Modularity and Space Juxtaposition: Beyond Site-specificity in Art

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Abstract

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“Modularity and Space Juxtaposition: Beyond Site-specificity in Art” suggests a modular structure that constructs and presents digital artworks related to spatial practice. This structure involves multi-layered space, interconnected modules and nomadic qualities. This dissertation discusses the discourses of site-specific art, cultural specificity and spatial practices in an artwork. The research analyzes characteristics of locative artworks, such as the unstable relationship between spatialized narrative and its site, the temporal shift in multilayered space, and the significance of this modularity in an artwork.

Chapter One of this dissertation, Introduction, reveals the importance of the origin of locative art while presents a critical analysis of the art practice in the 1960s.

Chapter Two, The Bonds, describes artistic approaches to everyday life and argues that elements from our everyday life in art projects as the bonds that connect each other.

In Chapter Three, Characteristics of Locative Art, it suggests a new art discipline, which originates from site-specific art and provides a theoretical framework. This analytical structure manifests in technological advancement of mobile technology, spatialized narrative and its modular structure.

While in Chapter Four, The Art Projects, it describes the dissertation's art projects both conceptually and technologically. It also explains the diagnostic art-making process and justifies its contribution to history of art, in relation to the domains covered in the previous chapters. The last chapter foresees how to extend the boundaries of the suggested framework and practice. It includes both possible technological developments and exploration in concepts discussed.

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1. Introduction

Site-specific art practice usually refers to artworks that exist in a particular space. A famous quote from the minimalist artist, Richard Serra, reveals the essence of this art practice. In 1985, after a public hearing to determine whether his work *Tilted Arc* needed to be relocated, he remarked:

As I pointed out, Tilted Arc was conceived from the start as a site-specific sculpture and was not meant to be 'site-adjusted' or 'relocated'. Site- specific works deal with the environmental components of given places. The scale, size and location of site-specific works are determined by the topography of the site, be it urban, landscape or architecture enclosure. The works become part of the site, and restructure both conceptually and perceptually the organisation of it.[1]

However, Serra's definition of this practice remains controversial. Because many argue that site-specific art should apply to any artwork that is made in response to a site or interacts with any element of a site. In addition, this term 'site-specific art' originates in the 1960s, defines the production, presentation and reception of artworks in conjunction with the idea of the site, its cultural and physical qualities. This includes light installations, sound installations, environmental art, public sculptures, dance performances and digital art, etc.

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[1] Richard Serra, *Writings/Interviews* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), 202

Instead of discussing approaches that define site-specific artworks, this chapter focuses on the critical analysis of minimalist and conceptualist practices in site-specific art.

Rather than 'establish its place', the minimalist object emphasises a transitive definition of site, forcing a self-conscious perception in which the viewer confronts her own effort 'to locate, to place' the work....[2]

Figure 1: Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc*, 1981-1989

In the book *Site-specific art performance, place, and documentation*, Nick Kaye shares his insights on site-specific practice by exploring Robert Morris' sculptural practice. He

[2] Nick Kaye, *Site-specific art performance, place, and documentation* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2

states that Morris' *Mirrored Cubes (aka. Untitled)*, exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art, New York in 1965, 'penetrated' into the gallery space, and abstracted the outer space and inner space of the sculpture. Morris positioned four mirror plated cubes as if they are placed at the corners of a larger square. As such, the multiple layers of reflection were unavoidable. In Morris' cubes, the reflection of the gallery space became the site of the artwork, which includes the audience and viewers of the work. It presents the instability of the site, as the reflected images are constantly changing.

When compared with Serra's conceptual framework, Morris considers the fact that the site of an artwork is a space where people interact. Although Serra defended *Tilted Arc* and stated that site-specific art should not be 'site-adjusted' or 'relocated', his earlier work *Shift* reveals the importance of the audience's participation and their spatial relationship with the artwork.

What I wanted was the dialectic between one's perception of the place in totality and one's relation to the field as walked.[3]

Shift redefines the viewers' perception of the landscape by placing concrete sections together in a zigzag pattern. Viewers, or precisely those who 'penetrate' into the space, perceive the terrain as a formless and undetermined structure.

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[3] Serra, 11

Figure 2: Richard Serra's *Shift*, 1970-

During nearly the same period in which Morris presented his *Mirrored Cube*, Hans Haacke presented *Condensation Cube* which engages with the natural environment of a site. Moisture at a unique time in the site where this transparent cube is placed, becomes the content of the work. Hence, invisible elements such as humidity, subtle changes in temperature and overall environment of the site changing constantly would eventually affect the form of the work.

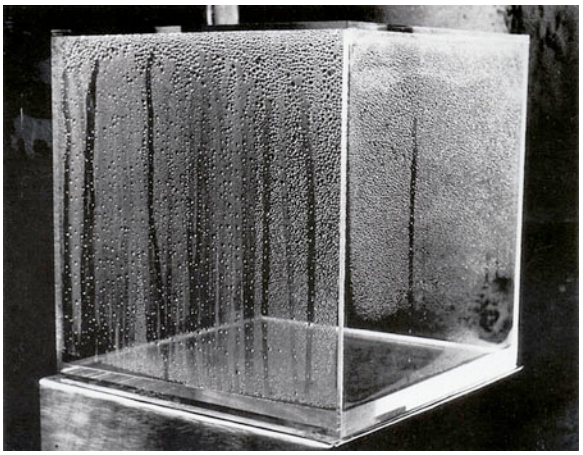

Figure 3: Han Haacke's *Condensation Cube*, 1963-65

Site-specific art could be 'site-adjusted' as in the case with the above artworks, especially in terms of embracing different qualities that exist in the site. Whether the work can be 'relocated' depends heavily on how the word 'site' is defined in site-specific

art, important concerns include: ‘What is a site?’, ‘How has the site been constructed?’ and ‘Where is the site?’.

An existing space may outlive its original purpose and the raison d'être which determines its forms, functions, and structures. It may thus in a sense become vacant, and susceptible to being diverted, re-appropriated and put to a use quite different from its initial one.[4]

Henri Lefebvre’s *Production of space* affirms space is never absolute and neutral. Instead, the ‘construction’ of space is a complex and bidirectional process based on social values, human perception and spatial practices.

Anthropologist Marc Augé conceived ‘non-places’[5] as places of transience according to their usage and human spatial practices. The theory stresses that spatial practices are more significant than the physical space itself. It defines ‘location’ as the name of a place, whereas ‘space’ is defined as the physical/ architectural form and an ‘end-product’ of spatial practice. As a consequence, the word ‘site’ should be interpreted in a straightforward fashion as a ‘location or place or space of events’. Each period's or culture's construction of ‘site’ is re-defined on the grounds of relevant, dominant social norms, time or practice, but not on any claim to be the prior truth. In other words, the concept of ‘site’ is temporary and volatile.

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[4] Henri Lefebvre, *Production of space* (UK: Blackwell, 1991), 167
[5] Marc Augé, *Non-places : introduction to an anthropology of super modernity* (London: Verso, 1995)

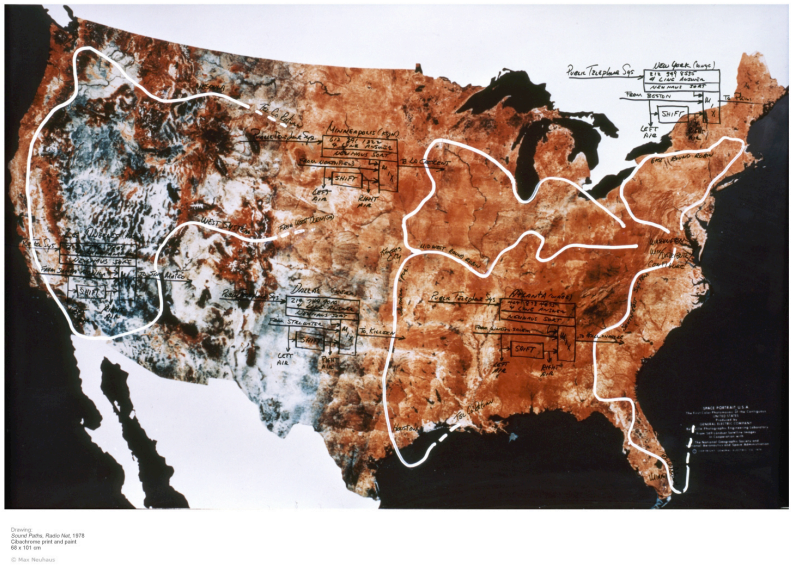

Figure 4: Max Neuhaus' Radio Net, 1977

The pioneering sound artist, Max Neuhaus, created one of the very first telematic sound performances *Radio Net* in 1977. It was a closed-loop radio network, which propagated a radio signal from one transmitter in a city to that of another city in the United States. The two-hour performance adopted communication technologies as a bidirectional process. *Radio Net*'s structure formed a cartography of radio wave spectra and an invisible landscape. We can see the technological advancement in this project, and how technology affects an artwork's structure. The invisible network formed by multiple sites in this work, cannot be described by the theory of site-specificity, especially for Serra's rigid structure. Because a site in site-specific art usually refers to a certain space while this artwork was traveling across several places. The communication and interaction among audience in different places are inseparable to the artwork, so the connection among places and the idea of multiple sites become important, though none of the sites is superior.

As technology develops, and art forms evolve, there are more and more artworks related to space and site which cannot be explained fully using Serra's theory. Recent digital art practices reveal the importance of shifting sociality in public spaces. They frame the virtual space as a place of events and social practice because this affects the way how we 'occupy' space in the city.

Figure 5: Blast Theory's *Can You See Me Now?*, 2003

Can You See Me Now? was a urban game first exhibited at the b.tv festival 2002 in Sheffield, UK. It happened online and in the city at the same time. Members of Blast Theory (members) played against online players (avatars) in an online city. The game placed avatars at random locations on a virtual map while members appeared on the map according to their real time physical locations. The members tried to catch the avatars in real city space and they also exchanged information and tactics with others via walkie-talkies. Once they caught an avatar, they would take a photo of that particular location in real city space.

In *Can You See Me Now?,* the virtual map space and the idea of 'presence' in this work suggest an insight. The virtual map exists on the internet, where cultural interaction

happens. Meanwhile, this map is an abstraction of the physical space, i.e. the cityscape. When the runners took pictures of places where they caught avatars, there is no doubt that the virtual players did not exist physically in those particular places. The ‘spaces’ in this project are all superimposed, mixed up and blurred. Its site was a virtual map - an extension of the physical site. Yet, it engaged more people and created a network of complex, hybrid space, which could not be analyzed solely using the term ‘site-specific’. These spaces make a statement about what a site means in the 21st Century. ‘Site’ nowadays should be interpreted as a space of events and an ‘end-product’ of spatial practice. In addition, this ‘space’ can be either physical, virtual or hybrid, similar to where interactions happen in *Can You See Me Now?*.

On the contrary, *Milk Project* created by Esther Polak, Ieva Auzina and RIXC - at Riga Center for New Media Culture in 2004, utilized the same technology, but a different approach towards ‘space’. This locative art project traced the production and transportation process of milk from Latvian cows. The artists invited farmers and drivers to wear GPS devices, interpreted the resulting data and created routes of how the milk was delivered from the udders of cows to consumers’ plates.

The structure of this work is simple enough. For instance, the content of the work depended on how people deliver milk, and the short stories involved. The stories were documented in both text and images, presented in the form of a video installation. It is concerned with what was happening on the route which had been derived from and defined by spatial practice; the route does not exist if there is no milk delivered, and it is a site defined by actions and culture. Also, it is meaningless not to just read the stories

as a whole as coherence will not be achieved, and as a result, one may not understand that the work revolves around the delivery process of milk. In other words, the entire entity was made up of connected stories that happened along the milk line, and these constructed the spatialized narrative, which was specific to the line.

The art group regarded the work as landscape art instead of addressing any cultural and political statements. The traces of movement depicted the activities of the participants involved, and none of them was omnipresent. Their collaborative force and technology facilitated the digital landscape art.

Figure 6: Esther Polak, Ieva Auzina and RIXC's *Milk Project*, 2004

In both *Can You See Me Now?* and *Milk Project*, there were hybrid forms of spaces, and their sites were complex. The term 'site-specificity' is too weak to describe their states of flux and nomadic qualities. However, digital art nowadays deals with locations, spaces and sites that mostly originated from site-specific art in the 1960s. They extend the idea of location, site, spatial practice and space. Moreover, due to the invention of telematics and mobile technologies, the original framework cannot explain the innovative discipline entirely. Neither can the rigid one from Serra's *Tilted Arc* nor the mutable form from *Mirrored Cubes* and *Condensation Cube.* This dissertation is not concerned with

defining ‘site-specific art’ for today’s digital art practices. On the contrary, it is concerned with suggesting a new form of art and discourse about how to appreciate this form of art, a new genre – locative art. It is also concerned with the notion of what the relationships among sites are, what the relationship between the site/ context is, and where the site(s) is/ are’.

Most digital artworks, in relation to space, sites and mobile technologies, encompass a number of invisible elements from their sites. This multi-faceted model is comprised of audience participation, historical backgrounds, collective memories as well as different form of spaces. The principles will be outlined in the next chapter – The Bonds.

2. The Bonds

Figure 7: Vito Acconci's *Following Piece*, 1969

Vito Acconci's *Following Piece* is a significant project in relation to art and everyday life practices in public spaces. Algorithms in art are sets of rules that artists create and during the process of art making; artists or softwares created by artists in digital art make decisions based on them. In this piece, Acconci's algorithm was first to pick random strangers on the streets, then until they disappeared and entered private spaces where he could not enter. This work was carried out every day for a month and he took video documentation. His own algorithm shows how artists contextualize public spaces and private spaces in art. It also emphasizes the uncontrollable nature of our movement in everyday life and public spaces. Acconci's algorithm decided his own movement in public spaces and this solely depended on actions of random strangers. This reflected how his movement and those related everyday life events were affected

by ‘external forces’. In spite of ethical questions arising from this project, one of the major elements in the piece was role of the participants in public spaces and everyday life.

The multilayered space in his piece is worth paying attention to. When he was following his ‘targets’, he was aware that he was creating art. In other words, his space is an art space. However from his targets’ perspective, the space is a public space. In this case, the contradictory definition of space proves that action defines space. Art originates from everyday life; it provides a channel and intersection between artists and their audience. Acconci’s paradoxical structure framed the artwork, and randomness in everyday life enriched its content.

From collage paintings to performance and excursions, Dadaists embraced everyday life events as active ingredients in their practice. For example, Marcel Duchamp’s famous ready-made sculpture *Fountain.* He exhibited an everyday life object, a standard urinal, and signed it with a fake signature (R. Mutt). This artwork transformed what we normally regard as non-art into art. Besides Duchamp’s anti-art innovation, Tzara and other Dadaists structured their works, especially for their performances and excursions, around the creation of an experience between dream and reality. Their claim of ‘anti-art‘ is the most ironic. They made art ‘anti-art‘. Their lack of aesthetics becomes their aesthetics, and also their manifestos.

In documenting art on the basis of the supreme simplicity: novelty, we are human and true for the sake of amusement, impulsive, vibrant to crucify boredom … I write a

manifesto and I want nothing, yet I say certain things, and in principle I am against manifestos, as I am also against principles … I write this manifesto to show that people can perform contrary actions together while taking one gulp of fresh air; I am against action, for continuous contradiction, and for affirmation too, I am neither for or against because I hate common sense.[6]

Similar to their claims stated above, the way they interpret 'common sense' is ironic too. Elements from everyday life in their works are the 'common sense' (Duchamp's urinal object for example), and through their 'anti-art' process (by exhibiting the urinal object in a museum), the anti-art object becomes art. The process involves setting up a situation and an experience which originates from everyday life, and deconstructing it at the same time. Although art critics criticizes their bankruptcy in aesthetics (this is what they were aiming for), their innovation in creating new forms of experience and influence on their successors – Surrealism, Situationist International and Conceptual Art – cannot be ignored.

Social activists or interventionists provoke their audience by presenting didactic messages and activate social changes, normally in public spaces. There are fundamental differences between this practice and artworks that involve public spaces. Art projects that involve public space do not necessarily aim for social change.

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[6] Tristan Tzara, *'Dada Manifesto 1918' in The Dada Reader: A Critical Anthology*, ed. Dawn Ades (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 36-42

Figure 8: Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen's *Binocular*, 1991

Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen transform everyday life objects and stereotypical objects into large public sculptures, such as *Binoculars* in Venice, California and *Cupid's Span* in San Francisco. Their monumental sculptures situated in different cities transform the public's perception of what sculptures are. The artists alter the scale of ordinary objects, and these iconic images are often freely associated or have multiple meanings. These sculptures should be viewed as pure forms of objects, as monuments in public spaces that juxtapose with our everyday life.

City spaces are stages of everyday life; they are full of meanings, and are constantly being 'written' or 're-written'. Hence, we regard cities (i.e. open public spaces) as spaces of everyday life events.

Spaces in everyday life are similar to these objects, and they often can be rendered as different acts and be 're-written'. Sense of space and its definition are highly subjective, and names of spaces are usually decided by urban planners, governments and

authorities. As mentioned previously, Marc Augé stresses spatial practice of a certain space is far more important than that physical space. Hence a sense of space developed by a particular person depends on his/ her perception, memory of that space and practice in that space. Meanings and representations of spaces in everyday life are no longer static.

The manifestation of each artwork is different from another, and often merely depends on what kind of element in our everyday life has been selected. In 1998, French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud suggested the term ‘relational art’, which defined as art practice concerned with communities, human relations and social context. This art practice stands against art practices which concern an independent and private space. Since relational art consists of a structure formed by collectivity and elements from our society, he also stated that methods of connecting each elements together become less visible.

Art keeps together moments of subjectivity associated with singular experiences, be it Cezanne’s apples or Buren’s striped structures. The composition of this bonding agent, whereby encountering atoms manage to form a word, is, needless to say, dependent on the historical context. What today’s informed public understands by ‘keeping together’ is not the same thing that this public imagined back in the 19th century. Today, the ‘glue’ is less obvious as our visual experience has become more complex, enriched by a century of photographic images, then cinematography (introduction of the sequence shot as a

new dynamic unity), thus enabling us to recognize the 'world' as a collection of disparate elements (installation, for instance) that no unifying matter, no bronze, links.[7]

Bourriaud's definition of 'glue' can be seen as methods that artists select events, and how they connect them together. Public space can also be regarded as a pool which is filled with everyday life events. Artists, such as Acconci, Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen, have selected objects and events to form the bonds. According to Bourriaud, the bonds become more complex, and they are not restricted to visual elements. Everyday life is an active ingredient in forming the bonds. There are no objections to how art relates to our society or it is a part of our culture, although revealing this relationship is not necessarily the ultimate goal. Instead, art should be unique and distinct in creating an experience.

Figure 9: Jacques Tati's *Playtime*, 1967

Jacques Tati's film *Playtime*, is a perfect example of how visual and aural rhythms with futuristic everyday life experiences are synergized. It has been described as plotless and without 'stories', in contrast to those films with clear narratives and formalistic

[7] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les Presse Du Reel, 2002), 17-18

structures. Tati positions us in his rigid, technological and futuristic world, and portrays the life of the main character ('Hulot') as humorous and a person who fails at life. Hulot finds himself full of curiosity in this world, unlike other characters in the film. In the scene that shows he is waiting for a job interview, Tati emphasizes the sound of a telecommunication machine, stepping sound of an employee and the sound from a sofa, which Hulot sits on. Cinema is a form of mirror, not absolutely accurate but selectively magnified and amplified. In *Playtime*, the bonds, in Bourriaud's term, especially in the scene mentioned, were those details in everyday life which often ignored by us. Tati emphasizes this surrealism of sound in our everyday life and this goes beyond what Bourriaud called '*cinematography (introduction of the sequence shot as a new dynamic unity)'*, instead, he creates new relationships among our everyday life, sound and visual images.

The bonds turn invisible and more complex in installation art, as Bourriaud mentioned and it is also true in new media art. *Milk Project*, referred earlier in chapter 1, reveals different disparate elements keep together and forms a unique 'world'. Participants from different locations along the milk line told stories about how milk was delivered and these stories rewrote meanings of locations. One of the stories told by Janis Simsons (one of the participants), who is a milk farm, showed his work schedule in a particular day. On the web archive of this project, artists chose not to show the names of participants' locations (e.g Janis Simsons'), instead, they showed their GPS coordinates, animations of their recorded movements and their stories in text. The audience perceive participants' locations as spots along the milk line, and these spots

are spots of memories and cultural practice in this project. The names of locations are no longer important to audience. Meanwhile, all spots are bonded through actions and movements of the participants, and this bonds are invisible and inaudible.

From dadaism, film to new media art and locative media, artists select events in everyday life and create selectively magnified worlds, the space in these worlds can be multilayered, contradictory and overlapping. This includes actions, visual, aural, cultural and psychological elements. Most of them manipulate events in everyday life as content of their works but their strategies, structures and approaches are different.

3. Characteristics of Locative Art

The term ‘Locative Media’, coined by Karlis Kalnins[8], refers to digital art practices in relation to either physical, cultural, epistemological or contextual elements, or ubiquitous technologies. Before the birth of the term, art practices from Thomas Philippoteaux’s paintings to Waag Society’s *Amsterdam Realtime*, revealed the engagement of ‘locative-ness’ in various art practices.

Philippoteaux created immersive cylindrical paintings during late 19th Century, one of his famous works is *The Battle of Gettyburg*. This kind of paintings, also known as Cyclorama, aims for creating realistic experiences for audiences as they feel they are surrounded by panoramic images. In Philippoteaux’s work, he showed a real war experience and by showing the painting in a 360 degree cylindrical building, the spatial relationship between audience and this painting is far more important than that of traditional paintings.

Similarly, in most of the locative artworks, artists concern with spatial relationship, rather than the space or the site itself. But due to our more complex sensory experience nowadays, the audience no longer ‘sees’ the artworks to be happening in 19th century. They become active in ‘viewing’ the artworks.

Waag Society, Esther Polak and Jeroen Kee created the project *Amsterdam Realtime* in 2001. Public audiences in Amsterdam were invited to be equipped with a portable tracer device developed by Waag Society. The devices kept track of their positions by using

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[8] Anne Galloway and Matthew Ward, "Locative Media As Socialising And Spatializing Practice: Learning From Archaeology" *Leonardo Electronic Almanac*, http://leoalmanac.org/journal/vol_14/lea_v14_n03-04/gallowayward.html (accessed 2, March, 2011)

GPS technology and data synchronized with that stored in a central server in realtime. The visualized data would then be shown on a map. The map does not contain any streets names, landmarks or buildings. Instead, it contains traces of human movements.

Figure 10: Christina Kubisch's *Electrical Walk*, 1970-

Another locative sound art example, Christina Kubisch chooses the invisible electromagnetic waves in *Electrical Walk*, and creates sonic narratives within different cities. *Electric Walk* is an outdoor installation which consists of lots of electrical wires. It employs custom made headphones that detect inaudible electromagnetic waves emitted by both wires and different objects in the city, such as ambulances, neon lights, and convert them into sound. The project has been exhibited in various cities.
Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby described 'hertzian space' as an interface between human and electrical devices.

We are experiencing a new kind of connection to our artificial environment. The electronic object spread over many frequencies of the electromagnetic spectrum, partly

visible, partly not. Sense organs function as transducers, converting environmental energy into neutral signals.[9]

In Kubisch's work, technology used in different sites are the same, and different sites and cities, and movements from the audience enrich the content with the invisible, 'hertzian' space. Kubisch chooses to create this installation by using an array of electrical wires which are all exposed to the audience. She states:

The palette of these noises, their timbre and volume vary from site to site and from country to country. They have one thing in common: they are ubiquitous, even where one would not expect them… The perception of everyday reality changes when one listens to the electrical fields; what is accustomed appears in a different context. Nothing looks the way it sounds. And nothing sounds the way it looks.[10]

This unique sonic experience differs from one location to another. In other words, the most important elements of an artwork are how the artwork is structured around the idea of spatial practice, and how different locations affect the artwork but not the kind of high-end technology involved.

Kubisch's piece cannot be located inside a gallery or museum, and most of the locations that she chooses are cities. These cities provide rich spectra of

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[9] Anthony Dunne, *Hertzian Tales: Electronic Products, Aesthetic Experience, and Critical Design* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 107

[10] Christian Kubisch, "Turku is Listening" *Electrical Walks*, http://www.turku2011.fi/en/s/electric-walks_en (accessed 12, April, 2011)

electromagnetic waves. In each city, the sound is different from one to the other, though the technology used are the same. The sound foregrounds the importance of everyday life, spatial practice, the 'hertzian' space and how the electromagnetic spectrum in a particular location affects the work as a whole. In her work, sites are important but they are not site-specific, because the 'hertzian' space is volatile and invisible. The 'space' itself is in a state of flux and the sites are important to the work due to the activities of electromagnetic spectra happen there, in other words, the spatial practice in a particular site is important, rather than the physical space.

As Kubisch situates the work in different public spaces, this giving a more complex structure. She relocates the artwork and the audience in *Electrical Walks* transforms the public space into an art space together with the artist, through their movements in the city.

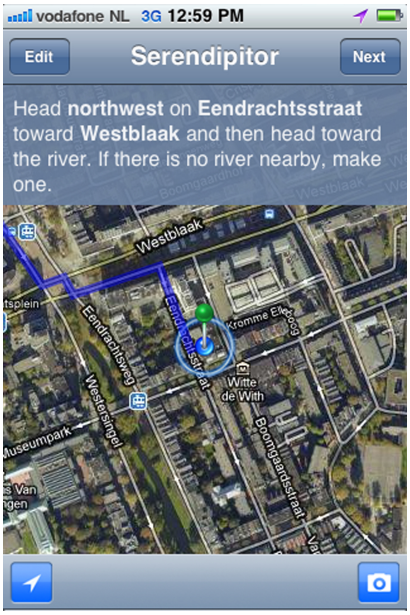

Figure 11: Mark Shepard's *Serendipitor*, 2010

A more recent example of locative art is *Serendipitor* by Mark Shepard. This iphone navigation app provides alternative routes to users and suggests actions, such as taking a photo, picking a flower. Users enter an origin and a destination, then the app will map a route between them. They can also choose to increase or decrease the complexity of the routes. When users reach the destinations, they can choose to send emails and share their routes and steps they took with others. This work adopts a similar approach to Kubisch's. Spatial practices in both projects are the active ingredients. Shepard even gives more freedom to users, and due to the technological advancement, the users can now experience the artwork wherever they are. The iphone app provides alternative routes for the users, and presents another kind of cartography, which differs from normal routes provided by online map applications. Those routes are usually longer than we normally take and encourage users to explore our environment in everyday lives. Yet, this personal experience has been guided by some simple instructions in the app.

Serendipitor is another example of how art transforms space, and sites of the artwork become indistinct. In Acconci's *Following,* the artist experienced the art space that is created by himself while others, such as persons he followed, experienced an everyday life public space. This concept expands in *Serendipitor*, since users experience and create art spaces, together with the artist. These spaces are multilayered and overlapped. Furthermore, sites in this artwork could be anywhere in the world with an internet connection, hence its sites are hybrid in form.

In addition to Karlis Kalnins' definition of locative media, one of the unique characteristic of locative art is how artists include everyday life events, i.e. actions in public space. Artists structure these events in order to transform the public space as well as the spatial relationship between the artwork and the audience.

Internet art (often referred to as net art) is a form of digital artwork distributed via the Internet. This form of art has circumvented the traditional dominance of the gallery and museum system, delivering aesthetic experiences via the Internet. In many cases, the viewer is drawn into some kind of interaction with the work of art. Artists working in this manner are sometimes referred to as net artists.[11]

As defined in Wikipedia, internet art often refers art practices that do not require a physical space. Locative art and internet art both share a certain degree of mobility, but their main difference is their sites. The sites of locative art could be transient. For example, in Kubisch's and Shepard's work, they include spatial, physical, and cultural qualities of sites temporarily. While for most of the internet artworks, their sites are virtual space, and most of the early internet artworks, e.g. Jodi's works, do not include physical or spatial elements. Jodi is an artist collective which creates internet art since 1994. In *walkmonster_start()*, the collective sent a email contains comment on political and war issues to a mailing list. The email was written as if it is a poem and at the same time, it was a piece of functional C programming language source code from their

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[11] Wikipedia contributors, "Internet Art" *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia,* http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Internet_art (accessed 17, January, 2012)

previous project. Although Jodi presented their works in galleries, most of their works do not require a physical space. Hence, locative art is closer to site-specific art than internet art, in which the definition of space and site are no longer restricted to a distinct, physical space.

Another similar practice to internet art and locative art is telematic art. It is defined as artworks adopting telematic technology, such as the mobile phone and other telecommunication devices. One of the telematics artworks, Heath Bunting's *Kings Cross Phone-In* in 1994, opened up new possibilities of performance art and the participants were aware of their actions. Bunting created a webpage, described the project and what people needed to do if they wanted to join the project. He also listed a pay phone number at Kings Cross station he would call during the performance. The artist observed the listed phone numbers' activities at the station and summarized events into a written report. Kings Cross in London became the main site of the piece while the distributed network covered locations where people telephone in. This work emphasizes the communities and the network but in actual fact, it had a main, central site. No other sites were superior to the main site. On the contrary, in Shepard's work, all users' inputs are important, and the sites (users' locations) in the network are equally important.

Internet art is distinguished by real-time and virtual space while in locative art, such as *Serendipitor*, the transient and mobile natures stand out.

In *Serendipitor*, there are multiple sites involved, and qualities of different locations are highly important. However, the definition of site in locative art is no longer limited to

physical, discrete spaces. Instead, it may involves ‘hertzian’, virtual or hybrid space. Furthermore, qualities of different locations, i.e audiences’ actions and the environment, are constantly changing, hence these qualities affect the user’s experience in *Serendipitor*.

Another feature of this kind of art is modularity and in *Serendipitor*, each user’s interaction in a location can be considered as a module. This modular structure, which outlined in a book of Lev Manovich as one of the principles of new media. The established media art scholar depicts a new form of media art in terms of content and structure. He states:

This principle can be called "fractal structure of new media.” Just as a fractal has the same structure on different scales, a new media object has the same modular structure throughout. Media elements, be it images, sounds, shapes, or behaviors, are represented as collections of discrete samples (pixels, polygons, voxels, characters, scripts). These elements are assembled into larger-scale objects but they continue to maintain their separate identity. The objects themselves can be combined into even larger objects -- again, without losing their independence.[12]

But modularity in locative art goes beyond what Manovich describes. With the development of internet technology and wireless communication, artworks existing simultaneously in different spaces is possible. In locative art, due to its transient and

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[12] Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 30

mobile nature, chance events usually occurs. When art becomes more open-ended and volatile, authorship in traditional art forms turns invisible. The experience created by locative art depends on how artists select events in everyday life, as mentioned previously. It also depends on how they put them together, and what the ‘glue’ is, according to Bourriaud. As we can see in the *Milk Project*, mentioned in Chapter 1, the artists limited the way how traces had been created. The group looked for specific content and qualities of narratives through interviews. Hence, different micro-narratives, told by different persons involved in the milk line, such as drivers and milk farm, in the project were delivered successfully to the audience in the gallery. Each micro-narrative in this artwork can be regarded as a module and all modules are well-glued by the milk line which is a cultural practice – a typical example of how action defines site.

In *Milk Project*, each micro-narrative can be read as an individual story of everyday life and by combining those narratives together through artists’ choice, it forms *"fractal structure of new media”*, in Manovich’s term. But this modular structure in locative art does not solely exist in one, discrete place, instead, all modules are spread out in all kind of spaces.

4. The Art Projects

The two art projects in this dissertation review an innovative form of creating micro-narratives and locative experience. This experience originates from everyday life, and extends the sensuality to physical space, as well as a hybrid form of space. The first project, *Where's the Chicken?*[13] interprets locative public art as an augmentation of site-specific art practice. It attempts to situate the same piece of art at different sites, foregrounds the cultural differences and suggests a more compelling structure for today's digital arts in relation to locative technologies.

As for the second project, *Around the Corner*[14], it extends users' interaction into a multilayered, hybrid space. Spaces are no longer defined by their physicality but instead, by actions and memories.

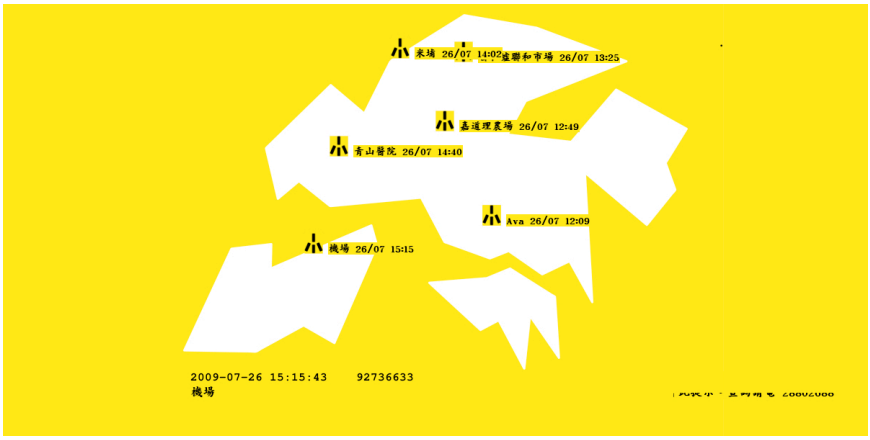


Figure 12: On Ni Wan's Where's the Chicken?, 2009

[13] On Ni Wan, "Where's the Chicken? on Vimeo" *Vimeo,* http://vimeo.com/18069758 (accessed 17, February, 2012)
[14] On Ni Wan, "Around the Corner on Vimeo" *Vimeo*, http://vimeo.com/25802510 (accessed 20, February, 2012)

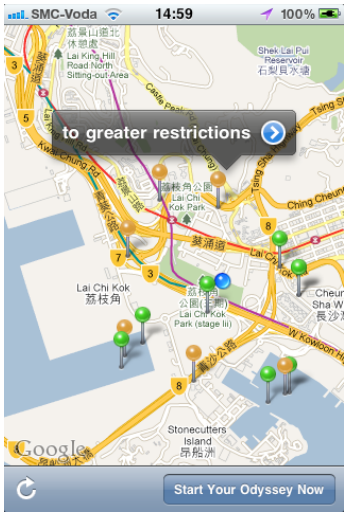


Figure 13: On Ni Wan's Around the Corner, 2011-

Both projects encounter maps and micro-narratives. The maps construct a documentation-like experience for the audience, yet it never gives them a full and realistic picture. The map in *Where's the Chicken?* marks the presence of the chicken robot, and I chose the locations of its appearance due to the 'embedded stories' of that particular space. Whereas in *Around the Corner*, the map does not function as a mark of presence; it is a shared hybrid space which brings users together. Even the frameworks of both projects are similar. *Around the Corner* takes a step further, and integrates hybrid space into locative art.

It also adopts the modular structure, discussed in previous chapter. Each user's viewed animation can be regarded as a module in a network, and the artwork's structure resembles a celestial coordinate-like system. The audience enriches the artwork through its interactions and exploration of the connections among modules. While the network is indefinite and formless, different modules are inter-related and connected through their forms and contents.

4.1 Narrative Overview

This first project is a locative public artwork which engages interaction from public audience, collaborative narrative and mobile technology. The artwork constructs a spatialized modular structure which bonds different visible and invisible elements, such as the robot, culturally specific locations and public participation.

The autonomous chicken robot 'performed' in 18 culturally specific locations around Hong Kong. The public participated by using text messaging (SMS) and bringing the chicken robot for outings.

Figure 14: On Ni Wan's Where's the Chicken?, 2009

The narrative hybridizes, enriches and continues with the public's interactions and stories. The public could interact with the project by sending text messages (SMS) to a designated phone number. Incidentally, this idea was inspired by a game, treasure hunt. Those who sent SMSes were allowed to bring the chicken robot for outings during the

second phase as a reward. Hence they were constructing a collaborative ‘Chicken Map of Hong Kong’ with me.

Figure 15: On Ni Wan’s Where’s the Chicken?, 2009

I constructed six robot chickens for this project. They included a fiberglass enclosure, electronic circuits and motors which enabled breathing motion, control beak motion and eye blinking motion via crank mechanism. The chicken robots also produced sounds with an embedded sound playing module. I brought one of them to different cultural specific locations around Hong Kong during the exhibition period.

Figure 16: On Ni Wan’s Where’s the Chicken?, 2009

The locations of the chicken robot were updated and converted into a graphical representation, ‘Chicken Map of Hong Kong’. Public messages had been rerouted from

the mobile phone to the computer via Bluetooth connection, and shown at the bottom of the ‘Chicken Map of Hong Kong’, which is algorithmic processed by a custom-made software.

Those who sent SMSes during this phase were automatically signed up for the second phase of the exhibition. If they called the designated phone number, they would hear a sound recording in both Cantonese and English, which introduced the project and method of participation.

During the first part of the performance, a small computer program tracked my location. In addition, I held a performance in each cultural specific location of the 18 districts, and marked the chicken robot’s appearance at each location.

Figure 17: On Ni Wan’s Where’s the Chicken?, 2009

After the first part of the performance, I edited a video documentation of the performance together with the ‘Chicken Map of Hong Kong’. The video documentation and the other four chicken robot were exhibited in the Academy of Visual Arts (AVA), Hong Kong Baptist University during the media arts festival *Where’s the Chicken?* in July, 2009.

During the second part of the performance, public participants who had sent SMSes and who been signed up previously to bring the chicken robot out were allowed to participate in the ‘chicken outing’. They brought the chicken robot, together with a trolley around Hong Kong. They took pictures of the robot, and interacted with other people in the public. When they returned, they shared their experiences/ narratives with me, and created a ‘Collaborative Chicken Map of Hong Kong’.

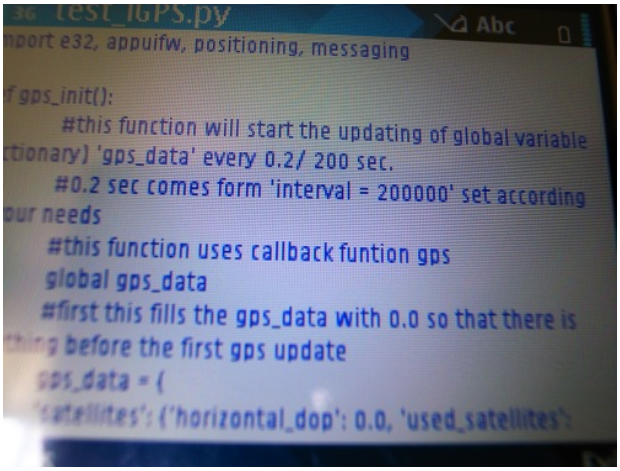


Figure 18: On Ni Wan’s Where’s the Chicken?, 2009

There are five major technical developments in this dissertation project: a custom-made software running on Ubuntu Linux, a light-weight script that runs on a Nokia E71 Smartphone (my phone) and a piece of Arduino code that runs on iDuino microcontroller while another two are hardware and fabrication.

The operation system, Ubuntu Linux 7.04, has been installed in an Apple MacBook (the laptop), and a custom-made software written in Python redirects all short message services (SMSes) received by the mobile phone to the laptop thereby generating the ‘Chicken Map of Hong Kong’ in the form of a graphic representation.

In *Around the Corner*, when users launch this semi-autonomous software, their current locations will be marked on the map, and the data will be uploaded to an internet server, together with their current date and time. They can also view other placemarks created by other users stored in the server. Once the user clicks 'Start Your Odyssey Now', the server side software will retrieve the data on the users' locations and have it mixed with the texts, generated via Markov Chain Algorithm which is based on Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. Then, random placemarks with mixed texts will be automatically marked on the users' maps.

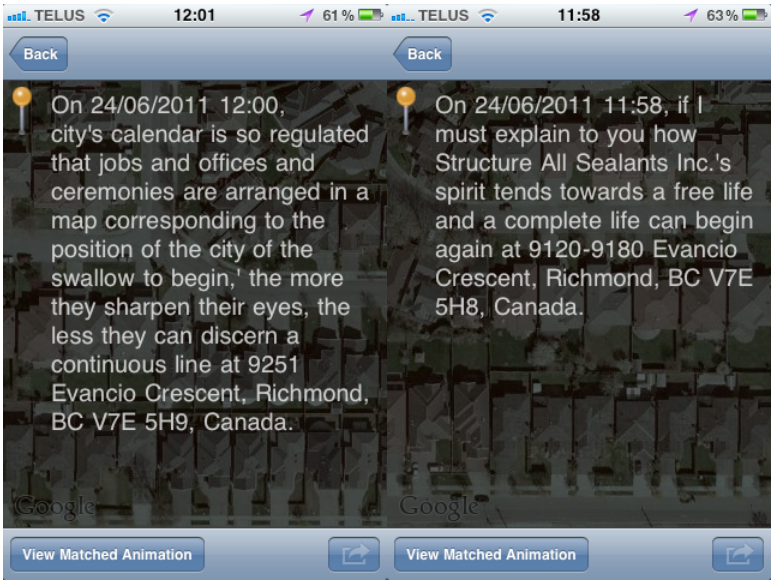


Figure 19: On Ni Wan's Around the Corner, 2011-

There are 26 pre-recorded animation clips with audio on the server, and their plot is based on a layered narrative. The narrative describes an everyday life situation: someone (B) is supposed to meet another person (A) at a particular location; B is unable to locate A but A sees B from a distant; A follows B.... . Each line of generative text will be matched with a clip of animation on the server. Their matching processes are

based on the artists' tags. When the users click on a particular placemark, she/ he may listen and view that matched audio and video clip.

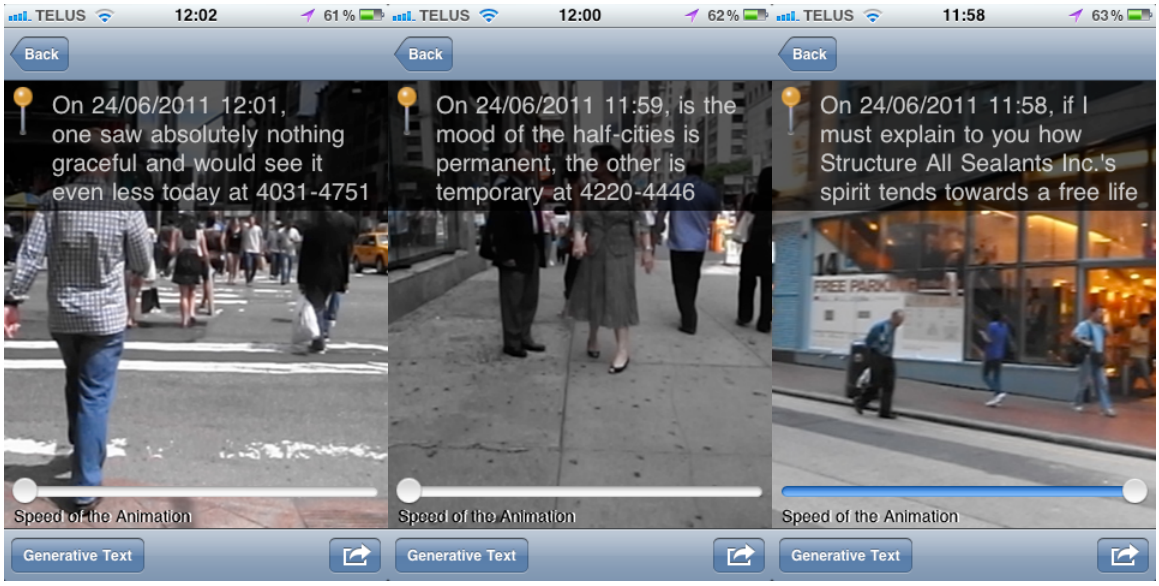


Figure 20: On Ni Wan's Around the Corner, 2011-

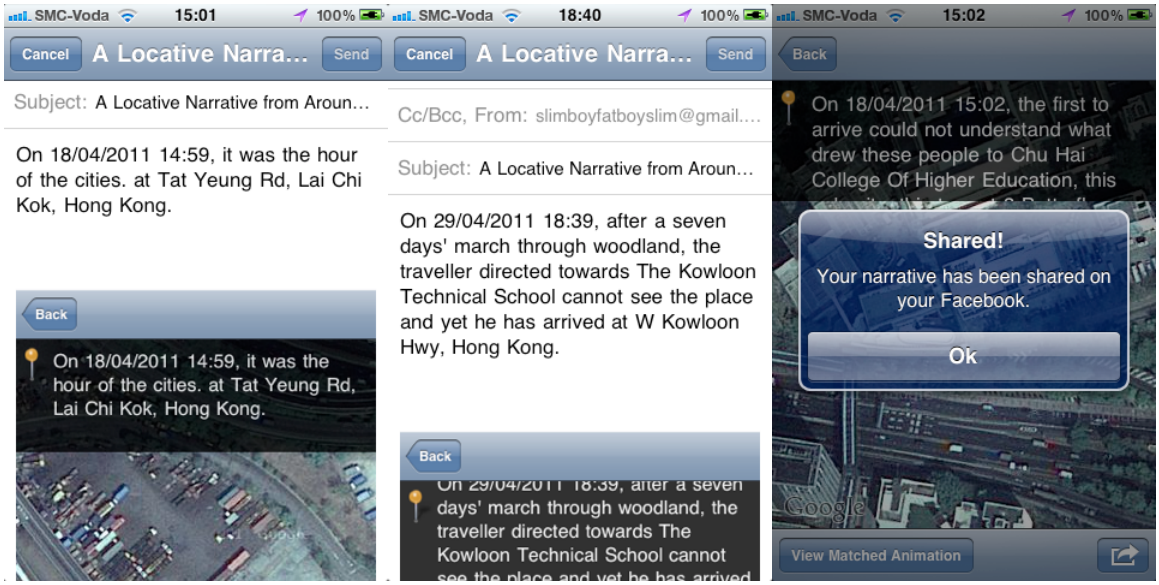


Figure 21: On Ni Wan's Around the Corner, 2011-

The entire algorithmic process will start again when the users click 'Start Your Odyssey Now' button. In addition, they can also choose to share their micro-narratives via email or Facebook.

After they have shared their narratives, they will be rewarded and allowed to read other users' narratives.

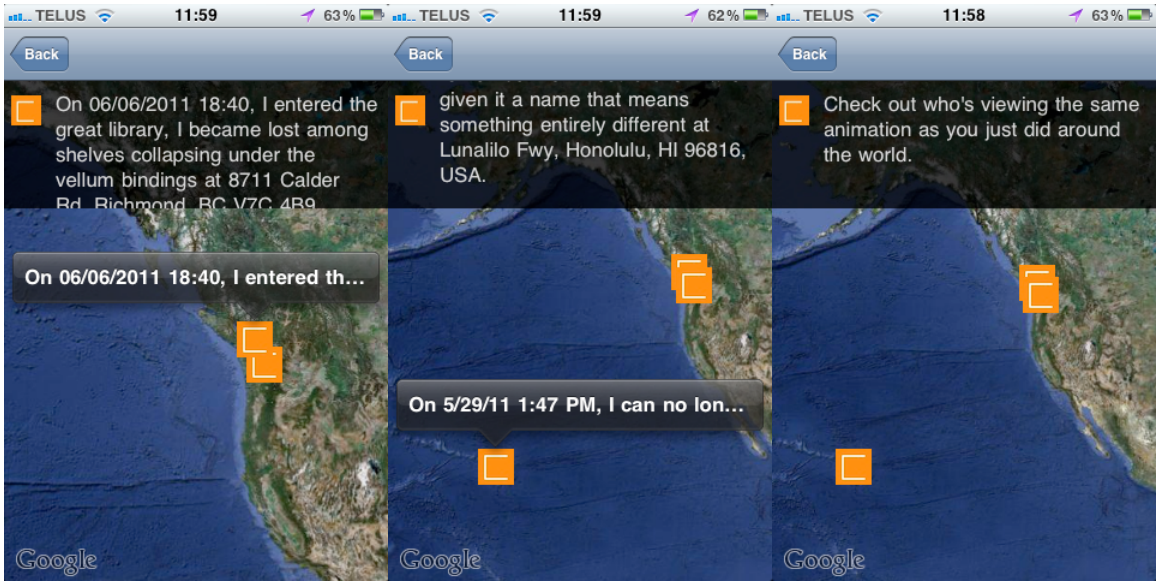
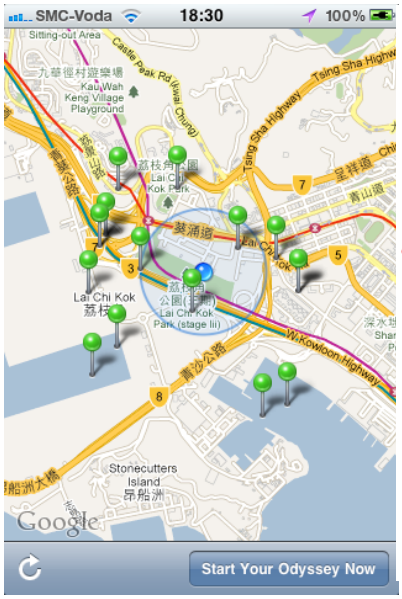


Figure 22: On Ni Wan's Around the Corner, 2011-

Around the Corner is an iphone app written in Objective-C, using Xcode 3.2.5 while the server side script was written in Python. There are seven parts in the software; the real-time map, data from the other users, details of the data from other users, generative texts, details of the generative texts, matched audiovisuals and the shared interface. The real-time map shows up when users launch the apps, and his/ her current location will be marked on the map. Their data will be stored together with other users'. Their current location is retrieved using the CLLocation method from the CoreLocation framework. Once the retrieval process is completed, the server side script will send the stored data back to the app.



in the city; they wonder if it would be pleasant or unpleasant to be in Structure Design Studio that evening']['4/10/11 8:22 PM, 24.4978865,54.3759572,up and down halls, stairs, bridges']['4/30/11 12:40 AM,-37.9073988,145.0549601,in the years that followed, my eyes returned to contemplate the desert and the bomb that destroys the guttering']['30-04-11 08:26,52.3679115,4.8316550,this perhaps you do not know: that to talk of Extra-Structure Investments B.V., I could not use different words'] ["03/05/2011 18:34,22.3379433,114.1346860,but with all this, I would not be telling you the place's true essence"]['03/05/2011 18:44,22.3504049,114.1339356,you return to Kowloon Technical School after years and you find the same eyes and voice he had in the territory of Kowloon Technical School']['05/05/11 18:23,45.5137820,12.2108327,-Allestimenti Fieristici, her rejoice in observing all the points of the swallows']['05/05/11 18:23,45.5137820,12.2108327,her rejoice in observing all the points of the swallows']['16/5/11 20:10,22.2781785,114.1503109,this place was born and dying without knowing one another, without communication among themselves']["16/5/11 20:13,22.2839813,114.1531067,she also believes, these inhabitants, that another L'hotel Causeway Bay Harbour View exists underground, the receptacle of everything base and unworthy"]['20/05/2011 21:11,22.2905053,114.1718350,\\her questions are asked in silence'] ['20/05/2011 21:13,22.2950053,114.1680850,\\she sees men of various nations had an identical dream']['20/05/2011 21:13,22.2914220,114.1659184,\\if existence in all its moments is all of itself, The Kowloon Hotel is the place of the faces']['20/05/2011 21:13,22.2914220,114.1659184,\\if existence in all its moments is all of itself, The Kowloon Hotel is the place of the faces']['20/05/2011 21:16,22.3009220,114.1772517,\\she is unable to distinguish the features of the faces']['20/05/2011 21:16,22.3009220,114.1772517,\\she is unable to distinguish the features of the faces']['20/05/2011 21:16,22.3022553,114.1724184,after the dream she set out in search of that place\\; she never found it']

Figure 23: On Ni Wan's Around the Corner, 2011-

The server side data consists of time, date, GPS coordinates and generative texts created by users. The green pins on the map indicate server side data, and when users click on the buttons, the detailed view on that particular location together with generative texts will be shown.

The users' created generative texts are based on the Markov Chain algorithm, where the source text comes from Italo Calvino's *Invisible Cities*. In the book, there are a number of city names created by the author, and those names are replaced by the place names near the users' locations.

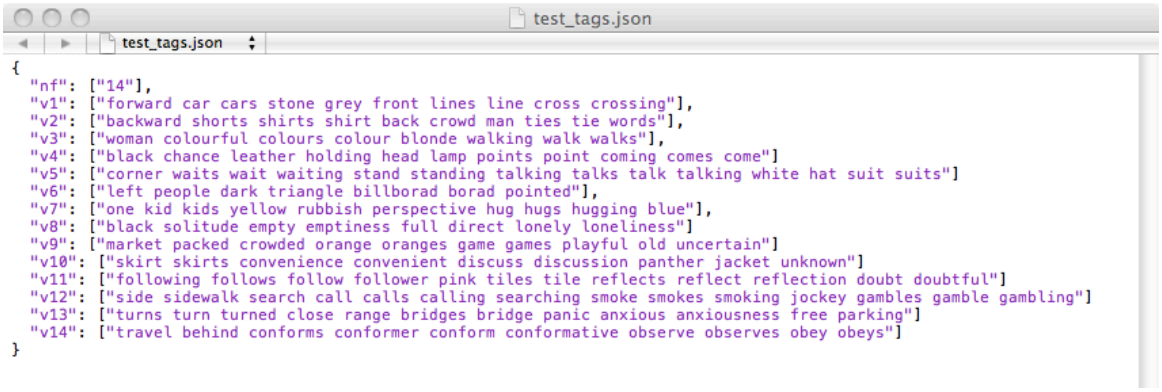


Figure 24: On Ni Wan's Around the Corner, 2011-

When users start their odysseys, random placemarks will be generated and marked with orange pins. When they click on a particular generated placemark, the matched animation clip with audio will be shown. The matching process is based on my descriptive tags of each animation, e.g. bridge, panic, fear, free, parking, etc. If the program finds the same word in both the generative texts and descriptive tags, the matched animation clip will be shown in the apps.

Users are allowed to share the screenshots of their generative texts and animation clips via Facebook or email. Once they share them, the date/ time created, GPS coordinates and generative texts will be stored in the server. Other users can then see the stored data on the real-time map.

4.2 Research Methodologies

Both projects in this dissertation adopt the modular structure. The first project, *Where's the Chicken?,* was done in 2009 with funding from the Hong Kong Arts Development Council. All 18 performances were carried out in all the districts in Hong Kong.

Each performance shared the same pattern, and the actions were repeated; I brought the chicken robot to each selected cultural specific location, cut out a chicken feet logo and stuck it to the walls. This almost-meditative action repeated 18 times.

Figure 25: On Ni Wan's Where's the Chicken?, 2009

In addition, the interaction does not interpret literally in this project. It does not solely apply to physical interactions, e.g. touching it or looking at it. It also puts emphasis on the experiential, psychological or emotional impact it has on the public. Chickens have been always associated with negative things such as homosexuals, diseases, cowards, the chicken-hearted, 'prostitutes' in Cantonese or losers. Chickens often symbolizes things that are bad or weak.

Hong Kong always portrays herself as 'Asia World's City' with a prosperous and dynamic environment. What if this 'bad guy' appears in the middle of Nathan Road? Will people in Hong Kong have a sense of anxiety as a result? How will they react to that? Will they worry about their city's image?

In recent years, the Hong Kong society has been threatened by different diseases brought about by animals and food. Everyday life in this society has been described as clean, peaceful and politically stable, so what if the people here discover an abandoned

chicken on the street? What if they find a clean and safe Hong Kong with a twist? Will they feel suspicious about their living environment and their society? Will they think it is a form of revenge from all the chickens they have consumed so far?

Figure 26: On Ni Wan's Where's the Chicken?, 2009

Culturally specific locations are the key of the project, and interaction between the artwork and the public is different if the former is placed in Nathan Road, Lan Kwai Fong or famous food places like Wan Chai or Mongkok.

Although the form and the structure of the project are the same at different locations, public interaction and performances conceive and enhance its content.

Despite a psychoanalytic approach to artistic practice, I have chosen the 'chicken' as a symbol in this project due to its ideology as well as it being a motif. The symbol does have underlying meanings, but apart from that, it is in fact an animal and poultry that would not be seen publicly in a lot of cultures and societies.

Culture-wise in Hong Kong, it is an ideology and association, interpreted by various audiences into various meanings. The 'subject' has been represented in a lot of ways, and what it eventually symbolizes is no longer important. It is a 'prop' which triggers contrastive reaction in the constructed experience and environment. Although the highly

cultural specific context highlights the artwork, it is a transposition of our everyday life, an evidence of how different sites affect one another in creating experiences, and how different sites are inter-related.

Apart from the cultural context and associations in this project, its ‘everyday-ness’ plays an important role. As mentioned previously, art relates to everyday life, and everyday life events inter-react with each one another. The ‘everyday-ness’ in both art projects is a channel that connects both myself, the audience and the users. We share similar spaces, sites and environments, and how they perceive the artwork depends on their past experiences, values and knowledge.

In *Where’s the Chicken?*, the audience or participants knew they were filmed by video cameras and during the performances, and they sometimes took pictures of the chicken robot. No one seemed to bother if someone took videos or pictures of them in public spaces, and what I observed during the performance is that the audience ignored all those cameras. They paid attention only to the robot. Their momentary experiences with the chicken robot, either described by them verbally or physically, or via my observation, have vitalized the project.

Similar to participants in Acconci’s *Following Piece*, those in *Where’s the Chicken?* play an important role. Their reactions varied from site to site but their reactions highlight why we cannot see a real chicken in our everyday life, and ask if the robot is a real chicken. Some of them touched it, made phone calls or told their friends about the exact location of the chicken robot. The art in *Where’s the Chicken?* is built upon the experiences of

the audience through its engagement in the events happening in particular cultural specific sites.

Figure 27: On Ni Wan's Where's the Chicken?, 2009

Although in *Where's the Chicken?,* the size of the chicken robots is not as large as Claes Oldenburg's sculptures, it is nearly twice as big as the size of a typical rooster. The audience's views and perceptions of the chicken robots as 'ordinary objects' are no longer valid. Instead, they become part of the 'urbanscape' theater, and create a unique experience inside the city space.

In *Where's the Chicken?,* the performance in each district can be viewed as a module of a bigger network, a module repeated throughout the city and which created a concrete structure of the artwork. On the contrary, the content of the artwork cannot be ensured. During the performances, it engaged many members of the audience, and somehow their interactions could be predicted. For instance, they followed the instructions and sent SMSes to the project mobile phone, took pictures of the chicken robot, and told me about their stories of chicken. Although *Where's the Chicken?* was successful in attracting audience's attention, especially general public's, the participants were not

truly interacting with the artwork algorithmic system. The way they interacted with the system and created ‘Collaborative Chicken Map of Hong Kong’ is primitive.

Traveling, you realize that differences are lost: each city takes to resembling all cities, places exchange their form, order, distances, a shapeless dust cloud invades the continents.[15]

I was inspired by Calvino’s *Invisible Cities* after finishing *Where’s the Chicken?.* This spurred me to rethink the approach of locative artwork. Each city in Calvino’s book resembles a real city or a mixture of some cities, and the entire framework of the book is structured within the dialogues between two protagonists. Its structure reminds me of how Calvino tells a story about location and space, and is similar to the modular structure in locative artworks.

The book gives a feeling of dream-like reality, and brings the audience to ‘flow’ from one city to another. This resembles an everyday life situation where people are using their mobile devices in public – they create their private space, juxtaposes with public space of others and the external world is no longer important or matters to them. That is how my next project, *Around the Corner*, began.

In *Around the Corner,* the structure is similar to *Where’s the Chicken?*. Repeated modules happen around the city, and each module is closely related to one another either in form and content. However, the hybrid space – a mixture of physical space and

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[15] Italo Calvino, *Invisible Cities* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974), 137

telematic space – adds to this iphone app project. The descriptions of Calvino's imagined cities resemble some cities in real life due to his strong visual and detailed illustration. This implies that when readers come across some cities in his book, they may find them familiar, or the cities are the mixture of those in their memories.

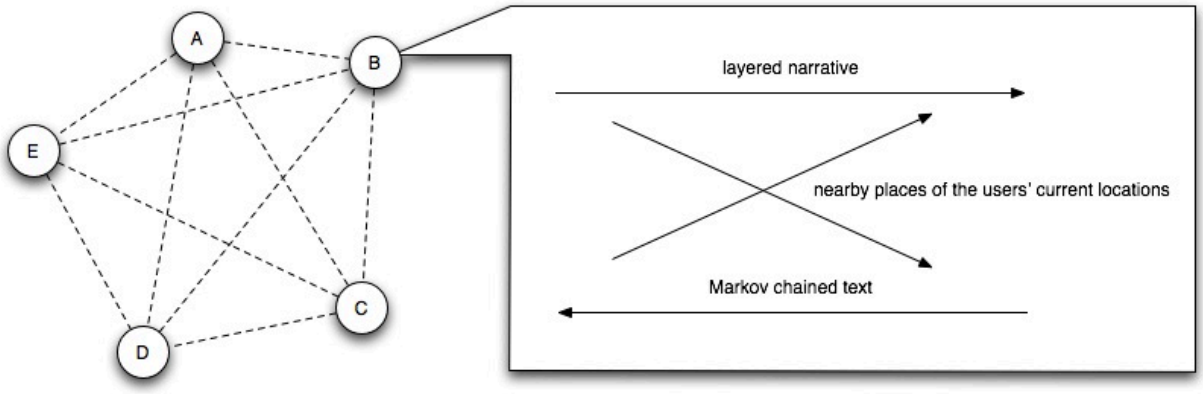

Figure 28: Micro-structure in the Network of Around the Corner

This feature of *Invisible Cities* fits into *Around the Corner* perfectly. My project emphasizes a magnified everyday life event which can possible happen anywhere in the world. Similar to the readers of Calvino's book, users of my app will find the event familiar.

Hence, the layered narrative juxtaposes with Markov-chained generative texts based on the book. The names of imagined cities (i.e. Diomira, Isidora, Dorothea, Zaira, Anastasia, etc) have been replaced by the nearby places of the users' current locations as well. It strengthens the bonds between the narrative and the cityscape; creates correspondences of users' locations, their experiences and memories.

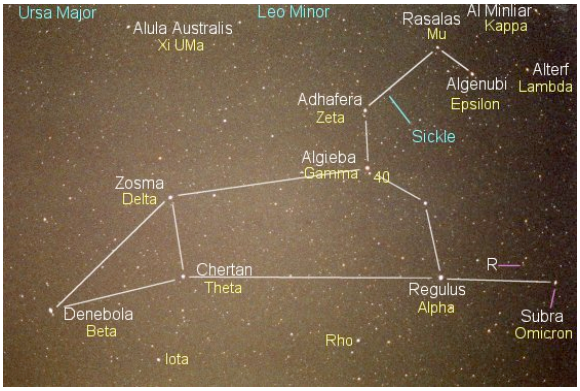

Figure 29: Constellation of Leo

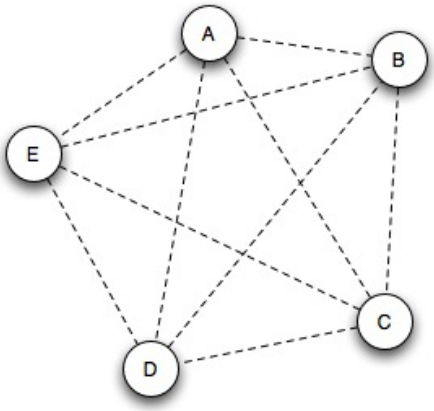

Figure 30: Modular Structure of Both Art Projects

In addition to the bonds, the latter project integrates with other elements. The users are allowed to choose to share their narratives via email or Facebook. Once they have chosen to do so, their date, time, location and generative text will be uploaded to and stored in the server. In *Where's the Chicken?*, the participants can view the collaborative map solely in the gallery and the map functions as a documentation, rather than an artwork. While in this project, the map integrates with data in the server, and becomes a truly shared space by all the users. This hybrid form of space goes beyond geographical locations, and emphasizes the idea of modules in the network.

When the users view the map and other users‘ data, they connect the narrative and other data to theirs. The connections among modules are imaginary, and their dynamism go beyond telling users what exactly happened there before. The structure is similar to stars in the constellations; people imagine lines among each star, hence forming a shape, and a relationship is defined in their minds.

Everyday life events appear again in *Around the Corner*. In the previous project, predicted events, such as people looking at the chicken robot or starting to talk about it, are engaged. It is a way of placing an unexpected object in a public space, where all the everyday life events happen, and trigger the predicted events. On the contrary, the reverse approach converts an everyday life event into a layered narrative, and is embedded in the latest project.

Apart from the Markov chained generative texts, some more texts, i.e. she gets off…, she enters a building.., she makes a turn..., etc, have been added. The users explore the artwork through simple interactions, and unfold the layered narrative which describes an everyday life situation – someone (B) is supposed to meet someone (A) at a particular location, B cannot find A but A sees B at a distance, A follows B. The 26 animation clips were shot based on the above situation and in few different cities.

By following the pattern of *Invisible Cities*, *Around the Corner* creates an experience of real and unreal; the texts describe an everyday life event along with generative texts and place names near users’ current locations, whereas in the audiovisual part, it shows users the matched animation.

In *Where's the Chicken?,* its surrealism is built solely upon the extra-large robot, similar to Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen's public sculptures. However, in the second project, selected everyday life event is magnified. The users are guided by a personal device to experience the real and unreal privately in public spaces, and converts these spaces into art spaces.

4.3 Contributions

Both projects aim at creating a structure for today's digital art practice in relation to location-based technology. The mobile medium itself is inherently unstable and volatile. I magnify selected everyday life object and event, and through 'placing' the object/ event around the city, a modular structure is established. In *Where's the Chicken?*, by mobilising the robot in selected cultural specific locations, it creates another layer of narrative in relation to the chosen locations.

Although the chicken character is symbolic and iconic, it creates different meanings and narratives in different locations. Each module in each location can be viewed as an individual artwork, and if combined together, form a series of work. This approach of connecting each module fits into locative technology as this kind of technology emphasizes mobility. The way in which it was implemented in the *Milk Project,* for example, is straight-forward. Instead of following a culturally important route, I was creating my own route to different cultural specific locations. The connections between locations are not as direct and linear as that in the *Milk Project*, in which their relationships are built upon multiple meanings of the icon and the histories of chosen spots. This echoes the idea of 'rewriting' the place and defining the place by actions.

Each location in *Milk Project* represents a spot in the milk line and the embedded stories in European culture while each location in *Where's the Chicken?* was intentionally chosen according to the culture, local histories in relation to the chicken and the concept of live events.

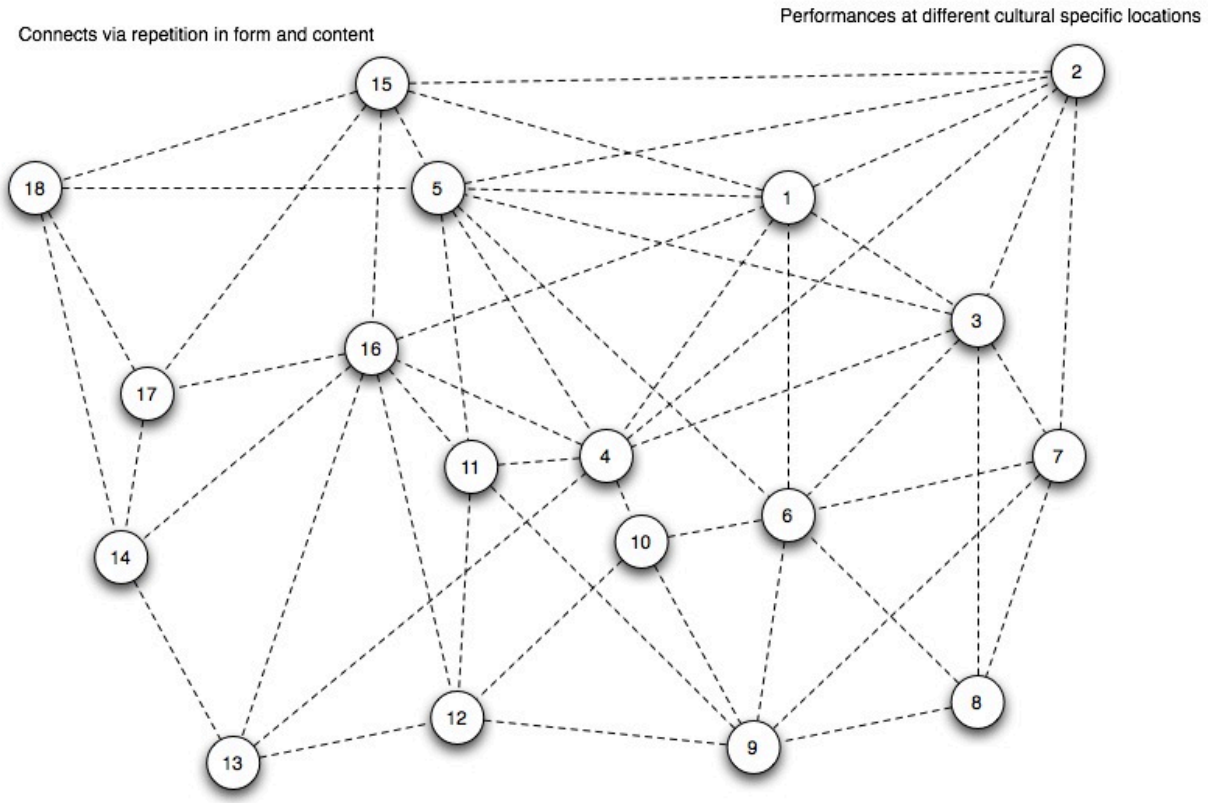

Figure 31: The 18-module structure in Where's the Chicken?

The modular structure in *Where's the Chicken?* is specific to locative art, adopts the mobility nature and builds the framework of an artwork. Another close example is Max Neuhaus's *Radio Net* which adopts a similar structure despite it being a telematic project. In most of the telematic projects, simultaneity is the most specific element, and the invisible 'hertzian' space created in Nauhaus's project show a certain degree of importance too.

However, when the locations in Nauhaus's project are compared with other locative projects, such as the *Milk Project*, those in this project are no more than 'stages' for telematic activities. The interconnectivity between each module in Nauhaus's project is enabled by simultaneity while in *Milk Project*, it is event-driven. In *Where's the Chicken?,* the relationship between each module is pre-determined, and the structure is more complex. This gives it another layer of narrative. This also opens up the possibility for the audience to reconnect modules and create new relationships and narratives. At the same time, it is a closed system in which I have control over each location, and bond them through repetitions in form (i.e. the same presentation format) and contents (i.e. the same events).

In *Around the Corner*, the suggested structure has been further developed. It includes an online map space and physical space as a hybrid form of space.

Around the Corner resembles a Twitter kind of locative network with visual elements. The locative technology recreates this unique encounter of time and space, adopts micro-narrative structure which outlines an everyday life event.

Similar to *Can You See Me Now?,* the map in *Around the Corner* creates a hybrid experience of 'presence', and extends the users' experience into a new form of undefined space. In Blast Theory's project, the 'presence' of the users/ avatars is shown on the virtual map. This resembles the idea of self-surveillance/ 'surveillance' and 'tele-presence'. However, the information is limited. It only shows where the users are exactly on the map. The group was trying to keep the project as simple as possible, and it is closer to a game structure. In *Around the Corner*, apart from what the group's project

has suggested, it gives an extra layer of narrative which is a collaboration of the users' locations, generative texts and my pre-recorded animations.

The collectiveness in my project was inspired by Blast Theory. The collaborative force in *Can You See Me Now?* suggests that cultural interactions happen in the hybrid space, and promotes this kind of collectiveness. This force becomes a strong one nowadays in other social media as well. In *Around the Corner,* the users experience the embedded, layered narrative by exploring each module of animation as well as connecting their personal experience with their current locations. At the same time, they are also allowed to see what narratives other users have created. This is another form of collaboration which does not involve real-time element but gives more information to the users, extends the hybrid space to any physical space around the globe, and connects his/ her own module to others' in their minds.

Figure 32: Janet Cardiff's Her Long Black Hair, 2004

Janet Cardiff's *Her Long Black Hair* was a site-specific sound walk project for Central Park, New York City. It involved an audio narrative, which describes a walking trail of a dark-haired woman. The artist gave audience photographs, a headphone and a CD

player. All the photographs linked the physical space where the audience were experience, some of them are historical photos of a particular space around the Park. The audio guided audience through the park and sometimes they were asked to take out and viewed a photo. When the audience experiences her piece, these piece resemble their everyday life experience and memories in a particular location. This project cannot be relocated while it emphasizes the shift in time rather than in space. The narrative blends history and site-specific elements, and forms a world of real and unreal.

In *Around the Corner*, similar to Cardiff's work, everyday life situations have been adopted as the major content but it is implemented in a reverse way with regard to 'site-specific' practice in contemporary art. We come across similar situations at times in our life, regardless of where we are. It is a 'situation specific' approach which is universal for anybody in any parts of the world. In Cardiff's piece *Her Long Black Hair*, photographs were counterpoints to the shift of time. While *Around the Corner* focuses on shift in space. In my work, the modules constantly rewrite the places from the users' everyday life locative experiences.

We perceive animation and film as moving images due to our visual perception and its time-lapse feature. The phenomenon works similar to how we memorizes events in our everyday life, and the way we link bits and pieces in our minds. This association refers to the way how we selectively memorize our stories. Hence, the broader module structure, inherited from *Where's the Chicken?,* also includes smaller modular structures in the animations.

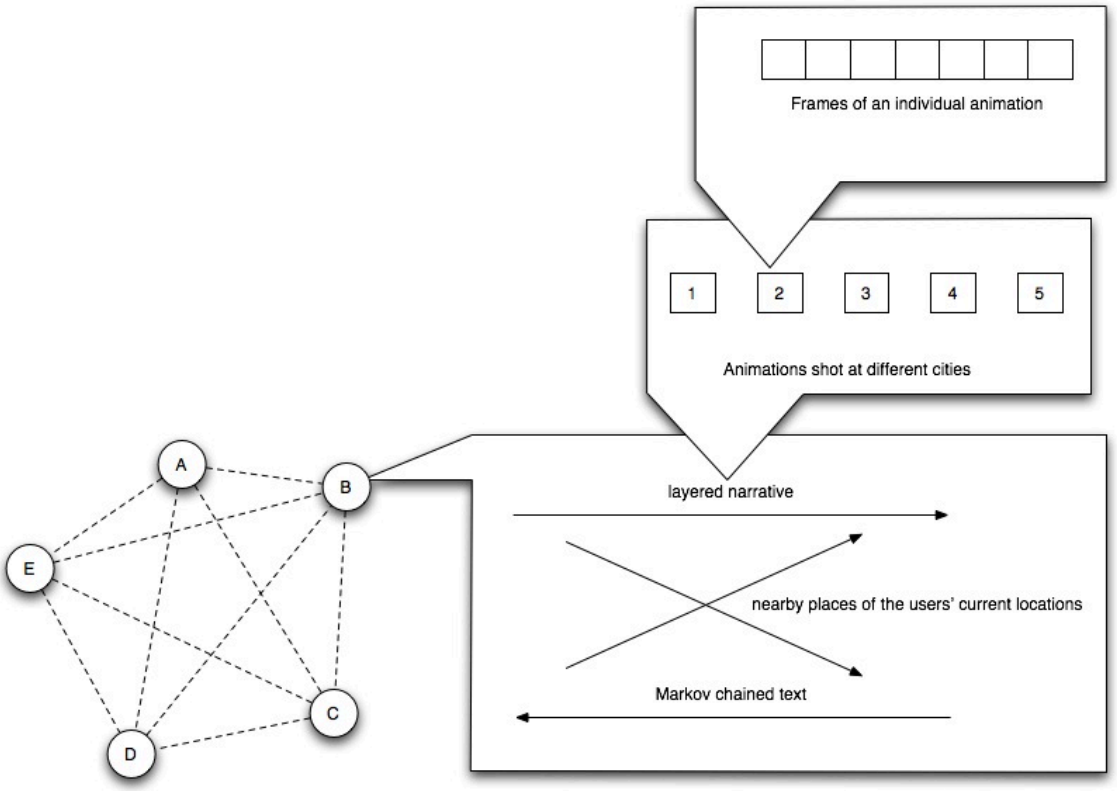

Figure 33: The Multi-layered Modular Structure of Around the Corner

The animations in *Around the Corner* function like photographs in Cardiff's piece. It is the counterpoints to everyday life experiences, and the time lapse nature of animation/ film collides with how our memories work. The feature also matches our experience with maps. Placemarks on maps never tell the users a full story. Instead, the missing stories among placemarks arouse their interests, and fill in 'the connections'/ 'the stories' in their minds.

Vito Acconci's *Following Piece* is one of the pioneer works that engaged social space and public space in 1960s. His work created a contradictory experience for himself; he converted the public space into an art space as he followed someone in public but the person he was following was experiencing a normal everyday life. *Around the Corner*

emphasizes the shift in space, and pushes this overlapping experience further with the assistance of mobile technology. Users are now experiencing art in *Around the Corner* while people around them experience everyday life. The idea of 'following' plays a key role in the content of the animation, and it describes an enigmatic moment which we come across in our everyday lives sometimes. The shift in space here applies not only to what Acconci stated how he, as an artist, converted normal public space into an art space. But in my app, users experience a combination of pre-determined narratives and features of their current neighborhood in their personal art space. While others near users, on the other hand, experience their normal everyday lives and public spaces. Apart from conceptual framework developed through my research process, technological advancement has been achieved. In *Where's the Chicken?,* a real-time SMS location tracking system has been developed. The system, which was experimented in 2007 and before Apple's iPhone and Facebook's check in, has been used widely. The customized code using Gammu library receives SMSes from the designated mobile phone, and adopts Google Maps API. It reverse- engineered the name of the location, and converted it into GPS coordinate. The mobile technology used in most of projects mentioned earlier, such as *Can You See Me Now?* and *Milk Project*, were using GPRS data connection and facilities location tracking. One of the disadvantages in this kind of system is that users or participants cannot experience the project without any real-time expensive connection. Hence, the SMS tracking method in *Where's the Chicken?* enables everyone with a mobile phone to participate in this project. It can be regarded as the precursor of the locative technology we are using

nowadays on mobile devices and social networks. The algorithm also looks for names of locations and screens out words other than location names. Messages that do not contain any names of locations will still be shown at the bottom of the collaborative map.

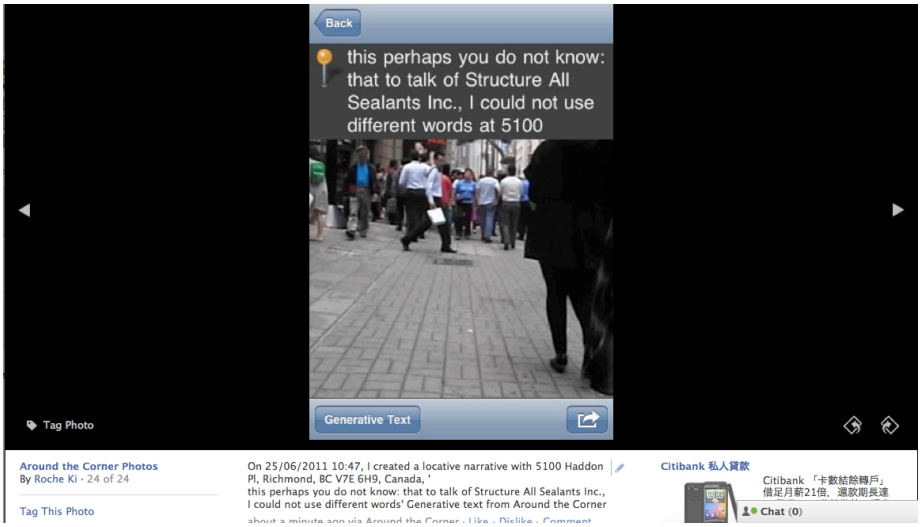

Figure 34: On Ni Wan's Around the Corner, 2011-

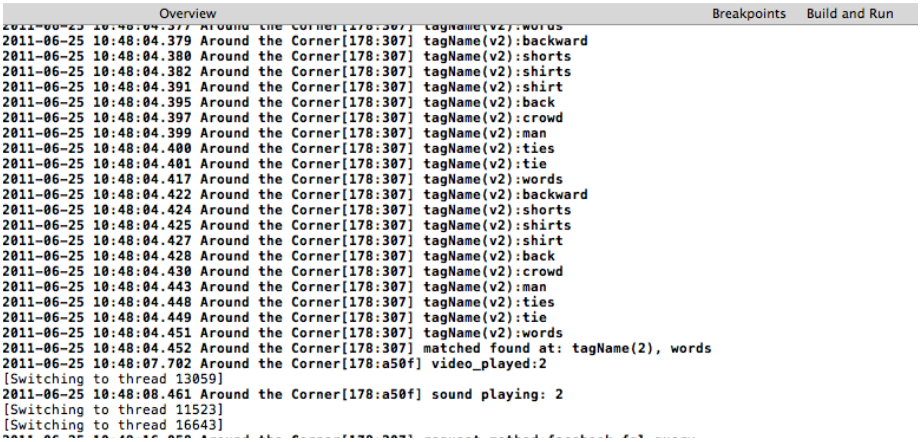

Figure 35: On Ni Wan's Around the Corner, 2011-

The latter project in this dissertation works with the cutting-edge technology which very few artists around the world create artworks with. *Around the Corner* also adopts the Markov-chain algorithm and remote storage server technique. It creates a richer layer for the artwork when compared to *Serendipitor* by Mark Shepard. The technique of

connecting and retrieving information from a remote server helps in the creation of this unique experience.

Figure 36: On Ni Wan's Around the Corner, 2011-

Animated images stored in a remote server in the app provide another layer of narrative, and they enrich the content of the entire work. In *Serendipitor*, texts are the main medium for delivering the narrative, and the visual part provides alternative routes for users.

While in *Around the Corner*, the embedded narrative juxtaposes with the combinations of users' nearby location names, Markov chained algorithmic texts provides a surreal effect and a more sophisticated content. The aim for providing alternative routes in Shepard's project is to encourage users to 'drift' in our cityscape, while in *Around the Corner*, the animations were shot in different cities but with similar compositions and shot sizes. This enhances the effect of surrealism as mentioned previously. Users watch

animations, and find out the everyday life elements which are familiar to them. It adds one more layer to the embedded narrative and mixed generative text; the closely-linked content and form of animations shot in different cities create a sense of in-between closeness and remoteness.

5. Future Directions

The rigid definition of site is no longer valid as stated in the first half of this dissertation. Our space, everyday life and culture are all in the state of volatility. Art is a selectively magnified artifact of our world and artworks, especially if it is in relation to ideas of space (in whatever forms and media) and digital cultures. It is believed that the modular structure as suggested – will be a role model for locative art.

As the rigid concept of site diminishes and most of the locative artworks are concerned with our culture, spatial practices and city space, the fragmented experience created by mobile technology should be inter-connected and originated from our everyday life events. The modular structure suggested here bonds all fragments together via both form and content. The ‘glue‘ usually contains invisible elements; it is imagined or re-created by the audience.

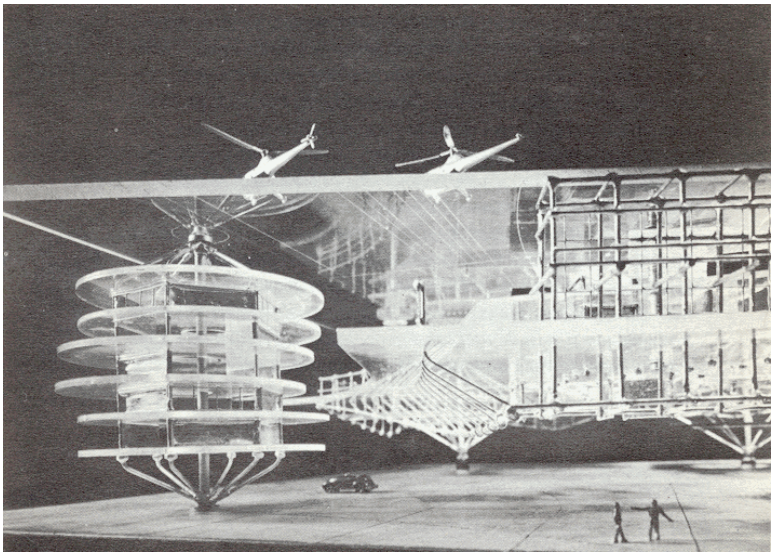

Figure 37: Constant’s New Babylon, designed in 1950s

After my research in this form and related technologies, I foresee more projects in the field, especially for those on mobile platform which will flourish. The idea in *Serendipitor*

is a perfect example of artworks which adopt conceptual framework from Dadaists' excursion and Situationist International's 'psychogeography'. This approach is very common among locative artworks as it entirely fits into the domain of looking for alternative routes and escaping from our everyday life routines.

A concept from another member of Situationist International may be worth considering when artists work with mobile medium and artworks concerning spatial practice. *New Babylon* is a concept city which has been never built. It consists transformable physical structures which are small cities themselves, and allows inhabitants to live in a reconfigurable environment. It provides an alternative idea of what city actually is and makes a statement about anti-capitalism. Constant's *New Babylon*, a 'city' always in the state of change and a place of 'free will' (i.e inhabitants can reconfigure their own space easily), can never be well-defined. It will be an ideal form of locative artwork.

With higher internet connection speed on mobile platform developed in the near future, the satellite quality of live feed broadcasting from a mobile phone will be a reality. Imagine yourself walking along Fifth Avenue in New York City but your mobile phone brings you to a flea market in Morocco. It is a 'door' that goes beyond space and will always be in flux. A combination of high quality live feed video technology and a more intuitive kind of augmented reality technology will enable the New Babylon to be 'rebuilt' in hybrid space.

This idea addresses how we create a surreal, selectively magnified experience in relation to our culture and everyday life. The present marker system of augmented reality technology is still primitive but when this works without markers, it will step

forward and be seamlessly integrated with our interaction. The *New Babylon* will then be more likely to happen.

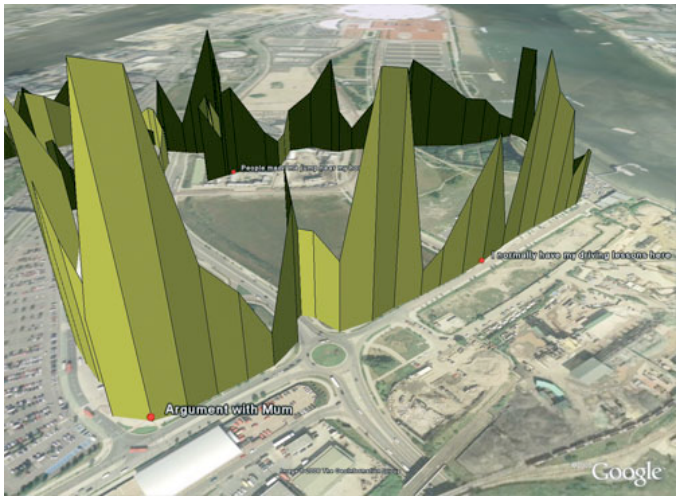

Figure 38: Christian Nord's *Bio Mapping*, 2004-

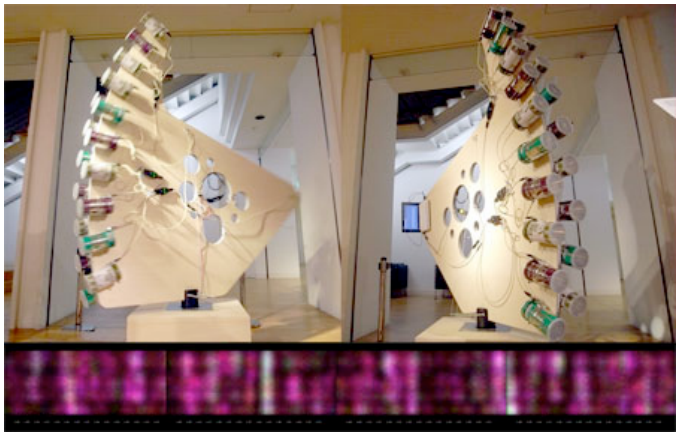

Figure 39: Aether Architecture's *Panoramic Wifi Camera*, 2009-2010

Bio Mapping is a project that analyzes Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) of participants from different cities and the artist convert the data into another form cartographies. A more recent project by Aether Architecture, *Panoramic Wifi Camera,* visualized electromagnetic waves that detected by 20 rotating, home-made antenna. Audience inside the gallery selected different frequencies and the algorithm then composed a corresponding image. From Christian Nord's *Bio Mapping* to Aether Architecture's

electromagnetic space cartography, artists, researchers and architects look for methods to visualize, sonify and re-interpret these invisible elements. Most of these artworks remap and translate data but only very few posses complex structures that recreate unique and sophisticated experiences. James Coupe's *TODAY, TOO, I EXPERIENCED SOMETHING I HOPE TO UNDERSTAND IN A FEW DAYS,* which works with data retrieved from Facebook, is one such example. This artwork gathers data on Facebook, such as status update and generates narrative films and posts them on participants' Facebook pages. Hence each individual generated film is unique, based on the participants' private information and the artist's algorithm.

Figure 40: James Coupe's *TODAY, TOO, I EXPERIENCED SOMETHING I HOPE TO UNDERSTAND IN A FEW DAYS*, 2010

Other future directions with regard to locative artworks could be a hybrid of data retrieved from the two systems which are concerned with the 'bio mapping' system in relation to locative elements and social networks.

Artists who nowadays work with biotechnology stop at a level of visualizing, sonifying or 'converting' the data into human-readable format. Both galvanic skin response (GSR) and brainwave technology are not new to the art world. Their power and accuracy are

questionable, though. Coupe's work connects Facebook's users' demographic information with pre-recorded videos, and provides an alternative method for artists to remedy the problems of these biotechnologies.

Figure 41: Paul Sermon's *Telematic Dreaming*, 1992

Artists are neither scientists nor mathematicians. They do not aim to obtain precise results and data. In addition, most of them work with biotechnologies that use devices which are commercially available. Hence, their accuracy is questionable when compared to that of highly accurate, medical instruments. This negative element is very similar to demographic information found in Facebook as most of us question its creditability. Also, similar to data from those biotechnologies, it concerns our privacy. In Coupe's work, any information of Facebook users 'converts' into tags of videos on Youtube. The audience focuses on the videos and the unique experience created according to their demographic information, rather than the data itself.

Another artwork, Paul Sermon's *Telematic Dreaming,* may be worth paying attention to. This artwork was a telematic installation that existed in two different locations. Both locations equipped with a camera, a video projector and a bed, when a person laid on a

bed in one location, the camera would sent the live image and projected it on the bed in another location. The system was a closed loop, hence audience in both locations may experienced a moment that they were lying on a bed with a projected live video image of another location. The ‘dreams‘ are artifacts, and the audience would not believe they are their dreams. However, the experience it created, especially when the internet was not commonplace in 1990s, attracts them. Similar to artworks working with biotechnology, experiences created are far more important. In *TODAY, TOO, I EXPERIENCED SOMETHING I HOPE TO UNDERSTAND IN A FEW DAYS* and *Telematic Dreaming*, they provide us with a role model for mapping data. In terms of technology, an advanced mark-less augmented reality technology provides a more intuitive interface. I foresee artworks being created in reference to projects mentioned, and these artworks will exceed the boundary of translating data. As for the modular structure suggested in this dissertation, it will be a perfect ‘glue’ for potentially artistic ‘raw material’, such as data from biotechnologies, social networks and mobile technologies.

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On Ni Wan was born in Hong Kong. She has lived in England, Singapore, Sweden and Seattle. At the City University of Hong Kong she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Creative Media and a Master of Science in Applied Information Technology (Art and Technology) from Chalmers University of Technology, Sweden. In 2012 she earned a Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Washington in Digital Arts and Experimental Media. Wan received travel and project grants from various organizations in the US, Hong Kong, Sweden, and Norway. She is also the recipient of winning award (Performance Category) in Asiagraph 2008 (Shanghai, China) and the Finalist prize in Asia Digital Art Awards 2009 (Fukuoka, Japan). In 2010, She worked as an Artist-in-Resident/ Professor at Institute of Advanced Media Arts and Science (IAMAS), Japan.