The Practice of Locative Experiences

Ann Morrison Matthew Simpson

The Australasian CRC for Interaction Design Pty Ltd,

Level 3, Room 312, Musk Avenue, Kelvin Grove, Queensland, 4059, Australia

Information Environments Program

School of ITEE, University of Queensland

(theory/ framework=> method and case study)

This is a short introduction to a larger framework we are developing for guiding the creation of locative experiences. In particular we make a careful analysis and then identify unique combinations of needs of the site, context, public and stakeholders. The model is informed by a case study and facilitates engagement through ongoing participatory and experience design processes.

In this framework, we refer to Experience Design as the consideration of the attributes which make an experience special. These attributes cover all spatial dimensions and senses and as Nathan Shedroff states, "is an approach to creating successful experiences for people in any medium" [Sherdoff, 1999]. We then explore how these experiences can be designed in a reproducible manner for, in this instance, contexts and locales. When considering site and context, harnessing these elements to shape predefined experiences is critical. Isolating out the functional attributes serves to guide this process.

In developing a locative experience the analysis of site, context and stakeholders is a complex process. We have developed an inclusive and aware framework "The Zone of Progressive Activity" (ZPA). Unlike existing models, ZPA synchronously considers stakeholder input, designer as experience user, public input, site and community to maintain these interdependencies. The framework acts as an effective method for ensuring all aspects are continuously developed in tandem, enabling a richer and augmented interactive experience for the users and the stakeholders of the site.

The term, The Zone of Progressive Activity, defines and develops a process and an approach to looking at a site over time. The Zone (ZPA) progresses the designer in experiencing a site as an outsider, exploring a site as an informed insider and working directly with stakeholders and public within the site. Technologies, infrastructure, and participation are synchronously considered to progress locative experiences for the natural audience to the site. This approach leverages participatory design with public and stakeholders involved from the early stages in the formation of the intended locative experience. Designers are informed in-situ and users are included in the decision-making process.

The Zone (ZPA) draws upon the processes of experience design and participatory design. Both these processes, in slightly varying ways rely on a combination of engagement by designers in the context for which they are designing and participant observers whom are engaged in informing the design development.

The process revolves around both the site and experience in different contexts. At a site level – process is about engaging and reflecting with participant observers. At an experience level – process is about being a designer who is engaged in a participatory design approach.

Participatory design acts as a guiding approach for exploring the site, context and stakeholders. Through field analysis the interrelated considerations are explored. The dependencies of these elements are shown in figure 1 below.
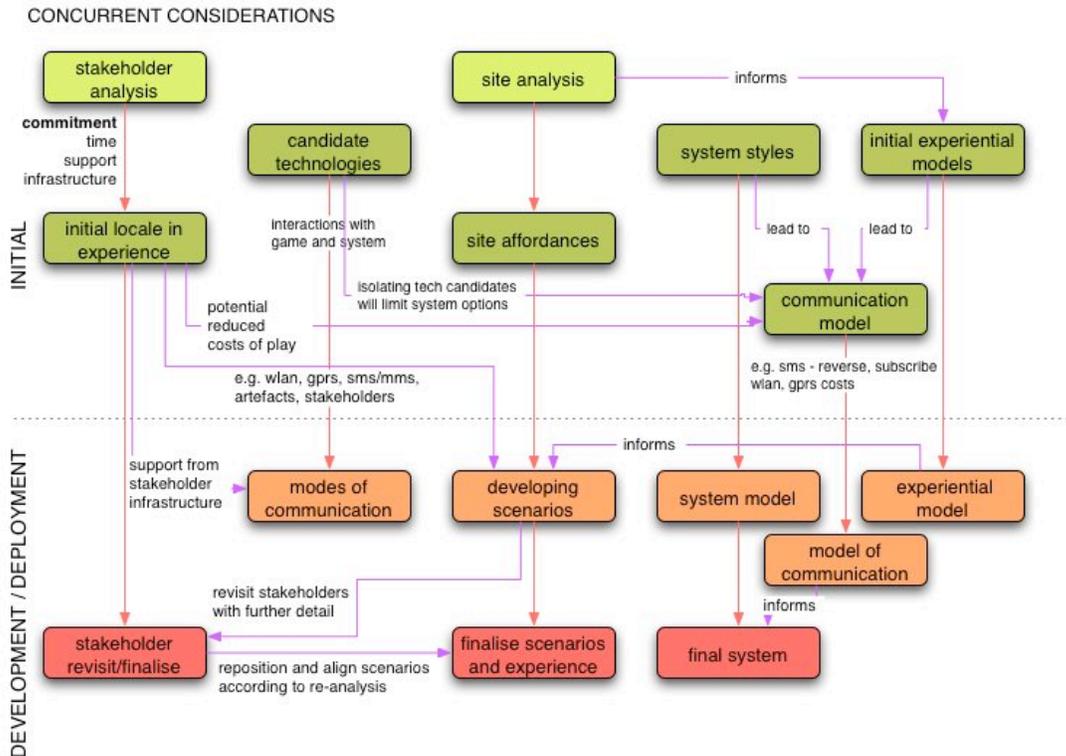
CONCURRENT CONSIDERATIONS

Figure 1- The complex interdependencies to be considered simultaneously while exploring site, infrastructure and community when developing a locative experience.

This is in line with the nature of more traditional design processes where the multiple aspects of a design are required to be explored and revisited in unison, as more information is collated and the design is progressed in an iterative process. As elements of this process are explored, their relationship to other considerations and what they mean for the development of an experience, are constantly reconsidered. It is these interdependencies, which make this process very time-consuming and often hard to predict the outcome. In design, Goldschmidt refers to this as looking at the "ill-structured problem" which by definition is a problem with no clearly discernable outcome or direction from the outset [Goldschmidt, 1998]. This forms a large part of the reasoning behind engaging stakeholder, community, and public alike in the process through participatory design techniques as it ultimately improves levels of transparency, understanding and appropriateness of the experience developed.

The Zone (ZPA) is a strategic approach and a workable structure for the designer to use to explore and better understand the socio/eco/cultural interactions, which are embedded and authentic to the site. It is envisaged that designers and practitioners alike will use the Zone (ZPA) to better comprehend and create experiences in context. In taking this approach we look to ensure awareness of existing structures, histories, communities and relationships are not only maintained and nurtured, but also enhanced.

Contact Details:
Ann Morrison, Matthew Simpson
Mobile: +61425 249 797 +61421 079 204
morrison@itee.uq.edu.au; matts@itee.uq.edu.au
The Australasian CRC for Interaction Design Pty Ltd,
Level 3, Room 312, Musk Avenue, Kelvin Grove, Queensland, 4059, Australia

Information Environments Program
School of Information Technology & Electrical Engineering
University of Queensland
Brisbane, Australia

Select diagrams to further support aspects of The Zone of Progressive Activity:

http://www.itee.uq.edu.au/~uqmatsim/lbx/concurrent.jpg
http://www.itee.uq.edu.au/~uqmatsim/lbx/communities.jpg
http://www.itee.uq.edu.au/~uqmatsim/lbx/interactions.jpg

Brief Bios:

Ann Morrison lectures in studio process, physical interactive environments and information visualisation within The Information Environments Program, School of ITEE, at The University of Queensland. Morrison is an installation, and new media artist currently writing, lecturing and constructing a context containment interactive environment.

Matthew Simpson lectures information technology, graphic design and studio process within The Information Environments Program, School of ITEE, at The University of Queensland. Simpson, with a background in architecture, focuses on design in interaction, web and usability. His current research includes frameworks for interaction in collaborative design, and locative experiences.