Location-based games as hybrid intuitive spaces

Stine Ejsing-Duun, sed@hum.aau.dk
Aalborg University, KILD – Communication, it and learning design.

Location-based games (LBGs) are games in which the players’ immediate surroundings and the locations they visit result in a direct influence on the outcome of the game (Ejsing-Duun 2011). They happen on the move in both digital and physical spaces, i.e., hybrid spaces (de Souza e Silva 2006). Through conscious play with perspectives and how we perceive the world can be used when designing location-based games. The perspective is letting certain things step forward, leaving the rest in the background. In this way, e.g., a pervasive game can draw out new sights and reveal hidden treasures for my route home that I had no idea about when I walked to work in the morning.

The perception of the surroundings is affected by the premises presented in the LBG, as they are incorporated and thus influence the player’s experience of and meeting with locations. When this is experienced as meaningful it is a phenomenon I term hybrid intuitive space. This term combines the notions of hybrid space (de Souza e Silva 2006), as a space in which players experience digital and physical space as merged, and intuitive space (Böhme 2007), which relates to how we experience physical space through representational patterns. “Intuitive” is added to hybrid space to stress the importance of how LBGs affect the perception of players, and that this is incorporated. This intuition encompasses the perceptual apparatus and attention of the players. The elements around us are not representations, but they are perceived through representational patterns (Böhme 2007).

What happens when we are playing and learning in hybrid intuitive spaces? When players are moving through urban space learning about democracy, history or math? How does the relation between tasks, physical and digital space affect the experience of the learning situation? Based on a three year study of LBGs through observation, participation, design, and player interviews this paper discusses these aspects.

References

