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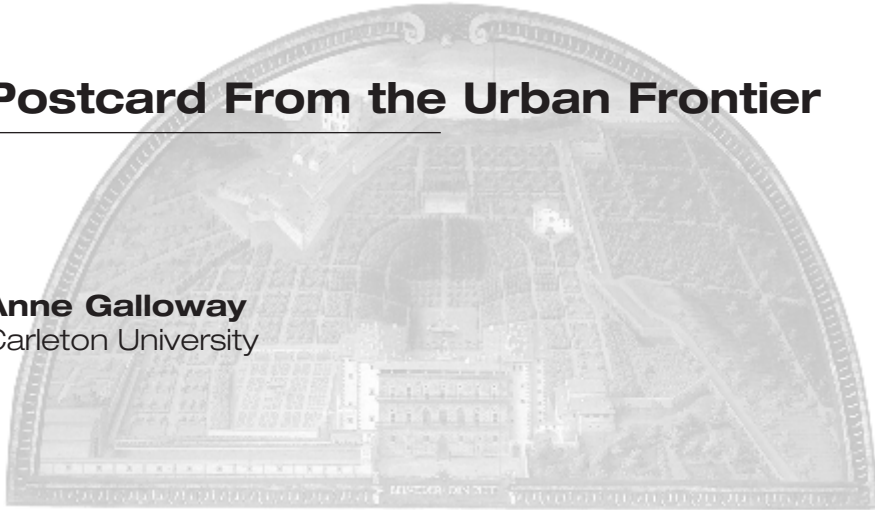
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Postcard From the Urban Frontier

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As technology increasingly moves away from the desktop, people are beginning to explore what it means to playfully and critically deploy networked and mobile technologies in the city. Mixing the virtual with the physical, new spatial and cultural practices are emerging to create a new urban frontier. Here are some recent highlights:

asphalt-games.net

Digital Street Game is an Internet-enhanced street game in which players stage and document small interventions or “stunts” on the street corners of New York in order to claim turf on a virtual map of the city. The game is an experiment in collectively reimagining commonplace views of New York. By providing an online counterpart to the urban environment, it allows players to share their visions of the city with others.

Digital Street Game is virtual graffiti that draws on your imagination, your sense of humor, and your dignity. Some people look at New York and think “why?” We look at New York and think, “Why the hell not?”

undertheumbrella.net

UMBRELLA.net is a project exploring transitory or ad-hoc networks and their potential for causing sudden, striking, and unexpected connections between people in public and urban space. The project focuses on the theme of “coincidence of need,” or how shared, yet disconnected activities can be harnessed into collective experiences. UMBRELLA.net examines how the haphazard and unpredictable patterns of weather and crowd formation can act as an impetus to examine coincidence of need networks. In particular, when umbrellas are opened and closed in public space. The project will attempt to highlight

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these informal relationships by creating a system of ad-hoc network nodes that can spontaneously form and dissipate based on weather conditions.

cnm.open.ac.uk/projects/cititag

Based in Bristol, England,

CitiTag is a wireless location-based multiplayer game, designed to enhance spontaneous social interaction and novel experiences in city environments by integrating virtual presence with physical. In the first version of CitiTag you roam the city with a GPS- and WiFi-enabled iPaq PocketPC in search for players of the opposite team that you can "tag." You can also get tagged yourself if one of them gets close to you. Then you need to find a friend to free you. Urban space becomes a playground and everyone is a suspect.

pacmanhattan.com

Pac-Manhattan is a large-scale urban game that utilizes the New York City grid to recreate the 1980s video game sensation Pac-Man.

A player dressed as Pac-man will run around the Washington square park area of Manhattan while attempting to collect all of the virtual "dots" that run the length of the streets. Four players dressed as the ghosts Inky, Blinky, Pinky and Clyde will attempt to catch Pac-man before all of the dots are collected.

Using cell-phone contact, Wi-Fi internet connections, and custom software designed by the Pac-Manhattan team, Pac-man and the ghosts will be tracked from a central location and their progress will be broadcast over the internet for viewers from around the world.

magicbike.net

Magicbike is a mobile WiFi (wireless Internet) hotspot that gives free Internet connectivity wherever its ridden or parked. By turning a common bicycle into a wireless hotspot, Magicbike explores new delivery and use strategies for wireless networks and modern-day urbanites. Wireless bicycles disappear into the urban fabric and bring Internet to yet unserved spaces and communities. Mixing public art with techno-activism, Magicbikes are perfect for setting up adhoc Internet connectivity for art and culture events, emergency access, public demonstrations, and communities on the struggling end of the digital-divide.

uncleroyallaroundyou.co.uk

Taking place in cities around the United Kingdom and Europe,

Uncle Roy All Around You is where the console game breaks out onto the streets; a game that pitches Online Players around the world alongside players on the real streets of the city. Street Players use handheld computers to search for Uncle Roy, using the map and

incoming messages to move through the city. Online Players cruise through a virtual map of the same area, searching for Street Players to help them find a secret destination.

Using web cams, audio and text messages players must work together. They have 60 minutes and the clock is ticking . . .

www.mle.ie/~jonah/projects/wifihog.html

Wi-Fi Hog is personal system for a laptop or portable computer that enables people to gain complete control over a public access wireless network. The idea is presented as an alternative to the utopian vision of wireless networks being open, shared, and utilitarian for everyone. This project is a cautionary one, and comes as a reaction to the battle over free wireless spectrum where corporate pay-per-use and free community networks are fighting for signal dominance in public spaces. Wifi-Hog exists as a tactical media tool for controlling and subverting this claim of ownership and regulation over free spectrum, by allowing a means of control to come from a third-party.

mogimogi.com

Mogi is a Tokyo-based game

where players move outside, pick up virtual items through their mobile phone interface then trade with other players to complete collections. The goal is to get the maximum points completing collections. It is based on players' location. From the Web interface, players see in real time, on a 3D map, the positions of connected players as well as collected items. From both interfaces, players trade the items picked up with the mobile. Mogi is a community game, featuring a complete IM system. A Web player might help a mobile player by clicking on its character on the map and sending "Lucky you! North, close to you, lies a rare item. Get it, get it! :)" which will pop on the screen of the mobile player.

ambriente.com/wifi

The Public Broadcast Cart is a shopping cart outfitted with a dynamic microphone, a mixer, an amplifier, six speakers, a miniFM transmitter and a laptop with a wireless card. The audio captured by the microphone on the cart is fed through the mixer to three different broadcast sources.

The Public Broadcast Cart is designed to enable any pedestrian to become an active producer of a radio broadcast. The cart reverses the usual role of the public from audience to producer of a radio broadcast and online content.

dodgeball.com

Dodgeball.com is a new social networking service built specifically for mobile phones. . . . The idea is simple: tell us where you are and we'll tell you who and what is around you. . . . Send us a text message telling us where you are and we'll send out a text message telling all your friends where you are AND send you back a message letting you

know if any friends-of-friends are within 10 blocks. If you have a camera phone, we'll even send you their picture. . . . Dodgeball is designed to help you meet up with friends and friends-of-friends while you're out, not while you're sitting in front of your computer. Try it out, next time you meet a friend for drinks.

These projects amount to a research initiative that is still largely invisible in urban and mobilities literature—challenging scholars to take a fresh look at networks, play, collective action, and public space.

Anne Galloway is currently completing her Ph.D. dissertation—Intimate and Playful Technologies: Ubiquitous Computing, Space and Culture—at Carleton University. She publishes a research weblog on technology and cultural studies at <http://www.plsj.org>.