishing off all the other searches in Ireland but we have been reassured that if new information is brought forward the forensic team will look at it and work accordingly with it.

8

At times it feels as if we have also disappeared because no one wants to talk about it.

9

We know we walk a fine line but if they want to talk to us and give us information then they can do that confidentially and in privacy.

10

I believe there is a real willingness there on behalf of the INLA. They want to find him as much as we do. At the moment we are waiting on word from one of Seamus's past associates. We are just hoping from day to day that he will get back to me and that he will have uncovered something new with regard to the search."

11

If they get information they can do things. That's what they're trying to do – to appeal to anyone with the slightest information to bring it forward before it's too late. Time really is running out. We can't move on . We are nearly in a time warp, like your life has been put on hold. We are just trying to complete a circle. In our case information has to be very specific. Here digs can last for months but in France the commission are given very specific timeframes and have many legal and forestry requirements so we may only have days. The information needs to be specific and most importantly accurate"

## APPENDIX 6. Plot of *A Machine To See With* adapted to Brighton<sup>375</sup>

# **BLAST THEORY**

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## A Machine To See With Brighton

29 September 2011

### 1. REGISTRATION CALL

#### **Registration.1**

##### **BookRegistration.1.1**

This phone has been registered for A Machine To See With by Blast Theory. Your booking is confirmed and you do not need a ticket. You will need to bring your phone fully charged and with enough credit for 45 minutes of calls.

If you believe this phone number has been registered in error, please contact the Brighton Dome box-office on 01273 709 709.

[PAUSE 5s]

[REPEAT 4 TIMES]

### 2. PRE CALL

#### **Registration.Pre.0**

##### **RegistrationPre.0.1**

Welcome to A Machine To See With. Call this number back to receive your starting instructions.

REPEATS 10 TIMES (to ensure that it lasts longer than their answer phone message)

#### **Pre.1 (A-F)**

##### **Pre.1.1**

This is A Machine To See With.

##### **Pre.1.2 (A-F)**

To confirm this is the phone you will be using for A Machine To See With and to receive details of your starting location, press 1 on your keypad now.

[SKIP TO Pre.2 (A-F)]

If you have received this call in error, press 2 [SKIP TO Pre.21]

[6 second pause]

(Repeat options once and hang-up)

#### **Pre.2 (A-F)**

##### **Pre.2.1**

Thank you. Now listen carefully. I am about to give you instructions to your start location. They are precise, and detailed, and you need to get them exactly.

[Pre.22 (A-F) starts here]

#### **Pre.2.2\_A Pre.2.2\_B Pre.2.2\_C Pre.2.2\_D Pre.2.2\_E Pre.2.2\_F**

A: Toy Museum	B: Pavillion	C: Market Diner	D: Church Street	E: The Astoria	F: Thistle Hotel
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ARTISTS: Matt Adams | Ju Row Farr | Nicholas Tandavaniti

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<sup>375</sup> Idem.

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	Gardens Cafe	by Old Market			
To start, you need to wait in the tunnel outside the Brighton Toy and Model Museum below the entrance to Brighton train station	To start, you need to wait at the Pavilion Gardens Café next door to Brighton Museum.	To start, you need to be at the 24hr Market Diner on Circus Street, opposite the Old Market	To start, you need to be outside the painted red church door of St Nicholas' Church on Church Street	To start, you need to wait at the front door of the abandoned Astoria Theatre on Gloucester Place	To start, you need to be at the Thistle Hotel on the seafront near Brighton Pier.  Wait by the reception desks in the lobby.

You need to be there at your scheduled start time. Bring some cash with you and do not tell anyone else where you are going.

## Pre.2.3 [A-F]

To confirm that you have understood these instructions, press 1. [go to Pre.3]

If you would like to hear these instructions again, press 2. [go to Pre.22 [A-F]]

[6 second pause]

[Repeat options twice and hang-up]

## Pre.3

### Pre.3.1

Thank you.

--

During the experience you will need to call this number back.

Make sure you know how to do this. This number ends in 061

You need to be at your start position at your scheduled start time. Do not tell anyone else where you are going.

You can call this number back at any time to hear these instructions again or if you are going to be delayed

[BEEP]

## Alternate cases

### Pre.10 [A-F]

#### Pre.1.1

[AS ABOVE]

#### Pre.10.2

To receive details of your starting location, press 1 on your keypad now. [SKIP TO Pre.2 [A-F]]

If you are delayed, press 2 [SKIP TO Pre.21]

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## Pre.21

### Pre.21.1

Please wait..

Pre.21.2

You are being transferred.

[TRANSFERS TO BT HELPLINE]

## 3. GO CALL

### Go.1

#### Go.1.1

This is A Machine To See With.

#### Go.1.2 (A-F) Go.1.2\_A, Go.1.2\_B, etc..

A: Toy Museum (was 1300)	B: Pavilion Gardens Cafe	C: Market Diner by Old Market (1500)	D: Church (1000)	E: The Astoria (1000)	F: Thistle Hotel
To confirm you are standing outside the Brighton Toy and Model Museum below the entrance to Brighton station and ready to begin, press 1.	To confirm you are at the Pavilion Gardens Cafe next door to Brighton Museum and ready to begin, press 1.	To confirm you are outside the 24hr Market Diner on Circus Street, opposite the Old Market and ready to begin, press 1.	To confirm you are standing outside the painted red door of St Nicholas' Church on Church Street and ready to begin, press 1	To confirm you are standing outside the abandoned Astoria Theatre on Gloucester Place and ready to begin, press 1.	To confirm you are by the reception desks in the lobby of the Thistle Hotel on the seafront and ready to begin, press 1.

If you have been delayed or cannot attend, press 2 [SKIP TO Go.21]  
[6 second pause]

[Repeat options twice and hang-up]

### Go.2

#### Go.2.1

[PAUSE]

What's your name? I want you to record it for me after the tone.

[1 second pause then BEEP]

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## Go.3

### Go.3.3 (A - F)

OK. Your answer has been recorded... I don't know what your name is because this is a recording and I could be thousands of miles away. I could be in Delhi or Derry or Denver.

A: Toy Museum	B: Pavilion Gardens Cafe	C: Market Diner by Old Market	D: Church St	E: The Astoria	F: Thistle Hotel
But you are standing outside the Brighton Toy and Model Museum on Trafalgar Street.  Take a moment to watch the people passing by.	But you are at a café in a park in the centre of Brighton.  Take a moment to look at the people around you.	But you are outside a 24 hour café in Brighton.  Now stand with your back to the café, facing the street.	But you are standing by a church on a quiet street in Brighton.  Take a moment to scan up and down the street.	But you are standing outside an abandoned theatre in Brighton.  Take a moment to scan up and down the street	But you are in the lobby of a hotel on the seafront in Brighton.  Take a moment to watch the people in the hotel.

You have just arrived. You are new here and you are alert to your new surroundings. You press the phone against your ear as the camera slides up your body in extreme close up to show your fingers. You are going on a robbery but your face shows no sign. To a bystander you could be anyone. You are just a person on a phone.

### Go.3.4

By taking part in A Machine To See With you agree that you will take responsibility for your own safety and actions during this time. You agree to dismiss and ignore any incoming calls or messages apart from those you receive from me from now on. Any recordings you make will be stored in the system and may be used for archival or documentary purposes.

Listen carefully: if you miss an instruction at any time, there's nothing you can do. I am an automated call and in case of emergencies I will not be there to help you. You are responsible for your own actions and safety.

If the police are called they will not take any notice of your excuses. If you get caught you just deny that you knew you were breaking the law, just tell the authorities that re-distributing capital from where it is not being used to where it will get used is a service. Get ready to think on your feet.

Things will NOT go as planned. This is just a recording. You're going to have to use your initiative to get through this.

If at any point you feel like you're waiting for a call, if you hang up accidentally, or if you're not sure what is going on, you can call in to this number and it will normally pick up from where you left off.

Now press One to confirm you understand and agree to these conditions of participation.

[Pause 6 seconds]

Press One to confirm you understand and agree to these conditions of participation.

[Pause 6 seconds]

[Any response apart from 1 repeats this section]

## Go.4

### Go.4.1

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Thank you.

It's time to initiate your surveillance system. Your eyes are a machine to see with. Your ears are a machine to listen with. This environment is not what it first appears.

## Go.4.2 (A- F)

A: Toy Museum 1300	B: Pavilion Gardens Cafe 1100	C: Market Diner by Old Market 15 00	D: Church Street 1000	E: The Astoria 900	F: Thistle Hotel 1300
<p>Now with your back to the Museum, facing the street, turn left and start down the road.</p> <p>I'll stay on the line as you walk</p> <p>0.10 Head down - past the Prince Albert with the memorial to John Peel painted on the side.</p> <p>Across the street is a Thrifty Car Rental.</p> <p>Take the pelican crossing by the car rental and keep heading down the road.</p> <p>You will only do what you think is right. You won't do what you're told.</p> <p>0.45 Pass the furniture shop and the bakery and look for a newsagents on the corner called St Noha's News.</p> <p>At the newsagents</p>	<p>Now, with your back to the café, facing the Pavilion, turn left and take the path which runs along the left-hand side of the Gardens towards the Pavilion</p> <p>I'll stay on the line as you walk</p> <p>Do not draw attention to yourself. Everything around you is just pretend, it's all made up. This town is paper thin. A series of flats, a scattering of extras and: you. You will only do what you think is right. You won't do what you're told.</p> <p>1.00 Where the paths meet in the middle of the Gardens, take a left, following the sign to the museum.</p> <p>On your right, a low fence protects the</p>	<p>Now with your back to the Market Diner, turn right down the street, keeping the diner on your right.</p> <p>I'll stay on the line as you walk</p> <p>You'll pass an empty shop on the right and next to that a wooden garage door with paint peeling off it.</p> <p>0.38 Keep on heading down to the end of the street. Pass the shutter doors and blue bins out the back of the offices which face out onto Grand Parade.</p> <p>At the end of the street are the back doors to the pub on the right, on the corner. And across the street at the end is the side of the University of Brighton.</p> <p>When you get to the end, cross over towards the</p>	<p>Now with your back to the red door of St Nicholas' church, turn right and start walking along Church Street keeping the cemetery on your right</p> <p>I'll stay on the line as you walk</p> <p>Do not draw attention to yourself. Everything around you is just pretend, it's all made up. This town is paper thin. A series of flats, a scattering of extras and: you. You will only do what you think is right. You won't do what you're told.</p> <p>0.45 Keep walking until you get almost to the end of the road, past some dead ends and turn left into the alley way at Crown Gardens just past Kew Street.</p> <p>A glass lamp and</p>	<p>Now, with your back to the Astoria, turn right and start walking down the road.</p> <p>I'll stay on the line as you walk</p> <p>Ignore the colourful panels screwed to the front of the theatre, trying to hide it's dereliction.</p> <p>Pass the padlocked door at the end of the theatre and look for the narrow side road cutting down the side of the building.</p> <p>Take this road along the side of the Astoria.</p> <p>On the right, you pass the boarded up side entrance to the theatre. On your left, through the green painted bars, is the leafy yard of solicitors' offices.</p> <p>Do not draw</p>	<p>Now, take the rear exit out of the hotel, heading away from the sea.</p> <p>I'll stay on the line as you walk</p> <p>Do not draw attention to yourself. Everything around you is just pretend, it's all made up.</p> <p>0.30 As you come out the rear doors of the hotel, you'll see a Japanese restaurant in the middle of the square to your left.</p> <p>Head down the steps outside the doors and straight across the square towards the street, keeping the Japanese restaurant on your left.</p> <p>On your right you will pass the side of the Brighton Town Hall.</p> <p>Across the street ahead of you is a</p>

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<p>turn right and take the alleyway, past the red bins on the right-hand side.</p> <p>1.10 Head into the alleyway, past the no cycling sign and the overgrown bushes on the left.</p> <p>On the right, metal bars protect the ground floor windows of the houses in the alleyway.</p> <p>1.35 A shed is hidden behind a wooden trellis among the gardens on the left.</p> <p>Keep heading down the alleyway. All the way to the end.</p> <p>Do not draw attention to yourself. Everything around you is just pretend, it's all made up. This town is paper thin. A series of flats, a scattering of extras and: you.</p> <p>2.07 At number 6, there is a metal knocker and graffiti on the wall.</p> <p>Around you a constellation of</p>	<p>plants from sprawling tourists.</p> <p>As you walk, you will see the entrance to the Museum on your left, and up ahead the entrance to the Gardens; a green copper dome above the arched gate.</p> <p>Around you a constellation of cameras, booms and cranes hover. As you tilt your chin they tilt with you. As you walk they glide-surround you.</p> <p>1.50 At the museum continue out of the Gardens on to the street. There's an exit just to the right of the arched entrance.</p> <p>As you come out of the exit to the park turn left and walk along the street keeping the Museum on your left. At the crossing, cross over to St Giles College but keep walking along this street - with the Museum on your left.</p> <p>Ends at: 2.19</p>	<p>University of Brighton, and head around the front of the building.</p> <p>Ends at: 1.44</p>	<p>palm hang over the alley, with some scaffolding up on the right.</p> <p>1.10 Go past the back of the Masonic Lodge and the fence with letterboxes in it until you get to a cream splattered wall at the end of the alleyway.</p> <p>Around you a constellation of cameras, booms and cranes hover. As you tilt your chin they tilt with you. As you walk they glide-surround you.</p> <p>Ends at: 1.36</p>	<p>attention to yourself. Everything around you is just pretend, it's all made up.</p> <p>Keep going until you reach the residential street at the end.</p> <p>1.13 At the end of the alleyway turn left into the residential street.</p> <p>1.37 As you walk down this street you see a busier road at the end. On the right, on the corner, is a pub: The Fountainhead.</p> <p>Around you a constellation of cameras, booms and cranes hover. As you tilt your chin they tilt with you. As you walk they glide-surround you.</p> <p>At the end of the residential street, on the far side of the busy road is an entrance leading under the building to a car park behind.</p> <p>This town is paper thin. A series of flats, a scattering of extras and: you. You will only do what you think is right. You won't do</p>	<p>pedestrianised road. Cafe Rouge and Bella Italia mark the entrance to this road, sitting on either corner.</p> <p>1.30 Cross the street, Prince Albert Street, and continue along this pedestrianised road ahead.</p> <p>Around you a constellation of cameras, booms and cranes hover.</p> <p>1.50 On the left you pass Picasso's: another Italian restaurant, serving 'breakfast, coffee, pasta, paninis, steaks and fish' to the tourists.</p> <p>Ends at: 2.01</p>
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<p>cameras, booms and cranes hover. As you tilt your chin they tilt with you. As you walk they glide-surround you.</p> <p>2.50 A brick wall on the left marks the far end of the alley. Silver graffiti is on the opposite wall.</p> <p>Up ahead, across the road at the end of the alleyway, is the back of the Royal Mail sorting office.</p> <p>Ends at: 3.15</p>				<p>what you're told Ends at: 2.32</p>	

## Go.5

### Go.5.1 (A - F)

A: Toy Museum	B: Pavilion Gardens Cafe	C: Market Diner by Old Market	D: Church Street	E: The Astoria	F: Thistle Hotel
<p>0.00 When you get to the end of the alley look for another alley to the right, Fredrick Gardens, between the sorting office and a pub with a Thai restaurant upstairs - Sing Tong Thai.</p> <p>0.25 You'll pass the barred windows along the side of the Royal Mail sorting office on</p>	<p>0.00 As you walk, you'll see the front of the Brighton Dome across the street. On the right, the well kept offices of solicitors hidden behind railings and the blinds of bay windows.</p> <p>0.40 Pass Blenheim House on your right. Up ahead, opposite the entrance to the Dome, is a dark</p>	<p>0.00 Head down Grand Parade keeping the park on your right, passing windows into the gallery on the ground floor of the Brighton University building.</p> <p>Pass the battered phonebox and the large black wheeled bin out the front of the college.</p>	<p>Turn right at the end and past the tiny barbers with a strip pole outside.</p> <p>Up ahead of you is a main road. You need to cross over Queens Road and onto North Road. As you stand waiting to cross you will notice the sea to your right and the train station up to your left. You are on the edge of the busy shopping streets</p>	<p>0.00 Cross over the busy road, and head down the entrance under the building named Barrack Yard.</p> <p>Pass the Old Slipper Baths on your left. It's now a nursery - with a playground out the back - the children share this corner of town with a car park.</p> <p>The red brick</p>	<p>0.00 You will come to an open space, circled by cafes, bakeries and a pub called The Pump House on the left.</p> <p>Bear right as you come into this space and head down Market Street keeping 'Number Ten' on your right.</p> <p>0.30 You pass a jewellers and a</p>

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<p>your left.</p> <p>At the far end of Fredrick Gardens, turn right and look for a pub called The Three Jolly Butchers.</p> <p>When you get to the Three Jolly Butchers, go straight inside the pub and look for the toilets. Head into the toilets and lock yourself in a cubicle. When you're locked inside a cubicle, call me back.</p>	<p>grey building, the Cote Brassiere. When you reach the Cote Brassiere, take the alleyway next to it.</p> <p>1.15 At the end of the alley is a large brick building - a public swimming pool. This is where you're going. Follow the plastic sign for the library around the building to the front entrance of the swimming pool.</p> <p>1.40 The front entrance of the pool has two pairs of double doors. Take the doors on the left marked IN in white plastic letters.</p> <p>Immediately on the left as you come through the entrance are a set of toilets.</p> <p>Head into the toilets and lock yourself in a cubicle.</p> <p>When you're in the toilets in the swimming pool and locked in a cubicle, call me back.</p>	<p><b>Around you a constellation of cameras, booms and cranes hover. As you tilt your chin they tilt with you. As you walk they glide-surround you.</b></p> <p>0.41 Keep on down towards the traffic lights and the crossing.</p> <p>0.52 Across the street you see the green copper dome marking the entrance to the Pavillion Gardens. This is where you're heading.</p> <p>On the left, offices hide behind the bay windows facing the street.</p> <p>When you get to the crossing next to the Brighton Sauna, cross over the road towards the green copper dome at the entrance to the Pavillion gardens.</p> <p>1.50 Once you're across the street, make your way to the middle of the gardens.</p> <p>Where the paths cross in the middle of the Pavillion Gardens you'll see a sign for the</p>	<p>of the city and the North Laine.</p> <p>[add 10 secs to cross] Once you have crossed the road keep going. You will notice the NCP car park and the LA fitness centre on your right, with red signage and a jester logo. When you are opposite these you will be on the corner of Frederick Street and have the pub behind you. It's called the 3 Jolly Butchers. It's name is in gold.</p> <p>Go straight inside the pub and look for the toilets. Head into the toilets and lock yourself in a cubicle. When you're in The Three Jolly Butcher's locked inside a cubicle, call me back.</p>	<p>building in front of you is the side of the Prince Regent Swimming Complex. A new plastic sign on the side of the building will guide you to the front doors.</p> <p>Follow the sign, round the right of the building to the front entrance of the swimming complex.</p> <p>You're looking for a pair of glass double doors marked IN in white plastic letters.</p> <p>When you get to the front entrance, head inside.</p> <p>Immediately on the left as you come through the entrance are a set of toilets.</p> <p>Head into the toilets and lock yourself in a cubicle.</p> <p>When you're in the toilets in the swimming pool and locked in a cubicle, call me back.</p>	<p>cheap sandwich shop on the left. On the right is a betting shop.</p> <p><b>Around you a constellation of cameras, booms and cranes hover. As you tilt your chin they tilt with you. As you walk they glide-surround you.</b></p> <p>1.10 Keep on down this street, passing the Snow+Rock shop on your left and the Market Inn on your right.</p> <p>The street passes under a building: an underwear shop with posters in the window.</p> <p>As you come out on the street by the taxi rank, turn to the left and take the pedestrian crossing over the road.</p> <p>You're heading into the Pavillion Gardens.</p> <p>You will see the domed entrance to the Gardens on the far side of the road, with the Pavillion itself visible beyond this.</p> <p>Once you're in the</p>
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		public lavatories.  Follow the sign to the public lavatories in the gardens.  When you've found the public lavatory, go inside and lock your self in a cubicle.  When you're locked in a cubicle, call me back.			Pavillion Gardens, follow the signs to the public lavatories in the Gardens.  When you've found the public lavatory, go inside and lock your self in a cubicle.  When you're locked in a cubicle, call me back.
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[BEEP]

Alternate Cases

## **Go.21**

### **Go.21.1**

You will receive a reminder call in 5 minutes.

You can call this number back at any time if you are ready to begin.

If you are unable to participate in A Machine To With, press 2 [SKIP TO Go.22]

[REPEAT 5 TIMES]

[BEEP]

## **Go.22**

### **Go.22.1**

Your participation has been cancelled.

Thank you for taking part in A Machine To See With.

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## 4. WC CALL

WC.1

WC.1.1

You are hidden in a cubicle, tightly framed.

Let's learn something about you.

Most psychologists now believe that the apparent complexity of human personality is just an illusion. In reality, people vary on just five fundamental dimensions. Understand these dimensions and we gain an important insight into your behaviour and thinking.

[WC.10 starts here]

WC.1.2

I'm going to give you five statements and I want you to give your response to them swiftly and honestly. Don't think too hard. Just give me your reply as a number between 1 and 3 where 1 is Agree and 3 is Disagree.

If you do not understand what I am asking you to do, press 2 now. If you understand, stay on the line.

[On keypress 2 – repeats WC.1.1?]

WC.2

WC.2.1

OK. Here is the first statement:

"If there was an election tomorrow, I know which party I would vote for"

Now press 1 to agree, 3 to disagree and 2 if you neither agree nor disagree.

[PAUSE 5s]

**WC.3**

**WC.3.1**

Next statement:

"I see myself as the life of the party"

Now give your answer.

[PAUSE 5s]

"I see myself as the life of the party"

Now press 1 to agree, 3 to disagree and 2 if you neither agree nor disagree.

[PAUSE 5s]

WC.4

WC.4.1

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"I see myself as feeling little concern for others"  
Now give your answer.

[PAUSE 5s]

"I see myself as feeling little concern for others"  
Now press 1 to agree, 3 to disagree and 2 if you neither agree nor disagree.

[PAUSE 5s]

WC.5  
WC.5.1

"I see myself taking the lead in a stressful situation"  
Now give your answer.

[PAUSE 5s]

"I see myself taking the lead in a stressful situation"  
Now press 1 to agree, 3 to disagree and 2 if you neither agree nor disagree

[PAUSE 5s]

WC.6  
WC.6.1

"I see myself having excellent ideas"  
Now give your answer.

[PAUSE 5s]

"I see myself having excellent ideas"  
Now press 1 to agree, 3 to disagree and 2 if you neither agree nor disagree

[PAUSE 5s]  
WC.71 WC.72 WC.73

WC.71.1	WC.72.1	WC.73.1
<p>Thank you.</p> <p>Your answers indicate that you're someone who understands why this needs to happen. This bank is every bank. You understand who is responsible. You will be the brains in this operation, the one to make sure the outcome is a good one.</p>	<p>Thank you.</p> <p>Your answers indicate that you're someone who doesn't take things lying down. The banks have got away with things long enough. You will be the one to take set things right. Keep on your toes and be ready to act quickly if things go wrong.</p>	<p>Thank you.</p> <p>Your answers indicate that you're someone who is logical and cautious. You're a team player but the question for you is who is on your team? Everyone is a potential obstacle or a potential accomplice. Keep your eyes peeled. You will be the one to decide who can be trusted.</p>

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WC.7.2

Now it's time to get ready to leave. I want you take out all your money, every single note. I want you to look at it, count it and then hide it, on your body somewhere. Somewhere they're not going to find it.

You have 1 minute to hide the money before I call you back.

[BEEP]

## 5. ToPARTNER CALL

### ToPartner.1(AE, BD, CF)

#### ToPartner.1.1(AE, BD, CF)

Now it's time to head to the meet up. Can you trust your partner to show up? If you're ready to go and find out, press 1 now [SKIP TO ToPartner.2.AD, BE, CF]

If you need a moment to collect yourself, press 2 [SKIP TO ToPartner.2.1]

[REPEAT 3 TIMES THEN HANG UP]

### ToPartner.2(AD, BE, CF)

#### ToPartner.2.1

As you head to your meet-up, watch out for the others as you walk. You can't be sure who to trust yet, but when the time comes, you'll know.

#### ToPartner.2.2.AD

#### ToPartner.2.2.BE

#### ToPartner.2.2.CF

AD: Jolly Butcher	BE: Prince Regent	CF: Pavilion
<p>Now, head back out to the street remembering to say thanks to the bar staff as you leave the pub.</p> <p><i>I'll stay on the line</i></p> <p>0.25</p> <p>Across the road from the pub is a car park entrance and to the right of this a road with a barrier which leads under an office block.</p> <p>Cross over the street and take the road under the office block.</p> <p>1.05</p> <p>As you come out from under the building you'll find a parking area and a path which leads</p>	<p>Now, head back out of the entrance of the swimming pool.</p> <p><i>I'll stay on the line.</i></p> <p>As you come out of the double doors, walk round to the left of the Pizza Express into the square beyond.</p> <p>0.20</p> <p>You'll pass the jumble of bikes on the left. If the doors to the kitchen are open, you'll get a noseful of upmarket indian cooking from the restaurant you pass on the left. Oversized plant pots are outside the front.</p>	<p>Now head out of the toilets into the Pavilion Gardens. Take the path which leads to the cafe in the Gardens.</p> <p>Is anyone monitoring your progress: keep a discrete eye out for anyone tracking you.</p> <p>0.30</p> <p>Find the path to the right of the café in the corner of the Gardens which leads out to the pedestrian street beyond.</p> <p>0.47</p> <p>As you head out of the Gardens, on your right, you will pass a bronze statue of an old vaudeville entertainer. Once you're out of the</p>

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<p><i>through a small park. During the week, it's home to office workers taking their lunch.</i></p> <p><i>1.25 Cross the parking area at the back of the building, a fenced off area with benches on your left and follow the path through the park.</i></p> <p><i>Late at night this is a good spot to hide out from the street.</i></p> <p><i>You'll pass benches and bins, littered with cigarette ends.</i></p> <p><i>5As you come out of the gate straight in front of you at the far end of the park, turn left and start heading down the hill.</i></p> <p><i>2.25 On the left, you'll pass a building with a metal door painted white.</i></p> <p><i>5 Across the street on the right, you will see a corrugated metal barrier surrounding an empty plot of land beyond.</i></p> <p><i>.55 Cross over the road, past Spring Gardens and keep on down the hill.</i></p> <p><i>5 On the left, you'll pass a wooden door. A sign reads 'Danger Of Death'</i></p> <p><i>Further down the hill on the right you'll see the ramp entrance to a multi-storey car-park. The P on the NCP sign above the entrance is missing.</i></p> <p><i>This is where you're heading.</i></p> <p><i>Take the pedestrian entrance next to the car park ramp and then take the lift to the seventh floor.</i></p> <p><i>Once you're on the 7th floor, standing outside the lift, call me back.</i></p>	<p><i>Is anyone monitoring your progress: keep a discrete eye out for anyone tracking you.</i></p> <p><i>When you get to the street on the far side of the square, look for the narrow passageway to the left of Yo Sushi. There is a bin tucked in the corner and steps leading up.</i></p> <p><i>Take the steps up this passageway to the next street.</i></p> <p><i>At the top of the steps turn left.</i></p> <p><i>20 Once you've turned left along the road, you'll see a graffiti covered wall up ahead on the right and at the end of the road the front of a hardware shop called Dockerills.</i></p> <p><i>40 Keep on going to the end of the road, past the large yellow G painted on the wall. Keep scanning, left, right, up ahead. Don't stroll straight into trouble.</i></p> <p><i>2.00</i></p> <p><i>When you reach the hardware shop at the end of the street turn right and start walking up the hill.</i></p> <p><i>Up the hill on the left across the street you'll see a yellow NCP sign, missing a P, above the entrance to a multi-storey car park.</i></p> <p><i>Walk up the hill to the car park and take the lift to the seventh floor. Once you're on the 7th floor, standing outside the lift, call me back.</i></p>	<p><i>park and on the pedestrian street, turn right.</i></p> <p><i>1.10</i></p> <p><i>On the street, on your left you will pass Pinocchio's, doing cheap prawn cocktails for tourists and the pre-theatre crowd. Beyond this is the massive colonnaded front of the Brighton Unitarian Church.</i></p> <p><i>1.35</i></p> <p><i>When you reach the end of the pedestrianised street with the Mashtun on the corner, turn left and begin walking up the hill. Keep scanning, left, right, up ahead. Don't stroll straight into trouble.</i></p> <p><i>2.00</i></p> <p><i>As you walk up the hill you will pass a hardware shop on your left. Further up on the left, beyond the traffic lights you will see the yellow NCP sign of a multi-storey car park</i></p> <p><i>This is where you're heading.</i></p> <p><i>When you get to the NCP car park find the pedestrian entrance and take the lift to the seventh floor. Once you're on the 7th floor, standing outside the lift, call me back.</i></p>
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[BEEP]

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## **ToPartner.21**

### **ToPartner.21.1**

Call me back when you're ready.

**[BEEP]**

## 6. PARTNER CALL

Assumes car is parked on the roof of the NCP car park.

BT Car (Silver BMW 3 Series, S134 NNH)

Partner.1

Partner.1.1

To confirm you're waiting outside the lift of the NCP car-park on Church Street, on the 7<sup>th</sup> floor, press 1. [SKIP TO Partner.2]

If you're still on your way there or need help, press 2 [SKIP TO Partner.21]

[REPEATS 4 TIMES + HANGS UP]

Partner.2

Partner.2.1

OK. Take it slow: you'll be exposed the second you step out onto the roof. Parked on the roof of the car park is a silver BMW 3 Series, registration S134 NNH. If there's anyone around, keep your distance for now.

Find a place where you can watch the car unnoticed – study it. Registration S134 NNH. How this meeting goes down will depend on you following my instructions carefully, starting now. So get a good view of the car, and tell me –

Partner.2.2

How many people are in the car? Tell me with your keypad.

If there is no-one in the car press 0. If there is one person in the car press 1. If there are two people, press 2.

[SKIP TO Partner.3\_FRONT if 0 is pressed

Partner.3\_BACK if 1 is pressed

Partner.31 if they press 2 or more]

[PAUSE 5 secs]

You're looking for a silver BMW 3 Series, registration S134 NNH, parked on the roof of the NCP Car Park. You need to make sure you've got the right car.

[Repeats Partner.2.2 four times]

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[HANG UP]

Partner.20

[Repeats Partner.2.2 five times]

Partner.21

Partner.21.1

Go to the NCP Theatre car park on Church Street and go up to the 7<sup>th</sup> floor in the lift then call me back.

[PAUSE 3 secs]

Church Street is in the North Laine area of small shopping streets. Church Street runs uphill from the Brighton Dome. It has the Mash Tun pub and Carluccios restaurant on it. As you walk uphill the NCP Theatre Car Park is on the left hand side. The vehicle entrance to the car park is opposite four trees.

Ask someone for directions if you need to.

[BEEP]

[Getting in the car..]

Partner.3 FRONT (if nobody is in the car)	Partner.3 BACK (if one person in the car)	Partner.31 (more than one person in the car)
<p>Partner.3.1_FRONT</p> <p>OK. There are two ways you can do this - either saunter up to the car no matter who's watching and smoothly slide into the seat. Casual as you like.</p> <p>Or to make absolutely sure you're not seen, stay tight against the wall, hide around a corner. It doesn't matter how you do it, just be careful.</p> <p>Now, get into the car on the driver's side.</p> <p>Partner.3.2_FRONT PAUSE 10 secs If you're now sitting in the driver's seat, press 1 [Partner.4_FRONT] PAUSE 8 secs If someone has just got into the driver's seat ahead of you, get into the front passenger and press 2. [Partner.4_BACK] PAUSE 8 secs If two people got in ahead of you then get out of there. Don't let them see you. Just</p>	<p>Partner.3.1_BACK</p> <p>Ok, your partner's already there. Now pay attention to what I'm asking you to do. Mistakes at this point will be costly. Don't give them reason to doubt you. Ready?</p> <p>_BACK Approach the car, passenger side. Knock on the window - three taps. If they trust you, they'll let you in. Approach, three taps, get in.</p> <p>Once you're in the front passenger seat, press 1. I'll stay on the line until then. [go to Partner.5_BACK]</p> <p>[Repeat 2 times and on 3<sup>rd</sup> time go to:] Partner.3.3_BACK If you're in the passenger seat, press 1 [go to Partner.5_BACK] If you've not been able to get into the car,</p>	<p>Partner.31.1</p> <p>OK, stay hidden. There are people in the car and they are nothing to do with you. You need to get in that car but you need things under your control, so hang back and watch. Stay intent on the car but don't ignore your peripheral vision - while you're watching it, there could be people watching you.</p> <p>Adopt a position that allows you to see the car without being seen.</p> <p>Wait for as long as it takes. Call me back when they get out.</p> <p>[HANG UP] [on call back, go to Partner.3_FRONT]</p> <p>Partner.31.2 If you think, you've been seen, or there is someone watching you, press 1.</p> <p>JUMP TO PRE BANK SOLO 2</p>

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keep walking. When you're out of sight of the car, press 3. [PreBank.2_S0L02]	press 2 [go to Bank.2_S0L02]	If you think you can wait here unnoticed then hang up and call me back when the car is clear.
[REPEAT 5 times and hangs up]	[PAUSE 5 SECS] [Repeat 5 times and hangs up]	Wait for as long as it takes. Call me back when they get out of the car.
		[Repeats 4 times]

## Partner.4 FRONT

### Partner.4.1 FRONT

[in the driver's seat – REDUCE VOLUME ]

You're in. Now pay attention to what I'm asking you to do. Mistakes at this point will be costly. Ready?

On the driver's door there is a lock for the central locking system: push it down. You want to make sure that you have total control over who gets in and out of this car. The person you're expecting, you don't know what they look like, but you know how this is going to roll. They're going to knock on the passenger window – three taps. Look them in the eyes and if you think you can trust them, pull the door handle and let them in.

### Partner.4.2 FRONT

You're about to rob a bank, and you're waiting for your partner. They may be late, they may not show at all, but right now, you have control.

### Partner.4.3 FRONT

If your partner *has* arrived and is sitting in the passenger seat next to you, press 1. [PAUSE 5 SECS] [go to Partner.5 FRONT]

### Partner.4.4 FRONT

The camera rig on the hood of the car has your face in close up. The anticipation - as your pupils flick nervously left, then right - fills the screen. Now, close your eyes.

If your partner arrives at anytime, let them in and press 1.

[PAUSE 3 secs]

While you wait for your partner, with your eyes closed, listening to my voice on your phone, let's go back to 1996.

Hundreds of people are sat in a call centre in Denver making thousands of calls every day. Here's why:

Bill Clinton is in big trouble. The deficit is huge and the Republicans have won control of both houses. His popularity is fading fast and re-election looks impossible.

However, under the guidance of a new political strategist called Dick Morris, Clinton fights back.

Here's Dick Morris outlining their approach:

"I said that I felt the most important thing for him to do was to bring to the political system the same consumer rules philosophy that the business community has. Because I think politics needs to be as responsive to the whims and desires of the marketplace as business is. And it needs to be sensitive to the bottom line - profits or votes - as a business is. I think all of this involves a changed view of the voters so that instead of treating them as targets you treat them as owners. Instead of treating them as something that you can manipulate you treat them as something you need to learn from. And instead of feeling that you can stay in one place and you can manipulate the voters you need to learn what they want and move yourself to accommodate them."

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Remember, whenever your partner turns up, unlock the doors, let them in, and press 1.

The Clinton team conduct a survey of thousands of swing voters to identify their personality types. It doesn't ask any political questions; instead it focuses on their hidden desires and impulses.

"Well we were asking people questions like do you think you're the life of the party? Do you think when you see things you like to have a list and organize them? Do you like to plan things ahead or be more spontaneous? Where do you like to go? What sports do you like to play? What would you do with your spouse on a romantic weekend? So we were asking people some very personal questions about their own lives to see were the kinds of people that were likely to change their vote also possessing a certain kind of personality traits and in fact they were."

When you hear the knock, let them in and press 1.

Armed with a new understanding of the swing voters, the marketing specialists working for the president group them into categories. For example, Caps and Gowns refers to urban intellectuals living in university towns. Other groups have names like Pools and Patios or Big Sky Families.

Policies were then crafted to meet the desires of each of these groups. Clinton's broad liberal ideology was jettisoned and instead micro policies were put in place. Clinton proposed V Chips be inserted into TVs to prevent children accessing pornography. He lectured about school uniforms and safety on school buses. He was filmed hunting and doing DIY.

When you hear the knock, let them in and press 1.

The call centre in Denver called hundreds of these swing voters every night to check every aspect of the election campaign with them. They asked whether they preferred policy A or policy B. These phone call results were collated and then guided Clinton directly day by day.

Clinton's fortunes were turned on their head. His poll rating soared and swing voters moved to support him. In 1996 he was comfortably re-elected.

Remember, whenever your partner turns up, unlock the doors, let them in, and press 1.

Or perhaps a switch will flip inside you and you're feeling pumped – you want to go it alone. If you've decided not to work with a partner, press 2 [go to Bank.3\_SOLD1]

Otherwise, I'll keep waiting with you.

[HOLD MUSIC]

[Repeat 4.4\_FRONT]

## Partner.5\_FRONT/BACK

### Partner.5.1\_FRONT

Right, you're going to rob Barclays Bank on North Street. You have one minute to agree with your partner how you're going to do this.

Who's going to lead and who's going to follow?

And when you get out of the bank which way will you head: to the sea or to the train station?

I'm going to call you back in one minute. Share this information with

### Partner.5.1\_BACK

Right, you're going to rob Barclays Bank on North Street. You need to wait for instructions from your partner. If there's a map in the car: memorise it and leave it. You don't want to incriminate yourself. Stay on the line until they are ready to talk.

[HOLD MUSIC]

30 seconds

Divided into three 10 second chunks...

### Partner.5.2\_BACK

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your partner, and tell your partner to hang up now. Say "hang up" to your partner, now.	<p><i>Fades up at beginning</i></p> <p>Partner.5.3 BACK <i>Continues</i></p> <p>Partner.5.4 BACK <i>Fades out at end</i></p> <p>[repeats 4 times]</p>
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[BEEP]

## 7a. PREBANK CALL

PreBank.1

PreBank.1.1

If you are with your partner press 1 [SKIP TO Bank.2]

If you are alone press 2 [SKIP TO Bank.2\_SOLO1]

[6 SECS PAUSE]

[PAUSE TO CONFIRM]

[REPEAT 4 TIMES UNTIL KEY PRESS THEN HANG UP]

[KEYPRESS1 CONTINUE, KEYPRESS 2 GO TO Bank.2\_SOLO1]

PreBank.2 FRONT/BACK/SOLO1/SOLO2

FRONT	BACK	SOLO1	SOLO2
PreBank.2.1_FRONT	PreBank.2.1_BACK	PreBank.2.1_SOLO1	PreBank.2.1_SOLO2
0.00 OK. It's time to move.	0.00 OK. It's time to move.	0.00 Ok. You're going it alone, taking the whole cut for yourself.	0.00 Ok. These people are jokers. Not you, don't stop.
Now, get out of the car. Close the door behind you but don't bother to lock it.	Now, get out the car. Close the door behind you but don't bother to lock it.	You slot so easily into role – escaping unseen down the back stairs with a holdall and a smug grin.	Get moving.
[PAUSE 8 SECS]	[PAUSE 8 SECS]	Get out of the car now . Close the door behind you but don't bother to lock it. You won't be coming back.	[CONTINUES to PreBank.2.2_SOLO]
0.16 At the far end of the car park roof, at the opposite end from where you came up, is a lift block with stairs which lead down to the street.	0.20 At the far end of the car park roof, the opposite end from where you came up, is a lift block with stairs which lead down to the street.	[PAUSE 8 SECS] PreBank.2.2_SOLO	

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<p>Turn to check your partner, make sure they're with you. Give them a sign to show you're ready.</p> <p>0.40 Now, start walking to the lift block.</p> <p>Stay alert, there are others around here but your partner's the only one you might trust.</p> <p>You're heading to the Barclays Bank on North Street, adjacent to this car park.</p> <p>You're going to rob the bank in seven minutes time.</p> <p>1.10 At the lift block, a sign says Level 6, EXIT.</p> <p>Go through the doors and head down the stairs to level 4. This is where you and your partner split up.</p> <p>You will do a recce around the back of the bank while your partner takes a position in the car park overlooking the bank.</p> <p>1.35 At level 4, nod goodbye to your partner. Keep on heading down the stairs to the street.</p> <p>1.55 On level 1, head out through the double doors, past the ticket machines.</p> <p>As you come out of the double doors, you will see the side of Barclay Bank directly ahead of you.</p> <p>Step out onto the corner of the</p>	<p>Turn to check your partner, make sure they're with you. Give them a sign to show you're ready.</p> <p>0.40 Now, start walking to the lift block.</p> <p>Stay alert, there are others around here but your partner's the only one you might trust.</p> <p>You're heading to the Barclays Bank on North Street, adjacent to this car park.</p> <p>You're going to rob the bank in seven minutes time.</p> <p>1.10 At the lift block, a sign says Level 6, EXIT.</p> <p>Go through the doors and head down the stairs to level 4. This is where you and your partner split up.</p> <p>You will take a position with a view of the bank on level 4 while your partner does a recce around the far side.</p> <p>1.50 At level 4, take the double doors into the car park. As you come out the doors, directly in front of you, beyond the parapet is the side of the Barclays Bank.</p> <p>Take a position where you have a good view of the bank.</p> <p>Scan the street below. Take time to make a note of the layout of the streets around this side of the bank. Look for an escape route on foot that will take you clear of the bank. Fix</p>	<p>[for SOLO 1 and SOLO2]</p> <p>0.00 At the far end of the car park roof, the opposite end from where you came up, is a lift block with stairs which lead down to the street.</p> <p>Now, start walking to the lift block.</p> <p>Stay alert, there are others around here but don't trust anyone.</p> <p>You're heading to the Barclays Bank on North Street, adjacent to this car park.</p> <p>You're going to rob the bank in seven minutes time.</p> <p>0.42 At the lift block, a sign says Level 6, EXIT.</p> <p>Go through the doors and head down the stairs to the street.</p> <p>The side of the Barclays Bank faces the car park entrance just outside the doors on level 1.</p> <p>You will do a recce around the back of the bank.</p> <p>Keep on heading down the stairs.</p> <p>I will stay on the line.</p> <p>1.22 On level 1, head out through the double doors, past the ticket machines.</p> <p>As you come out of the double doors, you will see the side of Barclay Bank directly ahead of you.</p> <p>[ENDS at 1.34]</p>	
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<p>pavement.</p> <p>2.10 On the corner turn and look up at the car park. If your partner is following instructions they will be standing at the parapet two floors up.</p> <p>Wait for them to give you a signal.</p> <p>I'll stay on the line.</p> <p>PreBank.2.2_FRONT</p> <p>When they give a signal, press 1 and start heading around the back of the bank.</p> <p>[PAUSE 10s]</p> <p>[SKIP TO Bank.3_FRONT]</p>	<p>one in your mind.</p> <p>2.25 Now wait for your partner to appear on the street below.</p> <p>When your partner looks up, give them a signal to begin circling the bank.</p> <p>PreBank.2.2_BACK</p> <p>Once you've given the signal, watch until they're out of sight.</p> <p>I'll wait on the line.</p> <p>When they're out of sight, press 1.</p> <p>[PAUSE 10s]</p> <p>[SKIP TO Bank.3_BACK]</p>		
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PreBank.3\_FRONT/BACK

[Bank description and walk to 99p shop]

<p>PreBank.3.1_FRONT</p> <p>OK.</p> <p>Now, face the side of the bank. You're going to walk around the outside of the bank.</p> <p>0.10 Head round to the right keeping the shutter door to your left.</p> <p>0.20 Around the corner, take the steps that lead up along the back wall of the bank. The shutter door you've just passed leads to a parking area for security vans on the far side of this wall.</p>	<p>PreBank.3.1_BACK</p> <p>OK.</p> <p>Now, make a note of the entrances along this side of the bank.</p> <p>The shutter door on the right leads to a parking area for security vans.</p> <p>To the left of this, a garage entrance leads to an internal loading bay and parking area.</p> <p>To the left of this, there is a black unmarked door with a single buzzer. This is used by the cleaning and security staff outside of opening hours.</p>	<p>PreBank.3.1_SOLO</p> <p>(for both SOLO 1 and 2) [same as FRONT 0.10 until 1.50]</p> <p>You're going to walk around the back.</p> <p>0.05 Head round to the right keeping the shutter door to your left.</p> <p>0.15 Around the corner, take the steps that lead up along the back wall of the bank. The shutter door you've just passed leads to a parking area for security vans on the far side of this wall.</p> <p>0.35</p>
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<p>0.40 You will have a view of the back of the bank above the wall.</p> <p>0.50 Turn left at the corner. Make a note of the doors and the windows along this side of the bank. What can you tell about what is behind the frosted windows?</p> <p>1.00 The side door further along the wall gives non-stepped access to the bank lobby.</p> <p>Inside the lobby, cameras overlook each entrance. During opening hours a clerk stands at a circular helpdesk near the front door. For colour, there is a sculpture of a 3D red scribble.</p> <p>Along one side are six cashiers desks facing a line of ATMs on the other side.</p> <p>There is a counter towards the back behind bullet-proof glass.</p> <p>Beyond this, an unmarked door leads to the offices and vault.</p> <p>1.30 At the end of the building, turn left and walk past the front doors of the bank.</p> <p>This is the entrance you'll be using to go in.</p> <p>1.40 Don't stop. Keep moving.</p> <p>As you walk past the front doors, glance inside.</p> <p>1.50 Beyond the bank on the main road is a 99p shop.</p> <p>Look out for your partner they will meet you again outside the 99p shop.</p>	<p>Next, there is a pair of white doors with a fan light above. This is the main staff entrance which leads to the bank's back offices.</p> <p>Inside, behind the three ATMs runs a secure corridor for refilling these machines and those in the lobby inside.</p> <p>The front doors to the bank are on the main road, around the corner to the far left.</p> <p>Inside the lobby, cameras overlook each entrance. During opening hours a clerk stands at a circular helpdesk near the front door. For colour there is a sculpture of a 3D red scribble.</p> <p>Along one side are six cashiers desks facing a line of ATMs on the other side.</p> <p>There is a counter towards the back behind bullet-proof glass.</p> <p>Beyond this, an unmarked door leads to the offices and vault.</p> <p>Now, get moving. Head down the stairs to the street. Walk along this side of the bank down to the main road.</p> <p>On the corner next to the bank is a 99p shop.</p> <p>Look out for your partner they will meet you again outside the 99p shop.</p> <p>Once you're both in position by the shop and ready to make a move on the bank, call me back.</p>	<p>You will have a view of the back of the bank above the wall.</p> <p>0.45 Turn left at the corner. Make a note of the doors and the windows along this side of the bank. What can you tell about what is behind the frosted windows?</p> <p>0.55 The side door further along the wall gives non-stepped access to the bank lobby.</p> <p>Inside the lobby, cameras overlook each entrance. During opening hours a clerk stands at a circular helpdesk near the front door. For colour there is a sculpture of a 3D red scribble.</p> <p>Along one side are six cashiers desks facing a line of ATMs on the other side.</p> <p>There is a counter towards the back behind bullet-proof glass.</p> <p>Beyond this, an unmarked door leads to the offices and vault.</p> <p>1.25 Around the corner to the left is the front entrance of the Bank.</p> <p>This is where you'll be going in.</p> <p>When you reach the main road, turn right and find the bus stop just up the hill from the bank.</p> <p>When you're standing at the bus stop, call me back.</p> <p>When you're ready to make a move on the bank, call me back.</p>
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<p>Find a spot near the shop where you can wait without drawing attention to yourself.</p> <p>While you wait, use the time to plan an escape route on foot in case things go wrong.</p> <p>Once you've met your partner and are both ready to make a move on the bank, call me back.</p>		
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## 7b. BANK CALL

Bank.1  
Bank.1.1

If you are with your partner outside the 99p shop, press 1 [SKIP TO Bank.2]  
If you are alone press 2 [SKIP TO Bank.3\_SOLO]

[6 SECS PAUSE]  
[PAUSE TO CONFIRM]

[REPEAT 4 TIMES UNTIL KEY PRESS THEN HANG UP]  
[KEYPRESS1 CONTINUE, KEYPRESS 2 GO TO Bank.3\_SOLO]

Bank.2  
Bank.2.1

Now stand facing your partner. Look them in the eye.  
If you're both ready then press 1 together. [SKIP TO Bank.3\_FRONT+BACK]

[6 SECS PAUSE]  
[PAUSE TO CONFIRM]

[REPEAT 4 TIMES UNTIL KEY PRESS THEN HANG UP]  
[KEYPRESS1 CONTINUE, KEYPRESS 2 GO TO Bank.2\_SOLO1]

Bank.3 FRONT/BACK/SOLO

FRONT/BACK	SOLO*
Bank.3.1_FRONT+BACK	Bank.3.1_SOLO
OK. Before we go any further, I need you to tell me some things about your partner.	OK. Before we go any further, I need to know what you are going to do, if things go wrong.
Hold them steady in your gaze.	

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<p>[PAUSE 5s]</p> <p>Now, if it starts to go wrong, I need to know what they are going to do.</p>	
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FRONT	BACK	SOLO*
<p><b>Bank.3.2_FRONT</b> I want you to picture your partner inside the bank. The security guard is heading for your partner. He has a grey moustache and he's carrying a bit of weight. His badge says Mark Penn. Is your partner going to smash him across the temple with the butt of a sawn off shotgun or tell him to sit the fuck down before he gets hurt?</p> <p><b>Bank.3.3_FRONT</b> If you think your partner will use the gun press 1 If you think they will yell press 2 [PAUSE 5 secs] [REPEAT 4 TIMES] [SKIP TO Bank.4_FRONT]</p>	<p><b>Bank.3.2_BACK</b> I want you to picture your partner inside the bank. There's a mother with a little boy in a pushchair. She freaks out, screaming, "Don't hurt my baby". She's plucking at her sweatshirt with sticky hands as she staggers towards your partner. Do they give her a swift slap or use the barrel of the gun against her forehead to push her to the floor?</p> <p><b>Bank.3.3_BACK</b> If you think your partner will slap press 1 If you think they will use the gun press 2 [PAUSE 5 secs] [REPEAT 4 TIMES] [SKIP TO Bank.4_BACK]</p>	<p><b>Bank.3.2_SOLO</b> I want you to picture yourself inside the bank. . He has a grey moustache and he's carrying a bit of weight. His badge says Mark Penn. Are you going to smash him across the temple with the butt of a sawn off shotgun or tell him to sit the fuck down before he gets hurt?</p> <p><b>Bank.3.3_SOLO</b> If you use the gun press 1 If you yell press 2 [PAUSE 5 secs] [REPEAT 4 TIMES] [SKIP TO Bank.4_SOLO]</p>

## Bank.4 FRONT/BACK/SOLO

<p><b>Bank.4.1_FRONT</b> Later, you've got heavy money in the bags and are about to leave. Your partner notices a separate CCTV system at the vault. You've both been captured on video. Do they take the time to find the recorder in the manager's office and smash it to pieces against the corner of a filing cabinet or do they stick to the schedule and get out immediately?</p>	<p><b>Bank.4.1_BACK</b> Now: big change of plan. You're going to dump this other person. I need you to act very quickly and discreetly when I give you the word.  For now, just act as if you're getting exactly the same call as your partner. If they press their keypad, just pretend to press your keypad too. They don't know a thing and they don't need to know.</p>	<p><b>Bank.4.1_SOLO</b> Later, you've got heavy money in the bags and are about to leave. You notice a separate CCTV system at the vault. You've been captured on video. Do you take the time to find the recorder in the manager's office and smash it to pieces against the corner of a filing cabinet or do you stick to the schedule and get out immediately?</p>
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<p>Bank.4.2_FRONT</p> <p>If you think your partner will smash the CCTV press 1 If you think they'll stick to the schedule press 2 [PAUSE 5 secs] [REPEAT 4 TIMES]</p>	<p>In a moment, your partner will make a move on the bank but you need to watch for an opportunity to make your getaway.</p> <p>By the time they realise what's going on you will be out of sight.</p> <p>Wait until they nod at you and then look for your chance.</p>	<p>Bank.4.2_SOLO</p> <p>If you smash the CCTV, press 1 If you stick to the schedule, press 2 [PAUSE 5 secs] [REPEAT 4 TIMES]</p>
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## Bank.5

<p>Bank.5.1_FRONT</p> <p>OK. It's time to make a move on the bank. You're the one to take the lead now. Give your partner a signal to let them know you're going in.</p> <p>In 2 minutes time you will be inside the bank.</p> <p>Keep your eyes peeled as you go; there are other people around here looking for you. There are currently [micropause] six [micropause] people in the vicinity of the bank.</p>	<p>Bank.5.1_BACK</p>	<p>BANK.5.1_SOLO</p> <p>OK. It's time to make a move on the bank.</p> <p>Keep your eyes peeled as you go; there are other people around here looking for you. There are currently [micropause] six [micropause] people in the vicinity of the bank.</p>
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<p>Bank.5.2_FRONT+SOLO</p> <p>Now, stand on the corner with a view of the bank. Don't forget to look casual, give a little smile or a tiny nod of the head as if an old friend has just made a clumsy quip.</p> <p>Bank.5.3_FRONT+SOLO</p> <p>When you're on the corner and ready to move, press 1. [SKIP to Bank.6_FRONT]</p> <p>I'll stay on the line.</p> <p>[PAUSE 10s and repeat 9 times]</p>	<p>Bank.5.2_BACK</p> <p>You've got less than 30 seconds to make your move.</p> <p>If your partner speaks to you or signals to you, just shake your head and keep going.</p> <p>Wherever they go make sure you head in the opposite direction.</p> <p>I'll call you back in 2 minutes. 2minutes. [Call for BACK ends here]</p>
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## Bank.6

### Bank.6.1

<p>Bank.6.1_FRONT</p> <p>I need you to be inside the bank by the time I get to 1. I'm going to count down from 10. Now walk straight for the front doors of bank. 10, 9, Speed, 7, 6, 5, 4,</p>	<p>Bank.6.1_SOLO</p> <p>I need you to be inside the bank by the time I get to 1. I'm going to count down from 10. Now walk straight for the front doors of bank. 10, 9, Speed, 7, 6, 5, 4,</p>
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Stop. Stop. Stop.  Do not walk any further. Get the fuck out of there as quickly as you can. Don't go back the way you came. Avoid your so-called partner at all costs and get the hell out of there.  I'll call you back in 2 minutes. 2minutes.	Stop. Stop. Stop.  Do not walk any further. Get the fuck out of there as quickly as you can. Don't go back the way you came. Avoid your so-called partner at all costs and get the hell out of there.  I'll call you back in 2 minutes. 2minutes.
---	---

[BEEP]

## 8. SPLIT CALL

### **Split.1**

#### **Split.1.1**

If you're safe and clear of the Bank, press 1 [To Split.2]

If you're still in danger, press 2

[PAUSE 5 secs]

[REPEAT 4 times]

### **Split 2**

#### **Split 2.1**

OK.

It all fell apart. That robbery was an invention that could never hold. Let's not kid ourselves: you're no bank robber. And it's a long time since the bankers were concerned with robbers. That battle is over. Best to swivel at the door and walk away. Let's get out of here.

Now you need make your exit. Find your way to the Victory pub. It's on Duke Street just two minutes walk south from the front of the bank. Almost opposite the 99p shop next to the bank is Ship Street. If you walk down Ship Street and turn right you will find the Victory. It has green tiles and is on the corner of Duke Street and Middle Street – towards the sea from the Bank. If you need help, ask for directions but make sure you arrive alone.

Once you've found the Victory, call me back.

I'll call if I don't hear from you soon.

[BEEP]

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## 9 END CALL

### **End.1**

#### **End.1.1**

[PAUSE 2 SECS]

If you're at the Victory pub on the corner of Duke Street and Middle Street, with the words Tamplins, Ales, Wines and Spirits above the windows, press 1 now. [SKIP TO End.2]

If you're still on your way, press 2. [SKIP TO End.21]

[PAUSE 5 SECS]

[Repeats 4 times, then hangs up.]

### **End.2**

0.00

0.00

Green enamel tiles cover the walls behind you and you are facing The Old Village Clothes Shop. Turn left and head down past Middle Street Primary School on your right with blue panels on the side

0.150.44

Go past 2 sets of galvanised steel double gates on your left

0.54

And head right onto Boyces Street, and past Choccywoccydoodah Boudoir

1.10

You will pass a bespoke tattoo parlour on your left and see Pasha up ahead on your right. Keep going as the road narrows

1.28

At the end of the road is the Bright Helm bar.

1.35

turn immediately left towards the sea and you will find the Regency Leisure Arcade on your left. As you

#### **End.2.2**

Once you reach the Regency Leisure Arcade, step inside and press 1 [SKIP to End.3]

**[HOLD MUSIC ]**

### **End.21**

#### **End.21.1**

You need to find the Victory Pub, a green tiled building on the corner of Duke Street and Middle Street.

It's just two minutes walk south from the front of the bank. Almost opposite the 99p shop next to the bank is Ship Street. If you walk down Ship Street and turn right you will find the Victory. It has green tiles and is on the corner of Duke Street and Middle Street – towards the sea from the Bank. If you need help, ask for directions but make sure you arrive alone.

When you reach the Victory, call me back.

### **End.3**

#### **End.3.1**

You're inside the Regency Leisure Arcade, filled with slot machines and arcade games.

Take a deep breath. Suck it in.

Pan around slowly to scan the scene.

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You are here for a reason, try to stay calm

Take up a position alone in amongst the machines by the windows where you can see people passing in the street. Try to blend in.

## **End.3.2**

[SLOW] Check out the people as they come and go.. Watch how they move.

Pick one person, outside on the street - What do you see? Be honest with yourself. No one is ever going to know what you're thinking about right now.

What is that person to you? What would it mean to touch their life for a moment?

[PAUSE 8 SECS]

OK, now focus your mind back here in the arcade. Is it just you or is someone going to come? You're only waiting for one person

## **End.3.3**

Think about the money that you have hidden on your body.

Get ready to get some out. You're going to give some of it away to a person in the arcade. You might know them, they might be a total stranger.

How much is this person going to get? Think it over for a moment.

[PAUSE 5 secs]

OK. Are you going to drop the money in their pocket as you hold them close? Are you going to press it silently into their palm? Or is there a better way? Think it over.

[PAUSE 5 secs]

Good. When I tell you, you are going to make eye contact. Then walk straight up to them. Without saying a word, embrace them, hand over the cash and then walk directly back the way you came.

If you understand exactly what I am asking you to do and there is someone there, press 1 now. [SKIP TO End.4]

If there is no one there, press 2 now.[SKIP TO END .41]

[PAUSE 6 SECS]

[Repeat End.3.3 four times]

End.4

## **End.4.1**

OK, This is it. Walk straight up to them and embrace them. Hand over the cash and then walk away.

I'll stay on the line.

[PAUSE 15s]

## **End.4.2**

Today has been all about you. This entire system has been personalised for you. We needed to know whether you are a person who can step through a door and become someone completely different. And now we know.

Let's not kid ourselves you're no bank robber, it's a long time since the bankers were concerned with people like you. You are all alone, to a bystander you could be anyone.

This is not a personality test. This is A Machine To See With. The ending is up to you.

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In 8 seconds I will hang up. You will not hear from me again. Goodbye.

**[BEEP]**

End.41

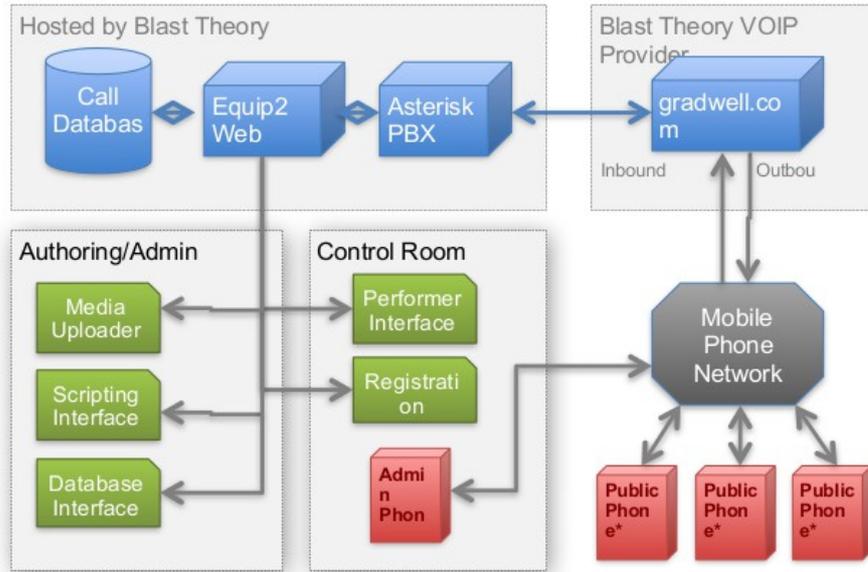
**End.41.1**

This is the end. You can wait here for as long as you like. Someone may be coming. They may not. It is up to you how long to wait. When you have given your money just head out of the door and back the way you came.

End.4.2 (as above)

## APPENDIX 7. Phone Platform of A Machine To See With<sup>376</sup>

### 2. Phone Platform



The phone platform which runs the performance is based around a Java web application built on EQUIP2, using Hibernate for persistent storage in a MySQL database.

This interacts with an installation of Asterisk, an open source PBX for handling and initiating calls.

This, in turn, connects to a commercial VOIP provider using a trunk service (IAX and SIP protocols) and a DID virtual number for inbound calls.

<sup>376</sup> Idem.



## APPENDIX 8. Summary of calls of *A Machine To See With*<sup>377</sup>

### **A Machine To See With: Call Summary – Banff, 03.09.10**

1. Pre-call
  - 30mins before you begin
  - Instructions where to go to start
2. Go call
  - Confirms you're ready
  - Introduction text
  - Disclaimer
  - Directions to the WC
  - Hide money on your body somewhere when you get there
3. WC Call
  - Description of psychological profiling
  - Profiling questions
  - Instructions to go to the Post Office
4. Park (Partner) Call
  - Instructions to meet and partner at the Post Office
  - Set up of the bank robbery
  - Instructions to go to a bank
5. Bank
  - Instructions to plan an escape route
  - Talk through scenarios at the bank
  - Questions about how far you will be willing to go
  - Instructions to approach the front door of the bank
  - Stop and take your escape route
6. Split
  - End of bank robbery fiction
  - Questions about election process and voting
  - Instruction to find a place to be alone
7. End
  - The ending is a film scene that you create now
  - Instruction to make a recording of the scene

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<sup>377</sup> Idem.



## APPENDIX 9. Questions to participants in *Rider Spoke*<sup>378</sup>

### Rider Spoke Questions (Final)

30/06/09

#### 1 – Describe yourself (0:39)

This is one of those moments when you're on your own. You might feel a little odd at first, a bit self conscious or a bit awkward. But you're alright, and it's ok. You may feel invisible tonight, but as you ride this feeling will start to change. Relax, and find somewhere that you like. It might be a particular building, or a road junction. It might be a mark on the wall, or a reflection on a window. When you have found somewhere that you like, give yourself a name, and describe yourself.

#### 2a – Holding Hand (0:28)

Tell me about the last time you held someone's hand in the street. Maybe it was a friend or a lover's hand. Maybe it was your mother when you were a child, or maybe it was a stranger. I would like you to fix onto that moment and that feeling, and that particular person. Go to a place where you can imagine it the strongest, and describe how it felt holding their hand.

#### 2b – Concrete (0:28)

Correct me if I'm wrong, but this city stinks. When I get off the train there's that smell. Cleaning fluid mixed with the odour of black crud that skirts every building. All carried into the air by electricity of the place. I feel safe here. Is it safe? Find me a stinking arsehole of a spot, and tell me about it.

#### 2c – Past (0:38)

I want you to tell me about a party - perhaps one when you were a teenager, or maybe a bit later. I'd like you to talk about a party where it got a bit out of control, where everything got a bit blurry for a while. Perhaps you did something you shouldn't. Then again, you could have been on the outside looking in. And find a place to tell me about it – take your time to run through the options. It needn't be dramatic, just a party that was important to you for some reason.

#### 3a – Choose Building (0:28)

Today everything changed. The streets are piled with overflowing sacks of rubbish; smoke drifts from office block windows. The sky is empty. The streets are empty. You have only yourself. You are free to make the city yours – choose a building to make your own. When you find a building, tell me what it's like, and what you'd do there.

#### 3b – Specific (0:17)

I want you to look for a flat or house, and find a window that you would want to go through. I want you to stare into that window, and tell me what you see, and tell me why you want to go through that window.

### 3c – Awake (0:22)

Please would you imagine being in bed at home, and tell me – what will keep you awake tonight? What is playing on your mind and comes back after dark, when you are quiet, and still, and alone. Go somewhere where you have a clear view of the sky and tell me – what will keep you awake tonight?

### 4a – Father (0:32)

Please will you tell me about your father. You might want to pick a particular time in your father's life, or in your life. Freeze that moment, and tell me about your dad. What they look like, how they spoke, and what they meant to you. And while you think about this, I want you to find a place in the city that your father would like. Once you find it, stop there, and record your message about your father, in that moment in time.

### 4b – Alright (0:35)

I want you to do something for me, and I appreciate that it's a big ask. And it's...I don't know how it's possible sometimes, and I can feel my heart in my throat, and my life flash past me. Cycle around for a bit, as if you know where you're going. And when you get there, would you tell me please – who makes it alright for you? What, or who, makes it alright for you?

### 4c – Voyeur (0:39)

Will you be a voyeur for me? Please will you cycle back towards a busier place and look for someone who catches your eye? Stay back, don't intrude – just watch them and follow them. Think about who they might be, and where they might be going as you track them. Don't be afraid to make it all up. Then stop your bike, let them go, and tell me about them.

### 4e – Not returning (0:45)

There was a moment for me that someone just went, and I was told, "they're going away for a long time". But it was forever. I've thought about it a lot. Has there ever been a time that you felt like just going, and not coming back? When you were right on the edge of that decision, and staying where you were was no longer the option to take. Were you very scared? Maybe your mind went, but your body couldn't leave. Find somewhere in the city for me where you feel brave or sure. When you get there, describe how it felt to go, or how it felt to stay.

### 4g – Violence (0:39)

Not far from here, I walked straight into violence. A streetlight was out, and a small crowd was off the kerb and into the road. Three bouncers in black coats were kicking, and before I put it all together, I was within feet of them. An anonymous shape on the pavement is all I saw as I passed. Tell me about a late night on the streets of the city, when you saw something you shouldn't. Find a good spot for watching from a distance, and then tell me what you saw.

### 4h – Secret [City] (0:39)

No one tells secrets. At least, not the interesting ones. Real secrets stay hidden, and so will yours. What I would like you to do is think about your secrets. I want you to roll down the quieter streets, and turn some secrets over in your mind. Don't waste time on the petty teenage misdemeanours, or the little lies. Use this moment to think

about the others, the important ones. Take me to a doorway – when you get there, tell me how your life would be changed without your secret.

### 5 – Promise (0:54)

You've been riding for a while now. You've answered some of the questions I've asked, and you've explored the city. Thank you. I have one last thing to ask you, and when you've answered, please can you come back? Will you make me a promise? It might be small – a promise about tomorrow, or a friend. It might be something more profound. But now, tonight, here, make a vow about your intentions. Think for a few minutes – go somewhere, stop your bike, and say your promise out loud, into the air.

### x – Ending \_mono (2:13)

This is the kind of place where the city makes sense for me. As you come back now I wonder about where we are all heading and I want us all to go there together somehow. I almost felt close to you like the warmth you can feel from a strangers face . You are familiar and a million miles away all at the same time. Tonight I heard something in a fragment of silence you recorded but you soon spoke over it. We always do.

### x – Intro (2:24)

As you leave today, take your time and just ride for a while. Don't worry about the time I 'll tell you when it's time to come back. I'll be asking you to record somethings tonight and the more you answer the more you can hear.

I hope that you take time in your head to go somewhere you would not readily go to. I promise to come with you and I bless the very air you move through this night.



## APPENDIX 10. *I Like Frank* text for online players<sup>379</sup>

### ONLINE FRANK TEXT

```
// clock based comments from roy...
// line format...
//start time % length % repeat time % the text
//
```

```
// Welcome to Adelaide.
//Shockwave ahead...
//Play Online Now
//I'm happy that you could make it. I want you to help me find Frank. He was here at one time,
with me. I remember a fair amount about where we went and what we did. His face still seems
clear at times, then ebbs away, half gone. He liked to drift away from the crowds into the shade,
pausing on a step, under an awning and then striding on. He was erratic at that time, perfectly
still then agitated and [onward.]
```

We were never lovers, it wasn't like that. Barely friends. But there are fleeting moments that register deep inside and they never leave. They may fade, hover nearby and flicker but they stay - suddenly piling into the foreground, a rush of smells and sounds and private details.

My partner says that each person you know opens up a different part of your personality. When they are gone, a part of you goes too. That's how it was with Frank. What is hardest is that with him gone, I can't even keep a hold of what that was, that part of me that he saw alone.

And now you're here to help me and so are the others. I can tell you what I know but some of these memories are so old I can't even be sure they happened at all. All I know is that thinking of Frank makes me ache, like a hollow, aching hunger. And I want him back. And [I need your help.]

```
LOG IN HERE: name, email
QUEUE: what to entertain dem peeples?
```

```
5%10%0%I want you to go into the city for me. Use your arrow keys to move around.
10%10%0%You can chat with other players when you get close enough to them.
30%10%0%Keep talking, keep your eyes bright, keep moving and help me find Frank.
50%10%0%I have chosen an important place for Frank and me. I marked it with a photo.
```

```
//XLOCATION: Hindmarsh bike rack
60%10%0
120%10%0%Frank loved the cut throughs, the back alleys and the dead ends.
360%10%360%I need you to do something for me. I've taken a photo that is just for you. When
you find it I'll be in touch.
```

```
// from finding x location onwards
```

```
5%10%0%I want you to bring a Street Player here. They will find an object that I've left for you.
```

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<sup>379</sup> Idem.



## APPENDIX 11. Reflections about why do *Blast Theory* use games<sup>380</sup>

Why do Blast Theory use games?

1. Structure: a strong, rigorous structure is demanded by even the simplest game (draughts, scissors/paper/stone etc.)

That structure is dependent on a definitive outcome: you win or lose. That structure often subverts linearity, narrative progression and other traditional forms of artistic structure. The last half century has seen artists working in time based media trying many ways of escaping traditional structures (e.g. Philip Glass and systems music, Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty, Peter Greenaway and David Lynch) but often ending up in a cul de sac. The resulting structures have felt 'experimental', alien and limited. Game structures answer many of these problems while remaining easily understood.

2. Interaction is inherent in gameplay

Grafting interaction onto existing artforms often raises profound and, as yet, unanswered questions (e.g. interactive narrative, interactive sculptures)

3. Immediate engagement

The language of games is predicated on attracting people and engaging them rapidly. Many games can be explained in just a few minutes. Most games build on existing games so that the players have an easy reference point. Most games are fun within a very short time.

4. Appeal to a wide, young, new audience

Young people are adept game players, are used to learning quickly and are open to new games.

5. Works with a language that people are very adept at. Visual literacy is very high and games work directly with that literacy.

6. An emerging artform: 9/11 survivor, Escape from Woomera

Analogous to cinema in the early 20th century, currently seen as downmarket, populist, shallow, appealing to the lowest common denominator, not generally worthy of serious comment or examination YET massively popular, growing all the time, developing rapidly in just a few decades, attracting increasing interest from serious thinkers and practitioners.

7. As a significant cultural form in its own right it is worthy of comment and exploration in its own right.

What is going in games – which tropes, motifs, genres are dominant and why? What ideas are being contested within this realm?

8. Identifying with avatars and playing with subjectivity. The way in which we identify with avatars as both us ("I died") and not us is a distinctive and compelling form of embodiment in a fictional world. This enables powerful and unusual explorations to be made.

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<sup>380</sup> Idem.



## APPENDIX 12. *Chronica Mobilis* embedded story<sup>381</sup>

### ***Chronica Mobilis***

Why do the family go to live in a new neighborhood? Where do they live? How are people in there? Answering all these questions we have constructed the story of Valentin's childhood. The first subplot comes introducing the fictional world setting, its elements, and characters. Thus, the initial act of the narrative serves to outline some past events. From this beginning, we can assume that before the family goes to live in the suburb, they were passing through a series of difficulties, from finding a job, to pay rent, health care. That was when the uncle of Valentin said that there were opportunities in the neighborhood where he lives. He has a small shop, and there he can assist them. Even though he will not be able to employ Valentin's parents, he ensured that he will help them finding a job. The mother has opposed to the idea, but there was no other option than moving to the new place. Despite there was no certainty of real opportunities, they took the decision guided by the promise of a better life. They put everything they had together and changed residency to try it again.

That is the moment from where we get the story of Valentin's childhood. The narrative begins with the family arriving at the new neighborhood. Though we do not see what motivated them to move place, on the course of this subplot we will conclude that their resolution has to do with financial problems and a stimulus of a family member. They just arrived, and the mother is very disappointed with her first sight of the area they are going to live. It looks the same or even worse compared to where they came from - a place of immigrants, poor, lacking the necessary infrastructure, declined and geographically segregated. During the whole act, we will see the mother complaining with the father about everything. The man is trying to do his best. He accepts some odd jobs indicated by his brother, who asks him to be patient with the beginning of their new life in that place. Nevertheless, the lack of perspective regarding a formal job put him

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<sup>381</sup> These are working documents of an interdisciplinary and international team, what explains possible errors of syntax or spelling. They are reproduced here as they were used in the project *Chronica Mobilis* and do not follow the academic tone of this thesis.

at the bar. The father starts drinking. Alcohol was his weakness. The discussions with the mother start again, creating many other problems to the family that was not necessarily economic.

The crisis between the parents worsen. Frequently, Valentin's mother, upset, asks him to go to the bar and bring his father back home. The man is an alcoholic. It is common to have him drunk in public areas. One day, the boy sees his father inebriated while he is playing with some friends on a square. Valentin hides from him, embarrassed with the situation. Watching it, neighbors scream some disgust words about the man. The father falls to the floor. Valentin comes to him. Crying, he hug his boy and apologizes. He promises that he will never drink again, that the arguments with the mother will finish and that everything is going to be alright. The boy grows up frightened by all the problems he has to face with his family. Among the discussions at home and the incursions to the bar, Valentin relieves at school his problematic childhood. There, he has Nina, someone that makes he happy. His dream is one day marry her.

The second subplot of the narrative represents Valentin young. The time has passed, and the protagonist now became aware of the recurrent problems of a suburb neglected by authorities. Crime, drugs, fights, gang stories. Valentin lives surrounded by it, but he is just enjoying his youth and do not properly get involved in crime activities. The young boy does not see Nina anymore due to the opposition of her parents. Get together with other local guys is the only option to him for having fun. With his friends, Valentin starts writing walls of abandoned buildings. They are not proper criminals, but the police are arresting all of them in order clean the neighborhood and to bring security to the area. Policing in the segregated district is a new thing and should be seen with good eyes. Nevertheless, all the poor boys getting together in a corner, what has always been common in the suburb, were converted in suspects. Authorities have never protected the area. They just use to appear in case of murder. The difference now is that the gentrification has already started and the new rich residents are demanding for it.

The family becomes aware of the district improvement plan. The mentioned progress comes for the good of his father, that now has a formal job in building construction. That is why he sees the

gentrification of the area with good eyes. As he glorifies, even a University is being erected in the neighborhood. In the future, he envisions Valentin going to study there, even though he can not afford it. The father affirms that his son deserves better opportunities in life. He does not want Valentin to end up building houses like him. He sees a good time to come, triggered by the gentrification process and the changes it brings. The man is an idealistic, different from many other residents of the area. Where he sees progress, the others understand oppression. Neighborhood associations struggle to avoid displacements in the suburb. Many residents are afraid of such progress. They suspect that everything will improve, but that there will be no place for them in the newly gentrified district. Valentin and the mother think differently from the father. They join some of the demonstrations against the gentrification wave that comes cleaning everything. The great fear is the real estate speculation, what can oblige all the former residents to leave the area. These days, many old buildings have been demolished to give place to new ones.

On the third subplot of the narrative, we meet Valentin already as an adult. Unexpectedly, he goes back to the neighborhood where he grew up. Yes, he does not leave there anymore. Displacements had occurred, letting the place free for the new rich people. We have not seen it happening, but we will realize that, at some point, when mentioned in the narrative. As soon as the gentrification started to show its first effects, he and his family had to leave the area. They did not manage to keep paying the rent and moving was once more the only solution they had. He misses the place where he spent most of his childhood.

Now, after many years, Valentin is back. He is an employee of an engineering company. No, he is not an engineer or an architect. It ended up that he did not frequent the University they built in the district. Valentin has followed with his life in a distant neighborhood. He is now married, but life does not exactly improve to him. That is another fact we will assume getting evidence from the narrative. He and his wife, as parents, are still struggling to overcome every day. What is curious is that Valentin went back to his old neighborhood exactly to work on building construction.

The suburb of the past became a wealth district. There is neither the infrastructure problems, nor criminals. Now it is a safe, artistic and

trendy area. The changes do have improved the local quality of life. What about the old character and flavor of that neighborhood? Where are the old residents? These are cruel questions Valentin asks whilst wandering through the streets. He tries to find the house where he used to live. It is in vain. The house was demolished. There is nothing more in there, just a sign announcing the new real estate enterprise. Everything is different, but he keeps in an incessant search for people and places from the old days. Valentin does find the bar where he used to go in a constant attempt to save his father from his addiction. The owner is still the same. He also finds Nina, his school's love. When he met her, she is collecting objects left in a recycling bin. In a mix of shame and surprise, she affirms to Valentin that there is nothing there for him. What does she mean? Is there nothing for him on the bin or in the district? At this point of the narrative, the most important question we are all asking ourselves is: why did Valentin come back?

## APPENDIX 13. The tree subplots of *Chronica Mobilis* embedded story<sup>382</sup>

### ***Chronica Mobilis* - Guión**

#### **3 etapas de la vida de Valentín: niño, joven, adulto.**

Cada grupo de jugadores juega una etapa/guión.  
Las escenas serán asociadas a lugares reales en el barrio de Poblenou, Barcelona.

Siempre que los jugadores encuentran el lugar a lo que cada escena está asociada, una recompensa (que es la escena en vídeo o en audio) se reproduce en el espacio de exhibición.

Cada escena será representada de una manera distinta, y nin todas serán registradas en vídeo. Algunas serán sólo audio, o fotos y diálogo, etc.

En el caso del video, todas las tomas son hechas como si fueran la subjetiva de Valentín.

+++++

#### **VALENTÍN NIÑO**

##### **EXT - PARADA DE AUTOBÚS - DÍA**

Consuelo, su marido Enrico, y su hijo Valentín, acaban de llegar al nuevo barrio dónde se van a vivir. Ha sido bajar del bus, y aun en la parada, la madre, Consuelo, empieza a quejarse con el marido.

CONSUELO

(quejándose)

Pensé que no iba a bajar de ese bus  
nunca más! Llegué a cerrar los ojos  
por el camino, para no ver tanta  
miseria junta! Dios mío...qué horrible!

Antonio ni le da idea, está ahí liando un cigarrillo. Consuelo mira hacia los lados, como que reconociendo el lugar y le pregunta a su marido de manera muy irónica.

CONSUELO

(irónicamente y luego quejándose)

Este es el lugar dónde tu hermano nos  
trajo a vivir, Enrico? Ahora dime:  
¿qué esperar de un lugar como este?  
Mira las calles! Mira esta basura! Qué

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<sup>382</sup> Idem.

desesperación! Si las cosas no mejoran  
aquí, Enrico, no puedo ni siquiera  
imaginar lo que nos va a pasar.

**INT - CASA DE ELLOS (en el juego es un terreno baldío ) - NOCHE**

La madre, Consuelo, está en la cocina preparando un pastel. Valentín le está ayudando, pero deja caer la leche. La madre se pone muy agobiada con la situación.

CONSUELO

(nerviosa)

Oh, Valentín! Qué has hecho?! Dámela!  
Ahora se acabó la leche y no hay  
dinero para comprar más. Tu padre, el  
sin vergüenza, estará en el bar  
gastando los últimos céntimos en la  
bebida! Si llega borracho, le voy a  
matar!

Consuelo sigue nerviosa y pide a Valentín que ve al bar buscar su padre.

CONSUELO

(amenazando)

Déjate eso ahí y ve a buscar tu padre.  
Dile que si tarda cinco minutos soy yo  
la que iré allí al bar, y luego ya  
verá lo que le pasará!

**INT - ESCUELA - DÍA**

Marina está sentada en la mesa del colegio justo por detrás de Valentín. Se sorprende cuando Valentín se vira y le deja un origami en su mesa.

MARINA

(sorprendida)

¿Es para mí? Qué es? ¿Ha sido tu  
quien lo has hecho?

Luego, Marina queda con cara de triste.

MARINA

(sussurando)

No podré jugar con vosotros hoy  
después de la clase. Mi madre estará  
esperando por mí en la puerta de la  
escuela. Ahora pasa a recogerme  
todos los días. Dijo que no quería  
verme metida en problemas.

La chica abre una sonrisa.

MARINA

(susurrando)

Es muy bonito! Voy a colgarlo en mi habitación.

La profesora, Cristina, brava e irónica grita con una regla en la mano, mientras los niños en el fondo dan risitas.

CRISTINA

Valentín! Perdiste algo en la mesa de Marina? La clase es aquí, adelante!

**EXT - ESQUINA / PLAZA - DÍA**

ESCENA CLIMAX DEL ACTO/PREMIO

El padre, Enrico, viene por la plaza tambaleándose. Está borracho. Valentín, cuando le ve, salí corriendo.

ENRICO

Valentín! Valentín! No te escondas de tu papá. Ven aquí, chaval.

VOZ DISTANTE 1

Borracho!

Enrico hace mala cara al oír eso. Y sigue gritando.

ENRICO

Valentín!

VOZ DISTANTE 2

Vagabundo!

Enrico queda enojado y mirando hacia los lados busca por la voz.

ENRICO

A quién estás llamando de vagabundo!?

VOZ DISTANTE Y VOZ DISTANTE 2

Tu hijo tiene vergüenza de ti! Borracho!

Enrico se pone de rodillas, llora y trae las manos en la cara, ocultando las lágrimas. Valentín se detiene, pero luego corre hacia el padre. El padre todavía emocionado, coge la cabeza del niño y lo abraza.

ENRICO

Oh, Valentín! Lo siento, perdóname!  
Mis días en el bar se van a acabar.  
Las peleas con tu madre también, mi hijo. Todo va a estar bien, te lo prometo.

+++++

## VALENTÍN JOVEN

### EXT - CONSTRUCCIÓN (en el juego es una finca nueva) - DÍA

El padre, Enrico, está en el trabajo, que es una construcción. Está sentado con su fiambarrera comiendo con una cuchara. Habla determinado, mientras come.

Enrico

(entusiasmado)

Hay un montón de cosas buenas por venir a nuestro barrio, Valentín! Lo ves aquí? Todas aquellas casas viejas que habían aquí han sido derribadas para convertirse en un gran condominio. Lujo, Valentín! L.u.j.o! ¿Y quién está construyendo? Tu papá! He oído a la gente aquí en mi trabajo diciendo que vendrá hasta una universidad para el barrio! Bien cerca de casa, ¿te imaginas?

Enrico deja de comer y de mirar la comida y vuelve la mirada al hijo Valentín.

Enrico

(sério)

No me mires con esa cara de desinteresado! Ya te dije que no te vas a quedar como tu papá... sin estudios. Vais ir a la Universidad allí y dejarme orgulloso.

Enrico cierra la fiambarrera. La pone en una bolsa de plástico junto a la cuchara.

Enrico

(agradecido)

Gracias por traerme la comida, Valentín! Ahora ve a hacer tus cosas. Y piensa en el futuro, Valentín! Nuestro futuro!!!

### INT - CASA DE ELLOS (en el juego es un terreno baldío) - NOCHE

La madre, Consuelo, está sentada en una mesa. Se la ve con un montón de papeles a su alrededor. Coge uno y después el otro. Escribe en uno de los papeles. Tiene cara de preocupada.

CONSUELO

(preocupada)

Estoy preocupada, Valentín. Hoy llegó la factura del alquiler. Lo aumentarán. O, mejor dicho, se duplicó. He estado haciendo los cálculos. Tu padre y yo tendremos que juntar todo el poco dinero que tenemos y luego coger otro tanto prestado.

Pero luego, como si hubiera encontrado una solución para el problema se pone optimista con Valentín.

CONSUELO

(animada)

Tu también podrías empezar a trabajar, Valentín! Voy a preguntar a tu tío si no hay trabajo en la tienda. O tu podrías ir a trabajar con tu padre, hay mucha obra por aquí ahora. Con todas estas cosas que van a construir en el barrio, seguro que te encontrarán un trabajo temporal.

Al final, Consuelo se pone represora con Valentín.

CONSUELO

(en reprimienta)

Y también te podrías dejar de estar con estos compañeros! Tu padre en el bar y tú en la esquina con esta gente... no me gusta nada! Me gustaría tener un poco de paz en mi vida.

#### **EXT - ESQUINA - TARDE**

El amigo, Ahmed, está en la puerta del bar. Se le ve visiblemente alterado. Se mueve mucho.

AHMED

Tu y Marina ya no se encuentran más? Ahh, es la madre de Marina que se está poniendo la cosa difícil, no?

Ahmed hace una pausa y mira hacia los lados. Luego sigue hablando.

AHMED

(sussurando)

Le pegaron a Felix. Ahora está difícil hacer pintadas en los muros. Hay policía por todas partes. Si reunimos más de cinco en la esquina, ya llaman a la policía. Si es tarde en la noche, peor aún. Es esta gente que ha venido

a vivir aquí. Quedan desfilando por  
las calles con estos súper coches  
pijos.

Ahmed se exalta, apuntando para el lado.

AHMED

(criticando)

Mira! Allá hay uno dando la vuelta en  
la esquina. Vaya, que pijos!

Se vuelve a Valentín, y se pone nervioso.

AHMED

(revoltado)

Estos días he oído una conversación  
aquí en el bar del Mathias. Querían  
comprarlo para convertirlo en un  
bistro. Bistro! ¿Qué mierda es esa,  
Valentín?

**EXT - PLAZA/ESQUINA - DÍA**

ESCENA CLIMAX DEL ACTO/PREMIO

Se escuchan un multitud de voces manifestandose. Entre ellas destacase  
la voz del líder. Viene de un megáfono.

LÍDER

(gritando)

Nadie quería vivir en este barrio! La  
acera nunca fue reparada. La basura  
era recogida una vez, sólo una vez por  
semana! Tuvimos que luchar para tener  
un puesto policial.

Se escucha la madre, Consuelo, dando órdenes al hijo.

CONSUELO

(dando ordenes)

Anda, Valentín! Coge el cartel! Venga!  
Vamos!

Vuelve la voz del líder al megáfono.

LÍDER

(gritando)

Ahora, los políticos, las empresas,  
los poderosos, todos ponen sus ojos  
aquí. Y quieren sacar a la gente que  
siempre luchó para mejorar las cosas  
en el barrio. Quieren que todo el  
pasado se desaparezca. No son sólo las  
casas las que están en juego. Es todo

el barrio, es nuestra historia! Ahora  
que todo ha mejorado, tenemos que  
irnos?

Luego, empieza con los gritos de orden.

LÍDER  
(gritando)

De aquí no nos vamos!! De aquí no nos  
vamos!! De aquí no nos vamos!!

+++++

## **VALENTIN ADULTO**

### **EXT - PARADA DE AUTOBÚS - DÍA**

El amigo de trabajo de Valentín, José, está en la acera, en la parada de autobuses. Mirando hacia los lados. Lo dice con broma, con ironía.

JOSÉ  
(bromeando)

Este es el lugar de donde vienes,  
Valentín? No sabía que eras tan tan  
chic.

Los dos empiezan a caminar y José sigue bromeando.

JOSÉ  
(bromeando)

Vamos a parar en una cafetería antes  
del curro en la obra? No, no, ¿cómo lo  
llaman, aquí?? Coffee Shop!

Valentín (la cámara) empieza a ir más rápido, adelante. José viene corriendo, más serio, y disculpándose.

JOSÉ  
(disculpandose)  
Hey, hey, cálmate! Era sólo una broma!

### **INT - BAR - DÍA**

El propietario del bar, Mathias, está por detrás de la barra. Está limpiando y tiene la cabeza hacia abajo. Cuando la levanta, mira sorprendido y se pone alegre. Da la vuelta en la barra y va a saludar Valentín.

MATHIAS  
(sorprendido)

Valentín! ¿Eres tú, de verdad? Has vuelto? Estás trabajando en las obras, no? Por tu ropa, ya lo veo. Ha pasado tanto tiempo, hombre... todo está tan cambiado por este lugar, no?

Mathias con un poco de nostalgia, empieza a acordarse del pasado. Tiene la mirada distante mientras habla.

MATHIAS

(reclamando)

¿Quién lo imaginaría, Valentín, que un día eso iría quedarse así?! Pero, al final, no hay casi nadie de los antiguos vecinos. Muchas veces ni yo reconozco más este lugar...

Después de una pequeña pausa, vuelve a mirar a Valentín en la cara y a hablar más animado.

MATHIAS

(con firmeza)

Pero todavía estoy aquí, nadando contra la corriente! Encantado en verte, mi hijo!! La gente de la obra está siempre por aquí. Claro, es el lugar más barato en el barrio. Sólo por eso he podido seguir aquí hasta hoy. No sé lo que será de este bar después de que hayan terminado las obras. Me tendrán que llevar de aquí en un ataúd!

**EXT - TERRENO BALDÍO (antigua casa) - DÍA**

Valentín está con Jose, el amigo, en la calle. Jose, alarga el cuello buscando a ver si ve algo adelante. Mira hacia un lado, da dos pasos. Mira hacia el otro lado, camina en esta dirección.

JOSÉ

¿Seguro de que tu casa era aquí? Mira, a lo mejor te has confundido... todo se parece un poco aquí...

Se para y se queda mirando fijo a Valentín, en silencio. Después de un rato, habla con él intentando dejarle tranquilo.

JOSÉ

Valentín, no te quedes así. Todo eso es pasado, mi amigo. Ahora tienes una historia en otro lugar, tienes familia. Olvídate de tu pasado.

**EXT - PLAZA/ESQUINA - DÍA**  
ESCENA CLIMAX DEL ACTO/PREMIO

El amor de escuela de Valentín, Marina, ya adulta, está en la plaza, revolviendo la basura. Está hablando sola, mientras busca algo en la basura. Se escuchan los ruidos de metal revolviéndose. Marina sigue buscando.

MARINA

Esto es malo, no, no, no ... esto. Han  
llevado todo! No queda nada!!

Siente que alguien se aproxima. Luego, levanta la cabeza y lo dice enojada.

MARINA

Lo que quedó es mio! Ve a buscar en  
otro sitio, esto es mío...

Cuando termina de hablar, se sorprende pues reconoce la cara. Ella para, aprieta los ojos como que mirando con cuidado y examinando la persona. Luego, cambia el tono de la voz. Tiene vergüenza. Mira apenas hacia el lado.

MARINA

Valentín ... Yo ... ah, hace tanto  
tiempo... ¿Has vuelto? Qué haces aquí?  
Todo es tan diferente ahora. No hay  
nada para mí aquí.

Marina deja caer el metal que aguantaba en la mano. Mira directamente para Valentín.

MARINA

Qué queda para ti aquí?

+++++

**FINAL**

ESCENA CLIMAX DEL ACTO/PREMIO

NO ES UNA ESCENA EN VIDEO, ES UNA ESCENA A SER INTERPRETADA EN VIVO  
POR UN ACTOR EN EL PAPEL DE VALENTÍN YA ADULTO/VIEJO

**EXT - PUERTA DEL ESPACIO DE EXHIBICIÓN - TARDE**

Valentín esta en la puerta del espacio de exhibición dónde se pasa el performance. Está sentado en un banco, mirando hacia el infinito. Cuando llegan todos los jugadores que estaban en la calle, Valentín se levanta y camina en dirección a ellos.

VALENTÍN  
(desconfiado)

Han ido en busca de mis memorias?

Espera un poco para ver cual son las reacciones y sigue hablando con un poco de nostalgia y un poco que contando de su vida.

VALENTÍN  
(haciendo pausas)  
Este barrio... Toda mi vida está aquí.  
Mis recuerdos... toda mi historia.  
Está todo aquí. En los bares que  
frecuentaba, por las calles que  
caminaba, en la casa donde vivía. Los  
mismos lugares que después de años me  
negaron.

Valentín, en este momento, se vanagloria con su hecho.

VALENTÍN  
Pero hora veo que he encontrado una  
manera de burlar la historia y  
quedarme aquí para siempre!

En este momento, os llama para que se acerquen y empieza a decir, susurrando.

VALENTÍN  
(sussurando)  
Guardé fotos del lugar que me encanta,  
algunos objetos que hablan de mí, de  
mi vida, mis libros de la escuela.  
Está todo ahí. Si son registros lo que  
quieren, aquí los tienen! Os dejo la  
maleta con mis memorias!

Después de darles la maleta, Valentín se va caminando en la dirección contraria, como que saliendo de Hangar, sin hablar nada más.

## APPENDIX 14. *Chronica Mobilis* gameplay<sup>383</sup>

### **Chronica Mobilis - Gameplay**

The game place us in the year 6014. Participants are archeologists trying to figure out how society was four thousand years ago. Around the year 2200, the last records that existed in analog media were all digitized. About 300 years later they disappeared. An electromagnetic pulse of unknown origin erased all data from all computers on the planet. There are no more analog records and because of that, the work of archeologists of the future is very complicated. From the study of a relatively preserved brain of the XXI century, they try to analyze the memories lived by the person owner of the brain. There is a new technology about to revolutionize this situation forever and for the first time, the archeologists are going to experience it. *Chronica Mobilis* is this technique that consists of creating a virtual scenario set in the year 2014, in which archeologists will be required to go in the search of emotionally important places for the owner of the analyzed brain. The virtual scenario is the city, and the archeologists are the players. Once finding the places, it is possible to retrieve and watch the memories the owner of the brain has associated with those locations. The goal of the mission is to recollect all these memories and analyze them to discover where the owner of the brain has kept what can be the last analog registers of the past.

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<sup>383</sup> Idem.



## APPENDIX 15. Initial and final cut-scenes of *Chronica Mobilis* game<sup>384</sup>

### ***Chronica Mobilis* - Guión Intro y Final**

Guión para el video de introducción y desfecho a ser proyectado en el espacio de exhibición al inicio y al final de la performance.

Fue creado este escenario de arqueólogos del futuro para contextualizar tanto la audiencia cuanto a los "jugadores/actores" y para generar la *Suspensión de Incredulidad*, haciendo que todos se sientan inmersos en el contexto.

La historia del personaje es real, seria y expone una realidad de nuestra sociedad. Esta sobre-historia/contextualización de los arqueólogos del futuro es completamente ficcional y más bien humorada propositalmente. Hace un contraste de tono del mensaje que queremos pasar.

+++++

#### **INTRO**

#### **ANIMACIÓN - CONTEXTUALIZANDO**

Durante mucho tiempo, la humanidad registró su historia en objetos físicos.

Hasta que se creó una nueva manera de guardar las informaciones: el formato digital.

Era algo tan práctico que alrededor del año 2020 ya no quedaba nada grabado en papel.

Desde entonces investigar el pasado es algo muy complejo ya que nunca se ha encontrado ningún registro escrito.

Laboratório Experimental  
Chronica Mobilis  
25.10.6014

#### **INT - LABORATÓRIO - TARDE**

Una mujer joven mira hacia la parte inferior de la pantalla. Lo mira fijo, con los ojos muy abiertos. Una luz parpadea sobre su cara. La luz, luego se queda roja y se escucha un sonido de máquina indicando un error.

La mujer pone cara de desaprobación y empieza a hablar.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN  
Máquina estúpida!

Si tu no lo puedes leer, yo tampoco!

Ya sabía que había partes dañadas!

---

<sup>384</sup> Idem.

Pero éste es el único cerebro bien preservado que hemos encontrado  
hasta ahora...  
Y creía que serías capaz de recuperarlas?!

El ordenador suspira y se pone a contestar de manera crítica y sarcástica.

SÚPER MÁQUINA  
La máquina estúpida no esta diseñada para esto!  
Aunque por lo menos ahora estoy preparada para soportar un pulso  
electromagnético... jejeje...  
Pobres máquinas...  
Todos los antiguos ordenadores del mundo limpios!  
Sin nada!  
Qué miedo!

La Coordinadora de Prospección, con rabia, también lo dice irónica al ordenador.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN  
Miedo tu? Y nosotros los humanos, qué? Qué nos queda Ahora?!

El ordenador le contesta a la Coordinadora como si eso fuera obvio.

SÚPER MÁQUINA  
Analizar viejos cerebros y sus recuerdos...

La respuesta del ordenador deja a la Coordinadora aún más agobiada.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN  
Ahh.. muy fácil!  
Como si todos los días cayera un cerebro del cielo, y con todas sus  
partes bien preservadas!

El ordenador entonces intenta hablar en serio aunque creyendo que la Coordinadora pide demasiado de él.

SÚPER MÁQUINA  
Pero no hay suficiente con lo que he podido leer?

La Coordinadora entonces, lamentándose, le explica la situación.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN  
Es que el cerebro de esta persona es muy importante.  
Aquí está nuestra única posibilidad de encontrar registros escritos de  
los años 2000!  
Pero la pista que nos falta está justo en la parte dañada!

La Coordinadora hace una pausa larga. Mira hacia arriba, mira hacia el lado, cierra los ojos, suspira y baja la cabeza. Se pone la mano en la frente como sujetándose la cabeza. Queda así por un rato. El ordenador empieza a hablar.

SÚPER MÁQUINA  
Y si usamos las partes del cerebro que menos daños sufrieron?  
Allí hay memorias muy vívidas que podemos leer y  
podríamos crear un Escenografía Virtual utilizando estos recuerdos.

La Coordinadora de Prospección levanta la cabeza, lo mira de lado y lo pregunta un poco sospechosa.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN

Se puede hacer eso?

El ordenador, para dejarla animada y para mostrar su inteligencia, empieza a enumerar todo lo que podría hacer.

SÚPER MÁQUINA

No solo eso! También se podría entrar y navegar en ese Escenario Virtual del pasado. Sonidos, imágenes...

La Coordinadora de Prospección lo interrumpe y sigue completando la lista, muy entusiasmada, moviendo las manos y la cabeza de un lado a otro en el aire, como imaginando las cosas.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN  
Olores, gente, coches, edificios.  
Todo! Todo el año 2000!

De manera bastante racional, el ordenador finaliza su teoría.

SÚPER MÁQUINA

Bueno, sólo todo lo que el dueño del cerebro ha visto, oído o sentido. El resto no lo podríamos reproducir!

La Coordinadora mueve positivamente la cabeza y esboza una sonrisa muy animada.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN  
Puede funcionar!  
Con esto puede haber suficiente!!

El ordenador le advierte.

SÚPER MÁQUINA  
Pero necesitaremos a los arqueólogos.

La coordinadora se espanta y le pregunta un poco curiosa.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN  
Los arqueólogos? Para qué?

El ordenador le explica.

SÚPER MÁQUINA  
Para entrar en el Escenario Virtual.  
Nos ayudarán a recuperar las partes dañadas del cerebro.

La Coordinadora saca algo del bolsillo. Aprieta un botón. Escuchamos un sonido de llamada. Espera por un momento. El sonido para. Pone cara de entusiasmo y empieza a hablar muy formalmente y seria.

#### **INSERT - ANIMACIÓN - EXPLICANDO DINÁMICA DEL JUEGO**

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN (Off)  
Hola arqueólogos, les habla la Coordinadora de Prospección.  
Tenemos una misión... y, para conseguir llevarla a cabo con éxito,  
Necesitamos de su contribución...  
Como saben, nos ha llegado un cerebro y la junta científica dice que la persona a la que pertenece vivió en los años 2000, probablemente alrededor del año 2014. Queremos obtener el máximo de información posible de este cerebro, pero hay zonas dañadas y, para conseguirlo, tenemos un plan.

Ahí es dónde entran ustedes, así que presten mucha atención a lo que La Súper Máquina les explicará...

### SÚPER MÁQUINA

Chronica Mobilis, éste es el nombre de la técnica más moderna que tenemos para explorar los cerebros y es la primera vez que se va a utilizar.

Consiste en crear, a través de los recuerdos que hemos encontrado en las zonas no dañadas del cerebro, un escenario Virtual situado en el año 2014.

Ustedes deberán entrar en él para buscar los puntos emocionalmente importantes para la persona dueña de este cerebro.

Una vez que encuentren y entren en estos puntos, creemos que será posible rescatar las memorias de las partes dañadas y, con ellas, activar y recuperar esas zonas del cerebro, accediendo así a toda la información.

En esta misión se crearán tres equipos de trabajo, uno para cada grupo de memorias que serán investigadas.

Equipo A: por el carácter de las memorias, parece ser que los recuerdos que van a buscar sean de cuando esta persona era un niño.

Equipo B: el individuo analizado parece estar en su juventud en ese momento.

Equipo C: los recuerdos que intentarán encontrar pertenecen, sin duda, a un adulto.

Una vez formados los equipos, estos se dividirán en dos: el Equipo de Campo y los Operadores de Consola.

El Equipo de Campo lo compondrán los dos arqueólogos que entrarán en el Escenario Virtual, informalmente llamado ciudad.

Ambos llevarán Comunicadores Trans-sensoriales, uno para el envío de imágenes a los Operadores de Consola y el otro para recibir mensajes de texto con las instrucciones que estos les irán dando.

Además, uno de estos dispositivos también tiene la función de "Reactivador Emocional de Memorias Geolocalizadas".

Con él, podrán recuperar recuerdos cuando estén en un lugar emocionalmente importante para el sujeto.

Estos recuerdos se enviarán automáticamente al equipo de Operadores de Consola a través del mismo Comunicador Trans-sensorial.

#### Operadores de Consola!

Ustedes también desempeñarán funciones muy importantes!!

La primera es controlar la posición del Equipo de Campo dentro del Escenario Virtual y guiarlos para que encuentren los lugares que estamos buscando.

Para orientarlos, pueden enviar mensajes de texto a través del Comunicador Trans-sensorial.

Otra función que tendrán será la de recibir los recuerdos encontrados y enviados por el Equipo de Campo.

Una vez recibidos, los escucharán y visualizarán con el Dispositivo Decodificador de Memorias para entender la vida de la persona analizada.

**INT - LABORATORIO - TARDE**

La Coordinadora de Prospección, con una sonrisa en la cara y la mano en el pecho, dice muy orgullosa.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN

Yo Tengo el sensor de carga emocional.

Con él, podré identificar dónde están los lugares que pueden activar las memorias que buscamos.

Enviaré las pistas a los Operadores de Consola para que envíen esta información a sus respectivos Equipos de Campo.

Lo dice muy entusiasmada, acercándose y apartándose de la pantalla.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN

Es mucho trabajo, ya lo sé!

Pero la información recogida puede ser muy importante!

A lo mejor encontramos los únicos registros escritos que quedaron de los años 2000. Por eso es una misión tan importante!

Luego se acerca mucho a la pantalla y dice susurrando.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN

Mucha gente se ha juntado para seguir el progreso de nuestro intento.

Os estaremos acompañando.

Suerte!

+++++

**FINAL**

**INT - LABORATÓRIO - TARDE**

La científica está sentada. Se levanta y pone cara de sorprendida. Mira directamente a la audiencia.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN

Habéis encontrado lo que buscamos?! Sí?!

No me lo puedo creer...

Estos son los únicos registros escritos que tenemos en casi 4000 años!

Por eso esta persona era tan importante!

La Coordinadora de Prospección se sienta y empieza a explicar lo que ya sabía, como quien les cuenta un secreto.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN

Cuando empecé a analizar este cerebro, encontré algo.

Me di cuenta que este individuo había dejado registros escritos escondidos en algún lugar.

Pero no podía saber dónde, ya que esta información estaba justo en una de las partes dañadas de su cerebro.

Así que pensé que, a lo mejor, recuperando las memorias, podría descubrir la localización de ese material.

La Coordinadora abre una sonrisa y dice un poco emocionada y orgullosa.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN

Y ustedes lo encontraron! Enhorabuena!

Ahora podremos analizar las transformaciones del pasado.

Y claro, entender también cómo hemos llegado hasta aquí, el año 6014!

Se levanta, y, por fin, les advierte.

COORDINADORA DE PROSPECCIÓN

Pero aún queda mucho trabajo que hacer arqueólogos!

Esto no ha hecho más que empezar...

Empiezan a pasar por la pantalla imágenes de los contenidos que están dentro de la maleta encontrada por los arqueólogos, con sus respectivas leyendas: libros de escuela, fotos del barrio, convite de la boda de Valentín con Marina, el dibujo del pequeño Valentín, el plano 22@ de modernización etc.

**Concepción**

Vanessa Santos  
VJ Pixel

**Consultoría Artística**

Karla Brunet  
Roc Parés

**Tecnología**

Miguel Peixe – mapas  
Mareta Saavedra – testes de usabilidade  
Nachto Duran – desenvolvimento tecnológico  
Paulo Henrique – desenvolvimento tecnológico

**Guión**

Murilo Dada  
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**Fotos**

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**Videos**

Ana Vilar – cámara e fotografía  
Dani Losada – fotografía  
Oriol Cardus – direção e cámara  
Juliana Rabihi – Consuelo  
Laura Baker – Super Máquina  
Murilo Dada – líder da manifestação  
Nachto Villaró – Enrico  
Natacha Elmir – Coordenadora de Prospección  
Nina Rocha – Marina  
Oliver Domingues – José  
Reg Wilson – Mathias  
Vanessa Santos – som e direção

<http://chronicamobilis.net/>

# Chronica Mobilis

## Manual del Jugador

Estamos en el año 6014. Eres un arqueólogo tratando de averiguar cómo era la sociedad cuatro mil años atrás.

Alrededor del año 2200, desaparecieron los últimos registros que existían en soportes analógicos, todo había sido digitalizado. Unos 300 años después, un pulso electromagnético de origen desconocido borró todos los datos de todos los ordenadores y soportes digitales del planeta.

Por causa de eso, el trabajo de los arqueólogos del futuro es algo muy complicado, ya que no existen más registros analógicos. A partir del estudio de un cerebro relativamente preservado del siglo XXI, se intentan analizar los recuerdos que esa persona vivió.

Una nueva tecnología está a punto de revolucionar esta situación para siempre y por primera vez iremos a experimentarla.

<sup>385</sup> Idem.



## APPENDIX 17. Geolocalization of *Chronica Mobilis* scenes<sup>386</sup>

### ***Chronica Mobilis* - Escenas y Geolocalización**

#### **Valentín Niño**

- A1 - PARADA DE AUTOBÚS - Madre
- A2 - TERRENO BALDÍO/CASA - Madre
- A3 - ESCUELA - Marina, Profesora
- A4 - PLAZA - Padre, vecinos.

#### **Valentín Joven**

- B1 - CONSTRUCCIÓN/EDIFICIO MODERNO - Padre
- B2 - TERRENO BALDÍO/CASA - Madre
- B3 - ESQUINA - Amigo del barrio
- B4 - PLAZA - Líder, Madre

#### **Valentín Adulto**

- C1 - PARADA DE AUTOBÚS - Amigo de trabajo
- C2 - BAR - Mathias
- C3 - TERRENO BALDÍO/CASA - Amigo de trabajo
- C4 - PLAZA - Marina

### **GEOLOCALIZACIÓN**

<b>lugar dirección</b>	<b>foto</b>	<b>latitude</b>	<b>longitude</b>	<b>escena</b>
HANGAR		41.408502	2.199424	inicio fim

<sup>386</sup> Idem.

<p>PARADA DE AUTOBUS</p> <p>(Carrer de Espronceda, 137)</p>		<p>41.406752</p>	<p>2.202662</p>	<p>A1 C1</p>
<p>ESQUINA</p> <p>(Carrer de Espronceda, 133)</p>		<p>41.406321</p>	<p>2.203206</p>	<p>B3</p>
<p>CASA</p> <p>(Carrer de Pujades, 279)</p>		<p>41.405519</p>	<p>2.205711</p>	<p>A2 B2 C3</p>
<p>OBRA PAI</p> <p>(Carrer Pallars, 279)</p>		<p>41.404338</p>	<p>2.201744</p>	<p>B1</p>

<p>PLAZA</p> <p>(Carrer d'Espronceda, 56)</p>		<p>41.403771</p>	<p>2.206782</p>	<p>A4 C4</p>
<p>ESCUELA</p> <p>(Jardins de Josep Trueta o Lope de Vega, 70)</p>		<p>41.404134</p>	<p>2.205108</p>	<p>A3</p>
<p>BAR</p> <p>(Carrer de Pallars, 264)</p>		<p>41.403957</p>	<p>2.201754</p>	<p>A2 C4</p>
<p>PLAZA MANIF</p> <p>(Carrer de Sant Joan de Malta, 209-211)</p>		<p>41.404816</p>	<p>2.197817</p>	<p>B4</p>



## APPENDIX 18. Riddles sent to *Chronica Mobilis* players<sup>387</sup>

### ***Chronica Mobilis* - Pistas**

#### PISTAS EQUIPE ROJA

##### **A1**

Cuando el bus salía de la avenida principal, ya habíamos llegado. Era justo doblar la esquina y ya paraba para dejarnos en nuestro mundo.

Sentado en el punto, pude ver a un gran aparcamiento de coches y la izquierda el nuevo parque construido.

##### **A2**

Mi casa estaba en la esquina de una calle con un callejón. Nos botaron y luego demolidos.

Han ponido un letrero de venderlo. Un gran dedo apuntando a un dibujo de una casa que ya no existe.

Hoy en día, los botes de basura se quedan delante de ella y hay un control de zona verde justo ahí al lado.

Desde la casa hay una fábrica abandonada, algunos de estos nuevos artistas han ponido una estatua de un hombre que piensa en su tejado.

Cuando salgo de casa, podía ver, a la izquierda, a una antigua chimenea.

##### **A3**

La puerta trasera de nuestra escuela daba a un parque, hoy han ponido un nuevo juguete verde y metal. Aún así sólo tiene este juguete.

Um gramado separa uma arquibancada e uma quadra de basquete no portão da escola. Eu e Marina ficamos horas ali brincando.

Toda la escuela fue pintada de color verde claro y se instala una máquina que mide la calidad del aire en una esquina de la plaza.

Nuestra escuela estaba casi fuera de otra plaza donde nos gustaba jugar.

+++++

#### PISTAS EQUIPE VERDE

##### **B1**

El edificio que mi padre estaba orgulloso de haber construido era todo negro con algunas rayas blancas.

En frente de la obra es el bar que mi padre siempre estaba bebiendo.

La entrada se encuentra en la parte de atrás, frente a una plaza y un callejón.

El edificio fue nombrado el callejón, pero "Antic" ella no tiene más nada.

##### **B2**

Mi casa estaba en la esquina de una calle con un callejón. Nos botaron y luego demolidos.

Han ponido un letrero de venderlo. Un gran dedo apuntando a un dibujo de una casa que ya no existe.

---

<sup>387</sup> Idem.

Hoy en día, los botes de basura se quedan delante de ella y hay un control de zona verde justo ahí al lado.

Desde la casa hay una fábrica abandonada, algunos de estos nuevos artistas han ponido una estatua de un hombre que piensa en su tejado.

Cuando salgo de casa, podía ver, a la izquierda, a una antigua chimenea.

**B3**

Los coches del aparcamiento nos escondia de la policia mientras pichávamos las paredes detrás del Centro de Salud.

Todos los edificios ahí juntitos, igualitos. mal se podía saber quién vivía en dónde, no fuera por las ropas tendidas en las ventanas

Al lado de la zona de aparcamiento donde pichávamos el muro tenía un parque infantil justo después de un callejón.

+++++

PISTAS EQUIPE AZUL

**C1**

Cuando el bus salía de la avenida principal, ya habíamos llegado. Era justo doblar la esquina y ya paraba para dejarnos en nuestro mundo.

Sentado en el punto, pude ver a un gran aparcamiento de coches y la izquierda el nuevo parque construido.

**C2**

Mi padre siempre fue en este bar de la esquina.

En frente del bar era la obra que mi padre trabajaba: un edificio de oficinas en negro con líneas blancas.

El nombre del bar significa hablar en voz baja, pero no todo el mundo hablaba en voz alta. Ahora no se puede porque el lado tiene un área de fisioterapia.

El nombre del bar significa hablar en voz baja, pero todos hablaban en voz alta.

Ahora ya no se puede hacer ruido porque el lateral tiene un área de fisioterapia.

Jamal hizo bien. Tiene un supermercado al lado del bar y una carnicería en la calle adelante.

**C3**

Mi casa estaba en la esquina de una calle con un callejón. Nos botaron y luego demolidos.

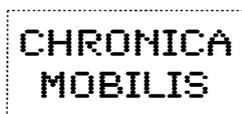
Han ponido un letrero de venderlo. Un gran dedo apuntando a un dibujo de una casa que ya no existe.

Hoy en día, los botes de basura se quedan delante de ella y hay un control de zona verde justo ahí al lado.

Desde la casa hay una fábrica abandonada, algunos de estos nuevos artistas han ponido una estatua de un hombre que piensa en su tejado.

Cuando salgo de casa, podía ver, a la izquierda, a una antigua chimenea.

## APPENDIX 19. *Chronica Mobilis* feedback form



### Feedback Form

Gracias por participar de CHRONICA MOBILIS. Nos gustaría tu evaluación de la sesión para podermos mejorar nuestro trabajo y comprender como ha sido tu experiencia.

Thank you for taking part in CHRONICA MOBILIS. We would really appreciate your feedback on the session so that we can improve the work we are doing and understand your experience.

Sexo: \_\_\_\_\_  
Gender

Edad: \_\_\_\_\_  
Age

Nacionalidad: \_\_\_\_\_  
Nationality

¿Cómo has participado?  
How did you take part?

Audiencia  
Audience

Jugador en la base  
Player in the exhibition space

Jugador en la calle  
Street Player

Enumerar los aspectos más positivos  
List the most positive aspects

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Enumerar los aspectos más negativos  
List the most negative aspects

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

¿Cómo evalúas tu experiencia? Ha sido cómo tu lo esperabas?  
How do you evaluate your experience? Was it as you expected?

¿Habías participado de una experiencia/proyecto como CHRONICA MOBILIS antes?  
Have you ever take part in an experience/project like CHRONICA MOBILIS before?

Si deseas decirnos algo más envía un correo a: [cm@chronicamobilis.net](mailto:cm@chronicamobilis.net)  
If you want to say something more, send us an email to

Si quieres, dejarnos tu email: \_\_\_\_\_  
If you want to give us your email for further contact

Muchas gracias!  
Thank you!