

researching wireless participatory spaces
some issues and initiatives

Participate/Collaborate
BANFF, September 30, 2004

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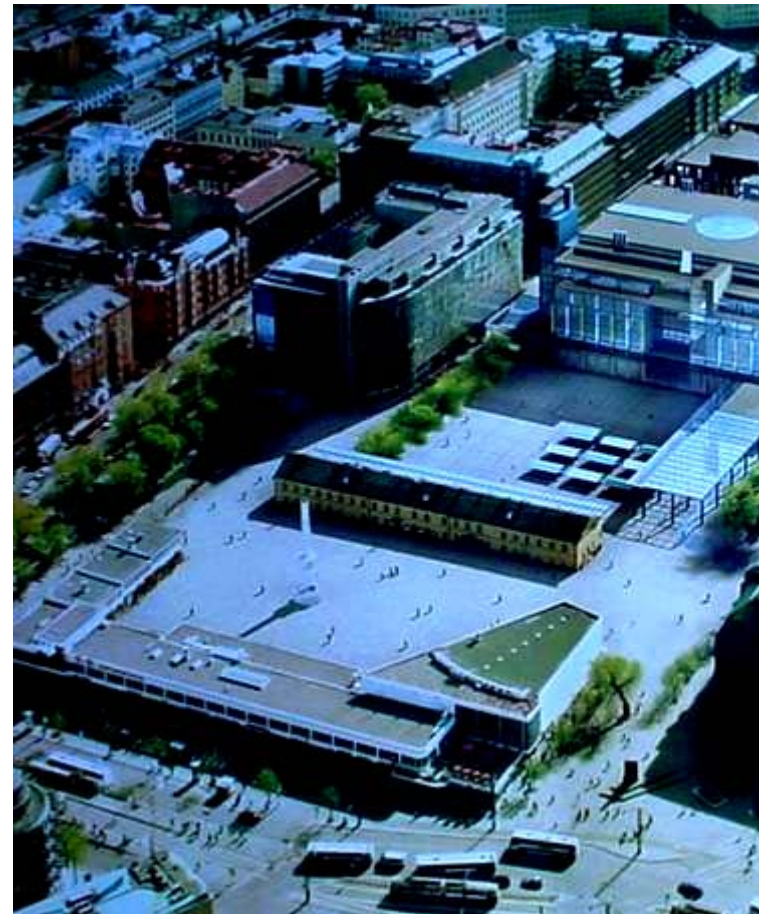
m-cult centre for new media culture

m-cult is a research, development and production centre for new media culture, founded in 2000 to support the development of competences, structures and policies in the field.

m-cult research focuses on social and cultural innovations in urban, wireless and community media, and on developing information infrastructures, participatory cross-media and open source tools.

in 2004, m-cult was main organiser of izea2004 which involved 1200 participants in a wireless, wearable and sonic experience in Helsinki, Tallinn and on a Baltic cruise.

m-cult has proposed to launch a hub for urban media culture in helsinki's former bus station in 2005. The project involves a wide collaboration with partners in culture, technology and civic society.



wireless, participatory culture?

m-cult and the finnish context

finland has been a leading country in both wireless and participatory / open source technology development: m-cult works to further develop their cultural applications.

a lot of 'empirics' have been produced on mobile user cultures since 2000; m-cult proactive, socially and culturally innovative research and development informed by user and producer cultures.

in national strategies, the 'finnish model' of welfare-cum-information society is being updated to a model of creative, cultural information society. in this context, m-cult works to enhance access to and participation in media contents and tools.



Flash banner for m-cult's mediumi web journal issue 2.1. Mobile culture (April 2002)

m-cult research: creative crossings workshop

location, community and media workshop

Co-organised by m-cult, BANFF, Arts Council of England, April 2004 with the aim of initiating a research framework/consortium.

Objective to accumulate cultural, social and critical strategies for research and practice of pervasive, location based and cross media.

Focus on the transformative uses of place and space and the possibilities of social networking and participatory authoring provided by wireless and cross media platforms.

34 artist, researcher and designer participants from Canada, UK and Finland; 3 working groups focusing on participatory, cross-platform and metadata strategies.



Marc Tutters and Giles Lane debate on locations; Rachel Baker and Ben Russell on open/closed systems; Anne Galloway and Minna Tarkka summing up

creative crossings workshop

group 1 / participatory strategies: social networking

This group addressed issues of participatory development and collaborative authoring: the merging of private and public space, the utopias of open systems and the ways of building communities in diversity.

- how to design for unintended use/creative misuse? how can you design a platform that evolves? what is the moderating role of the practitioner? how can the practitioner negotiate multiple contexts?
- how do we establish appropriate boundaries or parameters for participation? how do we establish mutual agreements or common understandings while respecting diversity? what are the appropriate forms of explicit agreements? how do we influence "external" institutions and contexts? what are the values that practitioners should cultivate? what are the responsibilities of practitioners? What are the values implicit in code and software?
- what methods can artists use for engaging communities? how can we design for sustainability? how can we evaluate our products and process? what do we mean by participatory design? how can we link artistic, design and research methods? what is the role of time in participatory research?

creative crossings workshop

group 2/ media strategies: cross-platform user modes

The group discussed cross-platform strategies which span media and urban contexts; mobile, material and embodied, useful as well as playful modes of interaction and the development of hybrid genres and interfaces.

- **We need to develop a grammar of critical language** and a set of descriptors that define the experience of live data. Our discussion pointed to 3 areas: theories of time, understandings of embodiment & hybrid cultural data ranging from advertising, performance and architecture. This is necessary because we are collectively moving into mobile, trans-disciplinary, cross platform practice.

creative crossings workshop

group 3 / metadata strategies: access, mapping, and ontologies

The group addressed the conceptual, technical and social infrastructures of pervasive computing. Techniques of annotation, cartography and group modelling were discussed along questions of access, ownership and standards.

- how is "a location" meaningful when entry of data takes place from multiple locations and temporalities?
- ownership of data and networks of fundamental trust
- interface solutions for authoring interactive environments and narratives that pay attention to conditions of mobility?
- issues of agency as one moves through public space equipped with varying types of mobile media; crossing different cultural domains
- agency as the mode in which one engages with a system: author/producer/distributor/thief...
- multiple points of view and their representation
- ethnographic research of spatial ontologies and cross-cultural engagement and environment design
- design strategies for multiple languages in how to map metadata or ontological structures to enable "transferring" projects to different locations, or exchanging data (or metadata).

m-cult research: used (urban spaces and experience design)

used researchers

Heidi Tikka - Designing the user experience: reconfiguring social practices in wireless and public spaces

Tapio Mäkelä - Interdisciplinary trouble: situated user experience in new media

Susanna Koskinen - Digital documentaries: developing methods for collaborative audiovisual production

Andrew Paterson - Contextual media fieldwork for participatory wireless applications

Funding applied for 2005-07 / Finnish Academy and Arts Council of Finland / Arts and research interaction programme.



Heidi Tikka's participatory MMS piece situations4x at ISEA2004 exhibition, Kiasma.

m-cult research: used (urban spaces and experience design)

used objectives and methods

Build critical, interdisciplinary art/design/research practice - special foci in interactions between media arts, urban geography and planning, wireless development, experience design

Understand the reconfiguration of spaces and locations by wireless technologies through a sociomaterial approach

Innovate production and use practices of urban spaces; develop access for the wireless 'public domain'

Appropriate new media ethnographies and participatory design methods for media arts and critical practice.

Create metadata and ontologies as well as social strategies to enable public authoring.

Develop testing and documentation methods for mobile user experiences and participatory production processes.



moon light



lager light



aurora borealis



031203+2023.3gp



street lights




Andrew Paterson & Signe Pucena, from the Northern Lights exercise in Mapping and sewing together mythologies workshop, 2003.

some questions of interest

visibility

How to make things visible is a concern shared by media artists, usability designers and surveillance operators alike. New forms of fetishism are being developed in the visualisation and branding efforts of wireless, immaterial data.

The building of wireless domains requires the development of visibility research labs and discourse.

let's warchalk..!	
KEY	SYMBOL
OPEN NODE	ssid  bandwidth
CLOSED NODE	ssid 
WEP NODE	ssid access contact  bandwidth

blackbeltjones.com/warchalking



Maps from Esther Polak's Amsterdam Realtime 2003; Media Lab UIAH, Beacon design project for HP, 3GSM Cannes 2001.

some questions of interest

determinism

GPS technologies involve a view from nowhere, the determinism of satellite vision and missile accuracy. Before location-based push and pull services have kicked off, the tracking industry is booming.

But is the 'tactical' art of chance or algorithm-based drifting proposed by some locative media artists a resistive enough practice?



Display at Suunto headquarters, Vantaa 2002.

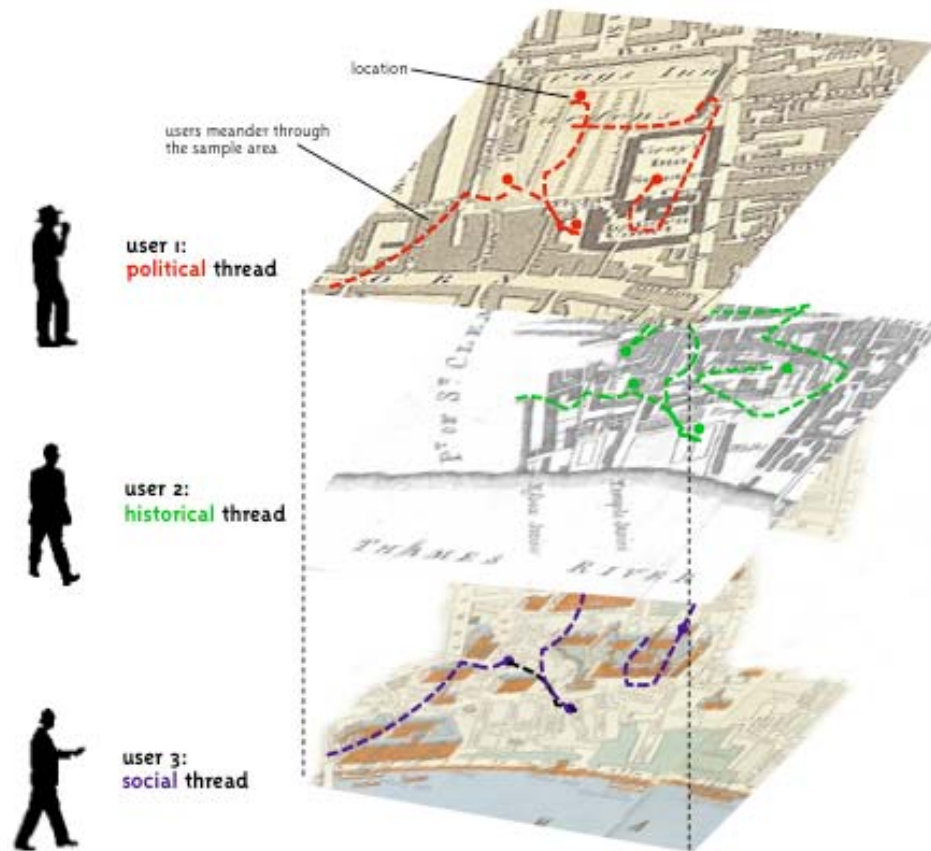
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some questions of interest

context

The production and reproduction of locality and neighbourhoods is a complex process. Many wireless/locative projects still remain within reproducing or repurposing technologies and narrow back the scope from a contextual to a 'localizing' one.

How should we work towards a richer, multidimensional approach to the locatedness/situatedness of human experience?



Proboscis, Urban tapestries documentation 2003.

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some questions of interest

governance

Participatory design has its twin roots in democracy and managerialism, and open systems often involve unspoken boundaries and spaces of closure.

New practices of collaborative, multi-sited reflexivity should be developed to support participatory processes.

