

Abstract

Digital Interactive Narratives in Public Spaces: Reclaiming the Public Sphere – Marcos Pereira Dias

This dissertation analyses the potential of digital interactive narratives in public spaces to reclaim the public sphere. A definition of public sphere in public spaces is established based on the ancient Greek city-state of Athens and is used as a reference to analyse the decline of public spaces and the public sphere in contemporary society. Modern urban planning, mass media broadcasting and the rise of individuality in society are identified as factors contributing to this decline, resulting in the retreat of the individual into private spaces, the depoliticisation of society and the loss of meaning in public spaces. Disruptive forms of narrative that combat these processes are identified, along with their limiting factors. An analysis made of the digital narratives originated by the shift from mass media to a networking society demonstrates increasing interactivity generated by them, but also a lack of meaningful dialogue. The virtual communities that define the rise of cyberspace are shown to be anonymous, stereotyped gated communities where the individual has limited collaboration in the narratives generated, and where the civil codes of society are blurred. To contrapose this, the silent shift from cyberspace to pervasive computing in society is highlighted, along with the importance of conducting this shift through human-centred interaction. In this new context defined by the move from the screens to the streets, playacting is identified as a key feature, with the collaboration of the individual in the creation of new digital narratives. Different forms of digital interactive narratives in public spaces are then analysed, leading to the conclusion that these narratives can generate new forms of social interaction and reclaim meaning in public spaces. Finally, an attempt is made to establish the defining features of these digital interactive narratives that reclaim the public sphere.