A networked interactive environment expanding a transmedia narrative

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Abstract

The paper introduces the networked interactive virtual environment *The Voice of a City / Polyphony,* which expands the storyworld of *The Voice of a City* project. *The Voice of a City* is a transdisciplinary project that shares the key features of transmedia narratives. It builds a storyworld, where various stories unfold across multiple platforms, while each of the stories has a unique and distinct contribution to the transmedia narrative [1, 2].

The Voice of a City / Polyphony is a collaborative project which consists of an interactive walk through a fictional virtual city. The visitor of the virtual environment explores an interactive narrative composed by original elements from *The Voice of a City* archive together with user-generated stories. More concretely, the online interactive environment is connected with social media networks, permitting visitors to contribute their own texts by posting them on social media platforms, using specific hashtags. The user-contributed texts appear inside the virtual environment of *The Voice of a City/ Polyphony* in real-time, articulating a collaborative and multi-author narrative.

The Voice of a City/ Polyphony is an artistic sub-project that expands the narrative universe of *The Voice of a City* project. *The Voice of a City* focuses on how subjective perceptions and personal narratives uncover larger societal issues, mixing fiction, fact, memory and interpretation and bringing together personal and collective (hi)stories. The initiators of the project travelled across Europe and gathered stories, testimonies and observations on the current state of affairs. During their travels, they met with a wide range of local inhabitants. Together they reflected on political and social change, the notion of community and belonging, the past, the present and the future. Thus, they attempted to form a current map of European society, its inhabitants' thoughts and their links to history [3].

Based on this map, the storyworld of *The Voice of a City* was built, inside which multiple derivative works emerged in the form of books, performances, artistic exhibitions, photographic collections, workshops, and the interactive online virtual environment *The Voice of a City/ Polyphony*. The works are complementary yet independent and allow the audience to perceive different facets of the narrative universe of *The Voice of a City*. Finaly, it is argued that the networked interactive environment *The Voice of a City/ Polyphony* increases audience engagement as it allows viewers to add their own texts and expand the transmedia narrative.

References

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[3] N. Gambier, The Voice of a City, Brave New Books, 2019