

# Pervasive mobile games

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## The SMS novel

- Japan – 5 of the top best selling novels in 2007 were originally text-message novels.
- Mostly love stories.
- Delivered in two daily instalments consisting of a message each.
- The SMS novel present traditional literature in a new format: text-messages.
- Demonstrate the strength of text-messages.

## Text based adventure game – Zork (1979)

- Played on computers.
- The "interactor" types out his action in response to textual descriptions of a fictional world.
- Zork is a prototypical example of interactive fiction.
- The game goes something like this:  
"You are standing in an open field. To the west is a house with a boarded front door."
- The implicit question of this 2. person narrator is: "what will you do?"
- The "interactor" on the other hand considers: "Should I go inside?"
- Depending on the decision the player types: "Go west", or "open door."

## Interactive fiction - cybertexts

- Zork presents a kind of game based interactive fiction dependent on the player or "interactor's" input. Merging literature and gaming.
- Interactive fiction lies between literary cybertext and virtual worlds
- In the sense that interactive fiction like Zork relies on imagined reality rather than simulated ones.
- Navigation in interactive fiction is explicitly spatial.
- Navigating a story is a matter of moving between "rooms" or "spaces" such as dungeons while carrying objects.

## Augmented cityscape or media consumption

- Lots of experiments are being made insisting on understanding mobile devices as portable screens. Within the educational setting this is known as translating books to computer screens.
- Enabling the already known business model from computers and television.
- This model aims at pacifying “interactors”. Making them recipient of a linear media output.
- BUT using mobile devices to augment and navigate complex cityscapes and at the same time enabling social contact is very much in contrast to media consumption.
- The contrast can be illustrated through the conception of the ideology of linearly, fixed and unchangeable narratives vs. spatial, unpredictable and changeable navigation.

## Surrender Control (2001)

- Is an SMS-based experiment.
- Distributed by flyers in London with the message: "Do you want to surrender control?" With instructions to send a message SURRENDER to a phone number.
- Surrender Control is an experiment somewhere between a game and a set of dares.
- People shortly after receives messages from a mere thought experiment: "What did you do last night?" to provocative actions "Write Sorry on your hands and leave it until it fades" and finally a social dare: "dial a number different from a friend, if someone answers try to keep them talking."
- This setup could be translated to develop understanding of social dynamics – in an educational setting.
- The user become avatar for the system.

## The Wrench (2008)

- Based on Primo Levi's 1978 novel *The Monkey's Wrench*
- Is a text-message exchange between a participant and the protagonist of Levi's book - Tino.
- Tino engages in a series of dialogues from helping Tino to navigate the cityscape, catalogue sounds from where the you are standing and so on.
- *The Wrench* is not an SMS-novel with predictable messages.
- Instead Tino is an artificial intelligent agent.
- Influenced by chatbots like Eliza.
- In *The Wrench* the "interactor" moves through a series of themes, navigate through the responses from Tino not unlike in Zork where the "interactor" moved through dungeons.

## Liveliness and responses

- Tino's stories are dynamically generated from RSS/Atom content feeds. This enables Tino to comment and respond to events in the real world – the weather or the outcome of last night's soccer game.
- Tino is not designed to be convincingly human – but to cultivate human relationship.
- The system is flexible. Tino sends updates on events of his life much like users do on facebook and/or twitter.
- The key to The Wrench is what happens beyond the phone. These events are not extra-diegetic. They are instead the subject of the unfolding story itself.
- The Wrench is designed of the fact that text-messaging as a medium is situated in the lives of its users.
- The system combines location and content whereby the system can respond in relation to a specific real world location.

## The Wrench continued

- In an educational setting The Wrench could easily be designed as a "friend" or "trainer" that could both interact with the students life and specific or chosen topics.
- Thereby embedding or changing the known spatial and geographical layout of education.
- Thereby changing the known temporal logic of today's educational system.

## Pervasive gaming – the social dimension

- What is pervasive gaming?
- Digitally enhanced reality called endophysics: the world as interface.
- Enabling a digital layer on reality.
- Under the umbrella of the genre Augmented Reality Games (ARG's) there are a number of subgenres:
  - Treasure hunt – finding objects in an unlimited game space
  - Pervasive larps – participants physically act out a character in an environment designed to look like the storyline.
  - Urban adventure games – stories and puzzles combined with urban spaces
  - Smart Street sports – played outside (urban or campus area)

# Augmented Reality Games as tapestry for learning

Epistemic games defined:

"An *epistemic game* is a game that deliberately creates the *epistemic frame* of a socially valued community by re-creating the process by which individuals develop the skills, knowledge, identities, values, and epistemology of that community." (D.W.Shaffer)

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## The workings of the epistemic game

- To make players feel like a professional X: someone needs to tell them they are professionals X
- They need a badge of office or prop of profession
- They need to do what they expect a professional do
- They need to learn about something that a professional X does that they didn't know was part of the profession
- They need someone to see them as professionals
- And the virtual world of the game needs to be consistent in treating them like professionals rather than students.

## Augmented reality games potential to act like an epistemic game.

- ARG's can demand that players are of a certain profession.
- The game setting can easily prop players with a certain profession
- It can and will ask players to act like professionals.
- It can inform players of skills needed to play a certain profession
- Game masters whether virtual or real can act like players are professionals
- The augmented game setting can consistently treat players as if they were professionals.

That was all for today.

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