

Locative Arts and Locative Activism

by Drew Hemment

As a part of a 3 year study on the shifting boundaries between art practice, the event and data systems, I took part in a series of workshops and online discussions in 2003 which helped to elaborate the field of locative media. Consolidating these interests, the Mobile Connections exhibition within Futuresonic 2004 sought to explore forms of expression that are intrinsic or unique to mobile and wireless media, and that led to the proposition that, just as net art is the art of the Internet, so locative art can be understood to be the art of mobile and wireless systems. Following this a taxonomy of locative media arts was written, which distinguished between mapping, ambulatory and geoannotation projects that were primarily documentary, figurative or social. Locative media contains a strongly social moment, and much early interest focused on the notion of 'social interfaces to places' (Russell). However, criticisms of locative media have highlighted how much of the field works with a very narrow, technologically deterministic understanding of location and with little or no engagement in lived spaces and social context. Locative media created an opportunity to look anew at public art and other spatial practices, and also has energised an interdisciplinary thinking of the city. Two outcomes of this were *Loca: Set To Discoverable*, an arts-based group project on grass-roots, pervasive surveillance which combined art installation, software engineering, activism, pervasive design, hardware hacking, SMS poetry, sticker art and ambient performance, and the Urban Play strand of the Futuresonic festival which seeks to reimagine, free and make strange the city through collaborative art and technology practice.

Drew Hemment is Director of Future Everything, a nonprofit company responsible for Futuresonic International Festival; AHRC Research Fellow in Creative Technologies, University of Salford; and Project Investigator in the Pervasive and Locative Arts Network (PLAN). He is currently working on the interdisciplinary arts-based research project *Loca: Location Oriented Critical Arts*. Projects include *Loca* (2003–present), *Futuresonic* (1995–present), *Low Grade* (2005), *Mobile Connections* (2004), *FutureDJ* (2004), *Turntable Re:mix* (2004), *Migrations* (2002–2003), *Blacktronica* (2002), *Sensurround* (2001–2002), *BrokenChannel* (2001) and *SenseSonic* (2000). Hemment was involved in early U.K. electronic dance culture as a DJ and event organizer. He completed an MA at the University of Warwick and a Ph.D. at the University of Lancaster.