

Floating Points 6 :: March 21, 2009

Playing life and living play:

How hybrid reality games reconfigure space, play, and the ordinary

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"It is said that the purpose of a man's life is to strive arduously for knowledge, for excellence and virtue, for fame and honor, for power and prosperity. Play, on the other hand, is supposed to function as occasional interruption, as pause. According to this conception, play seems to occupy a legitimate, if limited, place in the rhythm of human life. Play is thought of as an escape from unyielding reality to a dream-utopia. As long as we continue naively using the popular antitheses of "work-play", "frivolity-seriousness" and the like, we will never grasp the ontological meaning of play."

-- Fink, Saine & Saine, 1968, p. 19

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Hybrid Reality Games (HRGs):

Games / Play + physical space / daily life

-- foreground playful nature of our lives



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1: HRGs merge play + ordinary life via 3 criteria:

- a. **Spatial**,
- b. **Community (trust / rules)**,
- c. **Identity (anonymity / surveillance)**

2: How these games reconfigure connections between game space and urban spaces, and between players themselves.

3: Broader **spatial / social implications** of playing HRGs / locative media.

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I Like Frank (2004)



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Day of the Figurines (2006)

Berlin, Barcelona, Singapore



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1. Play + Ordinary LiveSpatial

Spaces of representation

Representations of space

Material spatial practices

-- Lefebvre, 1991

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Spaces of representation

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1. Play + Ordinary LiveSpatial

Spaces of representation = fictional game world

Representations of space

Material spatial practices

-- Lefebvre, 1991

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1. Play + Ordinary LiveSpatial

1. Game space / narrative → players
ordinary city space

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1. Play + Ordinary LiveSpatial


1. Game space / narrative
ordinary city space

2. No primary play space
(co-dependance / interconnection of spaces)

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1. Play + Ordinary LiveSpatial

- Differential access to information
- Mutual influence on each other spaces

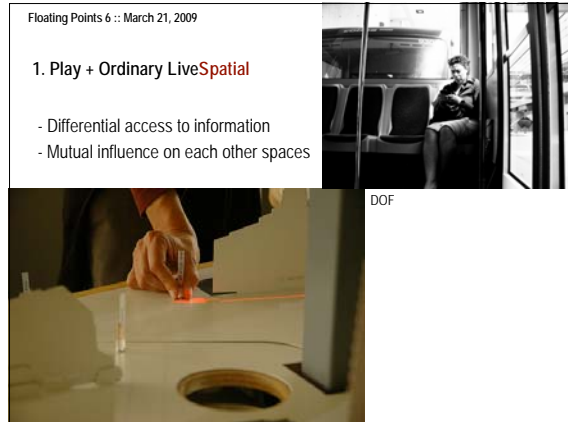


The image shows handwritten notes on a piece of paper. The notes describe a project where users go to the nearest phonebox and call the phone number on the back of their device. The notes mention 'We see "focus" as a result of a practical journey', 'It started with a sense of geographical dislocation', 'we found a Cuban stopper inside a blue car: an album in my bag making Obama signs at us; gangsters old Sikh men; angry teens attacking public phones; and an armed Palestinian taxi whirling out streets in the morning lit. Other memories will be fabricated. Taken on: Moroccan anthropologist naflazic@out.com' Below the notes is a screenshot of a mobile application interface showing a 3D map and a profile card.

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1. Play + Ordinary LiveSpatial

- Differential access to information
- Mutual influence on each other spaces



The image is split into two parts. The top part shows a person sitting in the driver's seat of a car, looking out the window. The bottom part shows a close-up of a hand holding a mobile device, with a red laser line projected from the screen onto a surface.

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2. Game Community

Space --> People

Community:


1. Interaction between people (**trust**)
2. **Rules** of play (Hughes; Salen & Zimmerman)

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2. Game Community

ILF (assumes cooperation / trust - Lehtonen & Mänpää, 1997)

- SP / OP
- SP / bystanders



The image shows a screenshot of a game interface. On the left, there is a 3D city environment with a character in the center. On the right, there is a profile card for a user named 'Mikko Mänpää' with a photo and some text. The text 'ILF / URAAY' is visible at the bottom right of the screenshot.

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2. Game Community

DOF
+ "abstracted" trust?
+ unpredictability
- rules




The image shows a 3D architectural model of a building interior. The model is composed of white, angular shapes representing walls and floors. A small figure of a person is visible in the foreground, providing a sense of scale.

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3. Identity

ILF: **Surveillance** DOF: **Anonymity**



The image is split into two parts. The left part shows a map interface with various colored areas and a list of items. The right part shows a person sitting on a white pedestal, wearing a dark jacket and a red hood.

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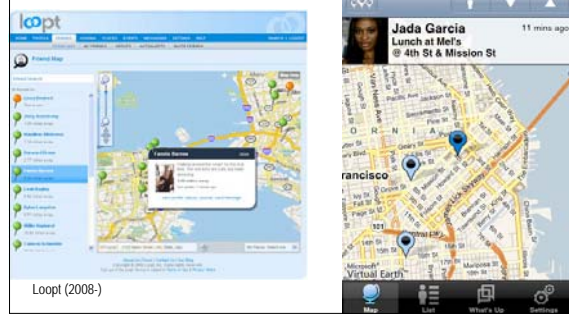
A new framework for games, game spaces and ordinary life?
Spatial / Social



Mogi (Japan, 2003-2006)

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A new framework for games, game spaces and ordinary life?
Spatial / Social

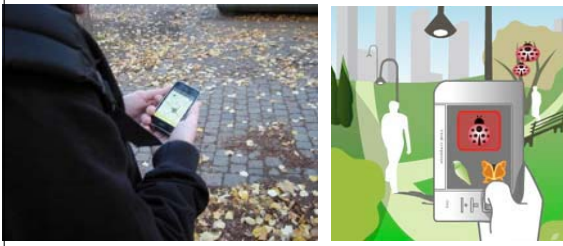


Loopt (2008-)

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A new framework for games, game spaces and ordinary life?
Spatial

- Encourage new ways of navigating city spaces
- See "familiar" places with unfamiliar eyes



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A new framework for games, game spaces and ordinary life?
Spatial

"How do we relate to people around us as we go into kinds of 'hertzian spaces' for our social networks?"

-- Matt Adams (Blast Theory)



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A new framework for games, game spaces and ordinary life?
Spatial

Public + private
Leisure + work

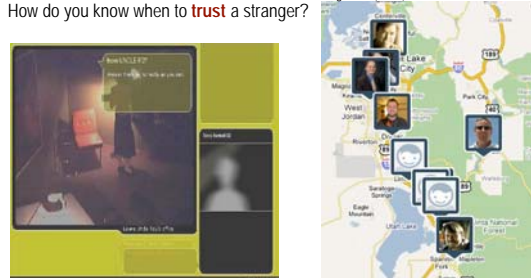


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A new framework for games, game spaces and ordinary life?
Social

How do you know when to **trust** a stranger?

Brightkite (2008)



A new framework for games, game spaces and ordinary life?

Social

Are these games / applications normalizing a surveillance culture or making us more aware of the existing surveillance mechanisms exerted by government and corporations?

Or are they changing how we understand surveillance?

- top-down
- Sousveillance (Mann, 1997)
- Co-lateral

Hybrid reality games / locative social network media applications

- merge play + life
- Challenge traditional concept of games
- Influence the way we navigate urban spaces
- Re-define social interactions in public spaces (trust, anonymity and surveillance)