

AT FIRST SIGHT: CREATING AN ALTERNATE REALITY GAME
WITH TRANSMEDIA EXPERIENCE

A Master's Thesis

by

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To my beloved family,

AT FIRST SIGHT: CREATING AN ALTERNATE REALITY GAME
WITH TRANSMEDIA EXPERIENCE

The Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences
of
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by

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ANKARA

September 2019

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Media and Design.



Asst. Prof. Andreas Treske
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Media and Design.



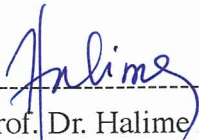
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ABSTRACT

AT FIRST SIGHT: CREATING AN ALTERNATE REALITY GAME WITH TRANSMEDIA EXPERIENCE

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When images come together, the viewer starts to read a story according to their own perceptions. The actual motivation of the storyteller is to let the viewer create a story based on their own ongoing biases, then to instill an unexpected perspective to make them retrospectively evaluate the entire storyline they had created. Using the transmedia storytelling method makes the viewer feel immersed in the story so that they can reinforce the image of the story in their mind. That is why I am trying to find out: “How can we effectively make the audience an active part of the project and create a common ground, by using Transmedia Storytelling?”

This thesis will support the alternate reality game that I have formed via trans media storytelling named “*At First Sight*”. The purpose of this research is to examine the

impact of the project “*At First Sight*”, which is an alternate reality game developed through transmedia storytelling in the frame of this thesis. This thesis introduces the works of the artist group called Blast Theory and analyzes the relationship between these works and the *At First Sight* project. In this sense, *Play the Life, Live the Game* and *Confession* projects, which were realized by using the alternate reality game and interactive game installation, were also included in the scope of the thesis in addition to *At First Sight*. In this context, the process and development of the projects examined are explained within the framework of supported theories and audience feedback.

Key Words: Alternate Reality Game, Game Design, Interactive Game Installation, Photograph, Transmedia Storytelling

ÖZET

İLK BAKIŞTA: TRANSMEDYA DENEYİMİ İLE ALTERNATİF BİR GERÇEKLİK OYUNU YARATMAK

Munlafalıoğlu, Güner

Yüksek Lisans, İletişim ve Tasarım Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Andreas Treske

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İmajlar bir araya geldiklerinde, izleyici kendi algılarına göre bir hikaye okumaya başlar. Hikaye anlatıcısının asıl amacı, izleyicilerin kendi süregelen önyargıları doğrultusunda bir hikaye oluşturmaya müsaade edip daha sonra beklenmeyen bir bakış açısı yerleştirerek yarattıkları hikayenin tamamını geriye dönük bir şekilde değerlendirmelerini sağlamaktır. Transmedya hikaye anlatımı yöntemini kullanmak, katılımcının kendisini hikayeye kapsamlı olarak girmiş hissetmesini, böylelikle de zihninde yarattığı hikayeyi güçlendirmesini sağlar. Bu yüzden, transmedya hikaye yöntemini kullanarak “Katılımcıyı nasıl etkin bir biçimde projenin bir parçası haline getirebilir ve ortak bir dil yaratabiliriz? sorusuna cevap bulmak istemekteyim.

Bu araştırmanın amacı; bu tez kapsamında geliştirilen ve transmedya hikaye anlatıcılığı aracılığıyla oluşturulan bir alternatif gerçeklik oyunu olan *İlk Bakışta* adlı projenin, katılımcılarında yarattığı etkiyi incelemektir. Bu tez *Blast Theory* adlı sanatçı grubunun çalışmalarını tanıtarak *İlk Bakışta* projesi ile bu çalışmalar arasındaki ilişkilerin analizini yapmaktadır. *İlk Bakışta* projesi ile birlikte, yine alternatif gerçeklik oyunundan ve interaktif oyun yerleştirmesinden yararlanarak gerçekleştirilmiş olan *Play the Life, Live the Game* ve *Confession* projeleri de bu anlamda tezin kapsamına dahil edilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, incelenen projelerin oluşturulma süreci ve gelişimi, desteklediği teoriler ve izleyici geri bildirimi çerçevesinde açıklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Alternatif Gerçeklik Oyunu, Fotoğraf, İnteraktif Oyun Enstelasyonu, Oyun Tasarımı, Transmedya Hikaye Anlatıcılığı

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Story isn’t a flight from reality but a vehicle that carries us on our search for reality, our best effort to make sense out of the anarchy of existence.” (Mckee, 1999, p.12)

The main reason and motivation behind creating this project and conducting this research is that I find storytelling a strong way of self-expression. Storytelling has always been a very helpful medium and a more efficient way of expressing myself in society when compared to other means of communication. Society's approach to images and visual communication tools, their interaction with and reaction to them have made my communication with the audience stronger and helped me see the project from the spectators' point of view. As a transmedia storyteller, I wanted to create my own world and let my audience experience this world by following a path in a gamelike manner. While moving through my world concurrent with the real world, members of the audience experienced not only being a part of the story, but

also standing on a common ground with the others moving alongside or around them. This common ground I created stemmed from the urge of “empathy”. Rather than expressing myself, I aimed to give the audience a chance to take a look at their inner worlds through my artwork; a world I have created where they shared a common space and feeling.

The most important point was selecting the tools I was going to use and how to assemble them to create this common ground. To solve this problem, I used my Alternate Reality Game (ARG) called *Play The Life, Live The Game* that I created in 2017 Spring Semester in Media and Design program, under the consultation of Asst. Prof. Andreas Treske. The story and story-hints have been transfused to spectators using videos and the people who have interacted with the video have gone through a gamelike experience and became a part of this interactive installation.

“The photographic image cannot realize itself within reality” because it is motionless, in other words stopped and it leaves room for imagination to interpret” (Baker, 2010, p. 279¹).

Based on this idea in my thesis project; I wanted to question how the audience will interact with the project when the created story is told with photographic images. This thesis explains how this project came into being and which theories it is based on.

¹ This work has been translated from the book “Kanaatlerden İmajlar’a: Duygular Sosyolojisi” (Baker, 2010, p. 279) by the author.

The purpose of this research is to examine the impact of the *At First Sight* project, which is an Alternate Reality Game developed through transmedia storytelling in the frame of this thesis. It introduces the works of the artist group called *Blast Theory* and analyzes the relationship between their works and the *At First Sight* project. In this sense, *Play the Life*, *Live the Game* and *Confession* projects, which were realized by using the interactive game installation and Alternate Reality Game, were also included in the scope of the thesis, in addition to *At First Sight*.

Moreover, the methodology of this research project adopts qualitative approach. Observation technique is used as a data collection tool in the research process. While the participants were experiencing interactive game installation and Alternate Reality Game in the showroom, they were observed, and data was collected during the implementation and execution of the three projects mentioned previously. In this context, the process and the development of the projects examined are explained within the framework of supported theories and audience feedback. On the other hand, this study focuses on the impacts of Alternate Reality Game the audience have created/built in their minds using transmedia storytelling method with the new media tools/ways such as linear photography, video, social media accounts and QR Codes.

One of the outcomes of this project is to create an Alternate Reality Game using transmedia. Since *At First Sight* is presented as a prototype, *Confession* and *Play the Life*, *Live the Game* will also be closely examined to support this project. The reason

for this is that all of them are basically games created by the same method of transmedia storytelling. Since *At First Sight* reached the participants through photographic images, unlike the other two projects, I placed the photographs I had taken, in the area I created with the intention of engaging for the participants with the game, following the photographs.

While conducting this dissertation research I have shaped my projects on the basis of the works of Portslade-based artist group *Blast Theory* because they are a group of artists who carry on in depth psychological analysis on their works. This has enabled me to find a common ground between my own work and their works. *Blast Theory* makes the audience the center of their works by finding answers to social and political questions by merging interactive art, and digital broadcasting and live performance.

Apart from Introduction and Conclusion, this thesis has three more chapters. The second chapter focuses on transmedia storytelling and design tools of the research. Additionally, this chapter refers to the creation of transmedia experience and the ways to apply it. Also, the use of images inside the interactive gaming installation I have created by means of using transmedia tools, tells about how it is turned into a game. The transmedia storytelling is discussed on Alternate Reality Game. Since the backbone of this thesis was on transmedia and games, it was necessary to define the concept of game. Therefore, in Chapter 3, I examine Johan Huizinga's definition of

“play” and “magic circle”, followed by the definition of “game”, which should not be confused with the definition of play, and finally Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's “flow” theory. This theory supplies an answer to my question, “How can I effectively make the audience an active part of the project and create a common ground?” I will examine this question through the works I have created in Chapter 4. In Chapter 3, I also examined the works of *Blast Theory* on the basis of interactive mobile games *Karen*, and *2097: We Made Ourselves Over* as case studies. I point out the methods they relied on in this chapter and how they applied these methods. Also, I mention the effects of these works on my studies and the common points between my study and these works. Lastly, the fourth chapter includes the project *At First Sight* as a case study for this research. My Alternate Reality Games and interactive game installation projects, *Confession*, *Play the Life*, *Live The Game* and *At First Sight* that I created by using transmedia tools and which were exhibited at the Master Thesis project exhibition.

CHAPTER 2

CREATING A TRANSMEDIA EXPERIENCE

1.1. The Definition of Transmedia Storytelling

“Transmedia storytelling is the art of world making.” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 21)

In the digital age we live in, transmedia storytelling has found itself a significant place within the new media culture. Before examining the definition of Transmedia Storytelling, we need to look at the meaning of the word “transmedia”. So we can get a much more detailed idea about transmedia storytelling.

....it is important to analyze the meaning of “transmedia.” the term is composed of two components: the first one is the “trans” and the second one is the “media.” “Trans” means “through”, “across” or “beyond” and the “media” are the channels through which information flow variously from sources to target audiences. Therefore, “transmedia” means “across” or “beyond” many channels. The term can be associated with any of the following: entertainment, games, arts, storytelling and branding, among others” (Byun and Kwon, 2016, p. 4).

Henry Jenkins, who is a media scholar, was the first person to use this concept. “The

implication of Jenkins' definition of transmedia storytelling is that the different components of a fictional story are delivered to target audiences through different media outlets, so that an audience must go beyond just one media channel in order to obtain all the components of an unfolding story" (Kwon and Byun, 2016, p. 4).

Although this concept has been proposed recently, we can in fact see some examples of it on hieroglyphs in ancient Egypt, thousands of years ago.

Miller (2014, p. 162) advocates that "the Egyptians' monumental temple complexes and tombs often employed architecture, painting, sculpture, symbols, and hieroglyphics to tell a single united story" (see Figure 1). Also, she adds that "the story could be about a god, a great pharaoh, or a victorious battle. Each medium would contribute a piece to the overall story, just as the various elements have a part to play in modern transmedia storytelling".



Figure 1. The ancient Egyptians employed a form of transmedia storytelling. Image courtesy of Carolyn Handler Miller.

If we look at the present day, transmedia storytelling is used frequently in the field of entertainment as it is used in the fields of education and advertising. The main objective is to transform the audience into an influential participant in the work by engaging the audience with the existing work, enabling them to play a greater role within the above-mentioned areas and removing it from a passive audience role. Actually, we can think of transmedia storytelling as completing a big puzzle (Sanchez, 2017). When the audience / participant puts each puzzle piece with different content into place, he / she begins to complete the narrative story and access to new information about the narrative story.

A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole. In the ideal form of transmedia storytelling, each medium does what it does best—so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels, and comics; its world might be explored through game play or experienced as an amusement park attraction (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 95-96).

Transmedia storytelling has been defined in the literature in different ways since it first emerged as a concept. Robert Pratten speaks of the traditional and the new definition in two different ways. He (Pratten, 2015, p. 2) describes the traditional transmedia storytelling definition as “telling a story across multiple platforms, preferably allowing audience participation, such that each successive platform heightens the audiences’ enjoyment”. However, he also mentions that the traditional definition of transmedia storytelling has changed over time, the reason why it focuses on how transmedia storytelling works within itself, but why the question is forgotten, only explaining production and consumption in its traditional form. He mentions that the audience/participant should be placed in the center of the existing work. Therefore, he also mentioned that it can be defined as “taking the audience on an emotional journey that goes from moment-to-moment” (Pratten, 2015, p. 2).

Although transmedia storytelling is very similar in definition and has a lot in common, there is a fundamental and significant difference between multi-platform storytelling and transmedia storytelling. Robert Pratten describes this as “the crucial difference between transmedia storytelling and multi-platform storytelling is the

attempt to create synergy between the content and a focus on an emotional, participatory experience for the audience” (Pratten, 2015, p. 3). In other words, due to the conceptual approach of transmedia, researchers have started focusing more on the distinction between the concept and cross-media increasingly. According to Jenkins (2011), who is the originator of the concept of transmedia storytelling, transmedia has a simple meaning of “cross-media,” the level at which he contends that transmedia is a way of discoursing about the convergence of a conglomeration of cultural practices” (Kwon and Byun, 2016, p. 5). Notably, the misunderstanding of the concepts of transmedia and cross-media is arising because of the mistaken definition of transmedia. As an example of cross media, we can take the world of *Harry Potter*. The world of *Harry Potter* has been transferred directly from books to movies and video games. Instead of learning the parts of this world fragmented through different media channels, we see the whole story in a direct integrated form.

Transmedia storytelling is widely used in entertainment, marketing, games and advertising. It aims to spread the existing story to more audiences by integrating it into many distribution channels such as comics, movies, books, television, social media, and mobile communication tools. One of the most well known and popular example is *The Matrix* universe. *The Matrix* universe is narrated by animated short films, comics, 3 action films and video games. In order to fully understand this universe, it is necessary to reach all these sources (Jenkins, 2007). Due to the nature of transmedia, all information has been fragmented and distributed to different media

channels, thus enabling the audience to track *The Matrix* universe through distribution channels for people to access this information. The beginning of the *Matrix* universe goes back to 1999 when The Wachowskis first wrote and directed *The Matrix* film. After the great success the film brought, two sequels, *The Matrix Reloaded* (2003) and *The Matrix Revolutions* (2003) were shot (See Figure 2).



Figure 2. *The Matrix* Trilogy Posters (Sep, 7, 2019)

The Matrix, was a narrative in which the where humans lived in a simulation ruled by machines and a group of people who are aware of that were fighting against those machines.

After this trilogy, more media were created that would grow and expand *The Matrix* series. Based on the far eastern elements highly used in the film, *The Animatrix* (See

Figure 3) which was composed of 9 animated short films, was released in 2003.

Animatrix tells the back-story of *The Matrix* universe.



Figure 3. *The Animatrix* Poster (Sep, 7, 2019)

It is an introduction to *The Matrix* universe animation, which explains the history of its world, general concept and back-story of some of the characters. Simultaneously with the movie *The Matrix Reloaded* a video game called *Enter the Matrix* (2003) and in 2005, an Massively Multiplayer Online Role-Playing Game (MMORPG)

called *The Matrix Online* and another new game called *The Matrix: Path of Neo* were released (See Figure 4). Those games included the follow-through of the three films and had a parallel narrative to the story.



Figure 4. The Matrix Games, Enter the Matrix & Matrix: The Path of Neo (Sep, 7, 2019)

As *The Matrix* universe expanded through these different media channels, comic books and short stories written and drawn by The Wachowskis and writers chosen by them began to be published. Some of them have been published on *The Matrix*'s official websites, while others have been combined and released to the market, allowing the followers of *The Matrix* world to discover the whole story through multiple media channels.

This demonstrates the importance of transmedia storytelling in both marketing and advertising. The more detailed and well-planned the world created by transmedia storytelling, the more convincing it is for people who are experiencing it. One example is the 1999 supernatural horror film *The Blair Witch Project*. *The Blair Witch* was originally published on a website as a fake documentary film about a real Blair Witch. Then fake missing human photographs and voice recordings appeared. This caused people to think that there was a possibility that The Blair Witch could actually be real and created a convincing world, a legend. *The Blair Witch Project*, which draws attention with its motto “Based on real events” has been a successful example of ARG where people actively strive to eliminate the mystery that exists.



Figure 5. *Blair Witch Project* Example (Sep, 7, 2019)

1.1.1. Elements of Transmedia Storytelling

One of the most important points to consider when creating a transmedia experience is storytelling. Storytelling is the backbone of the transmedia experience. After the story is created, it should be transferred to multiple media platforms and interaction between these media platforms is created. The uttermost prerequisite to plan a successful transmedia experience is reflecting on story itself, followed by considering the media platforms and the methodology to deliver the story to the audience in a similar fashion. Henry Jenkins sheds light on the question of “Through which form could we transform a story into a transmedia story?” through the seven fundamental principles developed and named “The Seven Core Concepts of Transmedia Storytelling” by himself (Jenkins, 2010). The seven basic principles to explain the concept of transmedia storytelling more deeply and to facilitate the creation process. These principles are spreadability/drillability, continuity vs. multiplicity, immersion vs extractability, world building, seriality, subjectivity and performance.

We can use the *Star Wars* universe to give examples for these concepts. *Star Wars* is an epic space-opera created by George Lucas. The saga starts with the 1977 film *Star Wars: A New Hope*. The saga quickly gained popularity a short time after it was released. The narrative takes place “a long time ago in a Galaxy very far away”. It is a story of a small group of rebels fighting against a tyrannical empire. What make the saga successful are elements such as Jedi warriors – a science fiction version of medieval knights that fight for what is right. Also, the original concept introduced in

the first film known as *the force*. *The force* is a mystical power only exclusive to ones chosen by it and it grants the ability to achieve extraordinary feats such as telekinesis and telepathy. Heroes use the light side of *the force* to accomplish good deeds. While villains use *the dark side of the force* to accomplish evil deeds.

- *Spreadability*: This concept describes the rapid dissemination of the story, which should be experienced by the participants through social media tools and the motivation for the content to be experienced and shared by the participants in a short time. It also demonstrates the importance of using digital platforms such as social media to develop and distribute the story.

In the *Star Wars* narrative, there are Facebook games which the audience can play and share their achievements with their friends. There are also, thousands of social media pages that are dedicated to the narrative. This creates, a massive spreadability that helps the product reach out to millions of people.

- *Drillability*: Participants will encounter multiple clues and challenging story layers as they experience the existing story. This concept tells the process of the participants to follow the clues and explore new pieces by going deep into the story world.

In *Star Wars* universe, there are a number of time lapses and gaps in the narrative and this gives the audience the chance to fill in the gaps using their prior knowledge of the story.

- *Continuity*: The more coherent the story world is, the more immersive the participant's experience gets and this will lead the game to become more worthy to interact. Continuity is the concept that aims to maintain consistency within the story world.

In *Star Wars* the stories in the universe are linked to each other. So that, the audience needs to watch, play and read the media released to be able to understand the whole story. This consistency makes the viewer more immersed in the narrative the more they consume the products given.

- *Multiplicity*: In order for the participant to keep his or her interest and participation constant, the story world must have a certain consistency within itself. To ensure this consistency, the story can be told in certain layers. When the story comes in layers, multiple alternative versions emerge. This concept tells about the situation of reaching the story and its alternative versions.

In *Star Wars*, books tell the story of *Luke Skywalker*, the protagonist, and what he does after the sixth film *Star Wars: The Return of the Jedi* (1983). But, when the seventh film, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015) was released the producers created an alternate storyline which houses the main characters, but different from their counterparts in the books. This creates an alternate story with an alternate timeline. Many of the characters and events that take place in the books are not in the films. For example, *Chewbacca*, one of the supporting characters dies in the books

heroically sacrificing himself. But he is alive in the last trilogy. This means, there are many differences alternate storylines can make the audience feel different emotions and make different connections between themselves and the characters they see.

- *Immersion*: If the quality of the story world makes the participants lose their perception of time and space, this means that the quality of the participants' experiences will increase. The more a story draws into itself, the more participants adapt to the story world and see themselves as part of the game. This ensures that the participant's attention is constantly kept on the story. The concept of immersion refers to this process.

As the *Star Wars* universe, expands using different media channels people feel more as a part of the narrative, spend more resources and invest emotionally. When this investment is returned they invest more creating a spiral. For example, lots of *Star Wars* fans that spend money on its merchandise also do *Star Wars marathons*. Where they try and watch all of the films without sleeping or sometimes even standing from their seats. It creates an immersion for the fans and their attention on the story is nearly never lost.

- *Extractability*: This concept describes the process of the use of valued items in the story world by the participants in the real world. Use of elements in popular movies, series, television shows and games in the real world enables participants to integrate the real world and the story world with each other (Pratton, 2015, p.8).

Star Wars franchise has managed to create thousands of merchandise including action figures, plushies, toys like light sabers and helmets, suits of characters and most importantly a whole section dedicated to it in *Disneyland*. In this way, they are able to connect with millions of *Star Wars* fans. This enables the fans to feel integrated to the story and the universe.

- *World Building*: The more convincing and sincere the participant finds the story world he or she has discovered, the more they remain connected with the story. This will increase the process of the experience. When creating a story world, making the created world believable for the participant is one of the most important key elements. The first step in achieving this is to create an intersection point between the created world and the real world. In the fictional universe, a world of story must be established by making a connection from the real world and convincing the participant that it is real.

In *Star Wars*, rules of physics are not broken and the rules of the universe are consistent. There is *the force*: a power that can bend those rules, but it is exclusive to only those who have the ability to learn and practice it. Thus, this does not break the suspension of disbelief, which means that things, which can bend the rules that apply to the real world, are limited by a set of predetermined rules belonging to a narrative. For example, if a question like, “Why *Luke Skywalker* –the protagonist of the series– does not use *the force* to instantly teleport and save his sister *Leia Organa* from

captivity?” can simply be explained with the preset rules of *the force* – it cannot be used to accomplish such a feat. This satisfies the world building rules mentioned above.

- *Seriality*: When a story spans multiple media platforms, this concept is called seriality. Nielsen and Selvadurai (2012, p.38) claims that “The different stories within the universe do not need to be interlinked, but the characters and the general rules within the universe have to be maintained”. Stories from the story world do not necessarily have to be related to each other. However, the characters linked to the main story must remain intact.

As *Star Wars* creates a universe with a very long history. It is needed to use as many different media as possible to expand and improve it. For example, there are *Lego Star Wars* games in which the players can play as Lego versions of the characters they see in the films. Also, the audience can learn the following story of the main character *Luke Skywalker*’s life after the first trilogy in the extended universe books over a hundred. These are, just two examples of seriality that can be observed in *Star Wars* universe. Thanks to that story which is distributed to more than one medium the universe can be expanded nearly indefinitely.

- *Subjectivity*: Side characters in the story can enable participants to experience the story from different perspectives. Robert Pratten (2015, p. 9) says that “Subjectivity refers to the range of points of view from different characters. Typically this is thought of in terms of secondary or supporting characters that get to express their point of view on a different platform to where the hero is telling

his story”. The concept of subjectivity helps the participant to experience from a wider perspective and connect the story with multiple branches.

For example, we can observe the events that happen in *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* animation which was aired in 2008. From the perspective of a side character in *Star Wars: The Republic Commando*; a game released in 2005. In *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, the animation we can see Jedi Masters that try to protect the peace in the Galaxy having conflict with separatists that want to start a war. In the game, Republic commando we see through the eyes of an elite clone soldier that is under command of one of those Jedi Masters – *Mace Windu*. This provides the player with the chance to examine the events from a close up detailed perspective.

- *Performance*: Active role of the participants in the story world will bring the story and user experience to the next level. We can define the concept of performance as the participant's part of the story where they use social media elements within the experienced story world. The participant's performance will increase in proportion to their effort on completing the story.

In *Star Wars, Episode V: The Empire Strikes Back* (1980), *Boba Fett*, a bounty hunter, hired by villains to bring back one of the heroes was only seen in a limited number of scenes. But, he was loved by the fan base so much and was written so many fan fictions about, that the producers had to explain his back story more in detail in the prequels that followed the first three films. For instance, it was explained in the

second film *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones* (2002), that clones originated from *Jango Fett*, who is his father and we see *Boba* as a child training with his father. Thus, we can understand the influence of the audience on the *Star Wars* universe.

1.2. Creating a Transmedia Experience

Experience, in the context of words, is a body of knowledge that people acquire through their actions and activities by directly and purely using their perceptions. So experience is open to innovation. The experience of transmedia, which has been created based on this information, should also have features that will attract the participant, promise innovation and make them a part of the story. This is also very important for the participant to complete the existing experience. When creating a transmedia experience, firstly it is necessary to calculate how and in what way the participants will interact with the story facing them. The tools and content used for this are of great importance. This means that it is a vital how the audience understand the experience artist trying to create, “not only the emotional engagement in the story but also in the engagement of the experience” (Pratten, 2015, p. 13).

Today, the power of social media and mobile device use in communication is known by everyone. Social media platforms are very suitable tools for creating a transmedia experience. People can interact with other profiles created or part of the experience through their existing profiles on social media. They can share with the profiles of

other people they are in contact with and allow the experience to spread quickly. Thanks to the mobile devices created, the transmedia experience created, can be spread over multiple channels via digital platforms, allowing users to transfer them to other users. This allows the transmedia experience to reach multiple participants quickly as it is possible to read QR codes, provide location-based experience, and broadcast video, audio and messages with various programs installed on smartphones. A transmedia project can take many forms and guises. Additionally, it is important to optimize the advantages that transmedia gives us which is “to deliver the right content to the right device and at the right time” (Pratten, 2015, p. 13).

In addition to this, it is also necessary to take into account the internal and external motivations of the audience when creating a transmedia experience. “Extrinsic motivation is offering people rewards like badges, points and prizes – they are motivated by external factors – whereas intrinsic motivation is where someone takes part in an activity because it is personally rewarding to them” (Pratten, 2015, p. 82). Therefore, it is necessary to create an experience that will keep the participants motivated. Transmedia storytelling has the purpose of making the person an active participant from a passive audience position. Therefore, the contribution of the participant through the experience created and communication with other people increases these motivations

Such elements are also influential in the creation process of Alternate Reality Games, a form of transmedia storytelling. ARGs integrate the trans-media storytelling method into their own bodies to deliver and spread the story quickly to people.

1.2.1. Alternate Reality Games (ARGs)

“Alternate Reality Games take the substance of everyday life and weave it into narratives that layer additional meaning, depth, and interaction upon the real world”

(Martin, Thompson and Chatfield, 2006, p. 6).

Alternate Reality Game is principally a form of transmedia storytelling. It uses the real world, time and human communication to transform the story into an immense experience. “Alternate reality games (ARGs) are a new genre of transmedia practice in which players collaboratively hunt for clues, make sense of disparate information, and solve puzzles to advance an ever-changing narrative that is woven into the fabric of the real world” (Bonsignore, Hansen, Kraus and Ruppel, 2013, p. 35). Alternate Reality Games aim to create a mystery for players to follow and solve that mystery.

As opposed to the definition of transmedia storytelling, Alternate Reality Games need to incorporate complex puzzles that the audience is required to communicate directly to come up with a solution as well as clues to follow and characters to interact with (Phillips, 2012, p. 19).

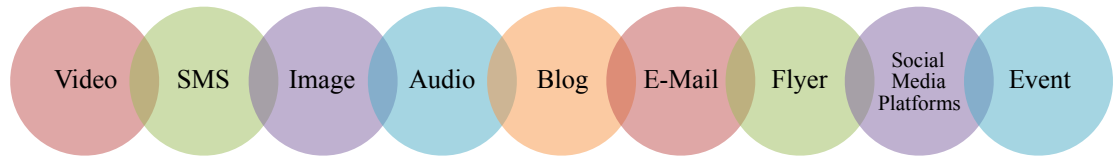


Figure 6. Multiple Dimensions Make Up Single Experience

When we look at the definition of Alternate Reality Game, we can see that it is often confused with other definitions. Alternate Reality Games are thought to have the same game definition as Augmented Reality Games. This creates great confusion when opening these two definitions. “‘alternate reality’ seeks to create a different reality for gameplay purposes. “Augmented reality” adds additional information or a layer to real-life environments and objects” (Kapp, 2012, p. 259). If we look at this explanation, as mentioned before, Alternate Reality Games combine the real world with the virtual world and present the created alternative reality to the player as “real”. However, the situation is slightly different in Augmented Reality Games. "Augmented reality games refer to games where there is a technology overlay on reality that contributes to play" (Kapp, 2012, p. 259).

While Alternative Reality Games use the real world as a platform in which players can move and explore, Augmented Reality Games build a virtual playground on images from the real world, especially through mobile applications. For example, *Pokémon GO* is an Augmented Reality game developed by *Niantic*. *Pokémon GO* has

three teams; yellow, blue, and red. Players start by selecting one of those teams. Pokémon GO positions players' projection in the digital world based on their real-world location (See Figure 6). Players try to hunt in-game items; *Pokémon*, that appear in the real world, through the camera on their smartphones (See Figure 7). By fighting and improving the *Pokémon* they hunt, they try to make their team stand out from the other two teams.

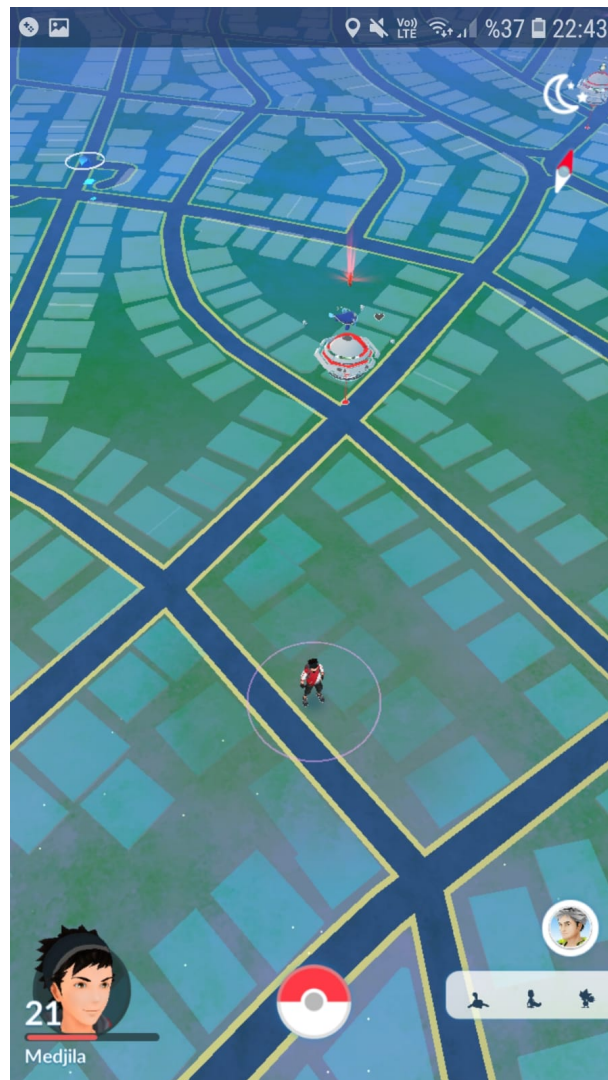


Figure 7. Example of *Pokémon GO* Gameplay



Figure 8. Example of *Pokémon GO* Gameplay

As an example of Alternate Reality Game, *I Love Bees*, or *ILB* was a kind of viral marketing campaign for *Halo 2* and an ARG, developed in 2004 by *42 Entertainment*, which was presented as an Alternate Reality Game. *ILB* was initially given as a subliminal message in the fragment of *Halo 2*. Players who were able to recognize the *ILB* subliminal within the game and discover the site with that name came across a website that seemed to be hacked (See Figure 8). As the players solved the puzzle, new audio logs (See Figure 9). were added to the site. Those sound recordings explained a background story about how an artificial intelligence deserted on the

earth was trying to bring itself back together. The few numbers of players that were able to solve the puzzles and visit in real-world locations hidden in the puzzles in the specific given time, were rewarded an in real life, special “Halo training” experience. Those two games can clearly show the difference between Alternate Reality and Augmented Reality Games.

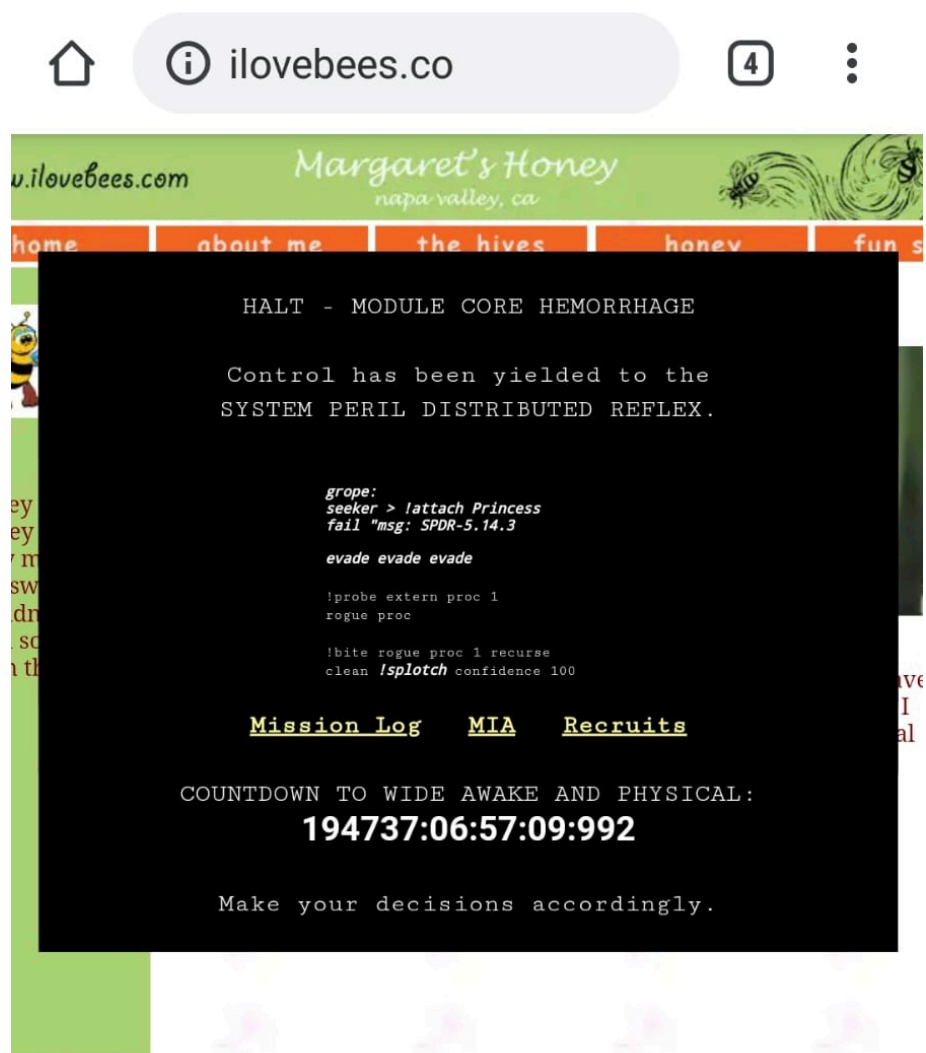


Figure 9. Example of *I Love Bees*

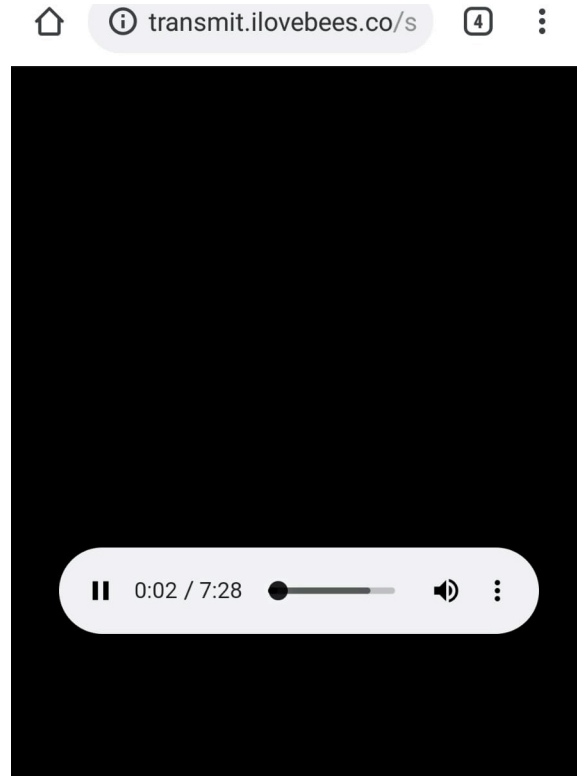


Figure 10. Audio Log Example of *I Love Bees*

While Alternate Reality Games is not a new form of discourse, it has recently become a common form of storytelling discourse specifically in the field of entertainment.

ARGs created based on movies, TV shows, book and TV series reach out to a wider target audience with the experiences of the participants. Alternate Reality Games are not necessarily utilized solely in the field of entertainment. ARGs are created by individuals and artist groups as well. ARGs aim to have participants feel themselves within the game, therefore these are built upon the tone of “This is not a game”. As Kapp (2012) states:

The goal in the design is to create an experience in which the players don't necessarily feel like they are playing a game. The actions they take, the decisions they make, and the puzzles they solve shouldn't be extraneous to the storyline. That said, many ARG themes have a more fantastical feel, so the designer's responsibility is to create a game experience that mirrors realistic activities as part of the game play, even when the storyline makes it clear that the game is not "real".

Alternate Reality Games are disseminated from start points called rabbit holes or trailheads for participants to experience these. Rabbit hole is described as a specific entry point to ARG whereas trailhead could be defined as a relatively generic, event-based starting point (Kapp, 2012). The story, which has been designed with the intent of having the audience experience this, is created to the end of reaching out the participants via such rabbit holes/trailheads. The rabbit holes/trailheads may even be conveyed via an email thread, a blog copy, a website link or a video embedded on a website.

In transmedia fiction, characters, events, locations, and objects are developed in ways not possible in monomedia contexts. For example, a character shown in a background shot of a film might become the main focus in a graphic novel, or a website referred to in the text of a print novel might be fully interactive online" (Bonsignore, Hansen, Kraus and Ruppel, 2013, p. 35).

Nonetheless, it may sometimes prove challenging to access these starting points as ARGs are elementally built upon a colossal puzzle. At this point, this thrilling transmedia experience is expected to be disseminated by participants who recognize

the rabbit holes/trailheads. Participants “diving into” the rabbit hole attempt to complete the story and solve the puzzle by obtaining distinctive and new information relating to the story, through making use of the online and new world entangled within each other. In an ARG, “...players discover the game through an encounter with one or more access points embedded in real world contexts” (Jenkins, 2010). According to Jenkins (2010), these access points, “...known in the parlance of ARGs as *rabbit holes*, lead players into a dynamic matrix of story components distributed across various kinds of digital and physical media”.

Rabbit holes/trailheads are created by *Puppetmasters*. *Puppetmaster* can simply be described as the master controller of an Alternate Reality Game. These assume the role of the creator/designer of the game as well as being in charge of the game. They follow how and to which extent the participants interact with the game in addition to their responsibility of keeping the participants aligned with the game objective. According to Jenkins (2010), “As puzzles are solved, the game's content producers, or “puppet masters,” release successive cycles of story and interactivity, tweaking their approach along the way based on the observed behavior and emerging collective intelligence capabilities of the players”.

Open story-world-type storytelling provides a quite convenient setting to create Alternate Reality Games (ARGs) as open story-world allows the audience to discover and experience the stories by themselves regardless of whether it is an online or real

world. “The open story-world is often described as "non-linear storytelling" because the audience is free to explore those entities in any order - meaning that there isn't a single linear sequence or order that the audience has to follow” (Pratten, 2015, p. 30). ARGs are a kind of game that immerses the user without making them feel that there is a beginning or an end to the game. So they can provide the intended effect to the user quite successfully in this story-world.

CHAPTER 3

PLAY vs. GAME and BLAST THEORY

3.1. Play vs. Game

While the world of Transmedia storytelling offers a wide and connected entertainment experience, the 'game and playfulness' side it contains should be kept in mind. Before we look at the game's place in transmedia storytelling, we need to talk about the definitions of “play” and “game”, because these two definitions often cause confusion. Huizinga defined “play” as follows:

A voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy, and the consciousness that it is different from ordinary life. (Huizinga, 1950, p. 28).

According to this statement, the definition of “Play” can be explained as a voluntary activity, at the same time as an activity for leisure, entertainment and relaxation.

Since it is a voluntary activity, it is not based on taking any order, and it ceases at any time the person wants. In explaining the difficult and abstract part of the definition of “play”, Huizinga also mentioned how engaging, immersive and non-serious he was.

[Play is] a free activity standing quite consciously outside "ordi-nary"life as being "not serious,"but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it (Huizinga, 1950, p. 13).

However, according to this explanation, although the definition of “play” has a non-serious context, the concept of “play” can provide a seriousness for the players when the players concentrate and dive into the game. In addition, considering the existence of entertainment, communication and media sectors who want to reach people with different methods by keeping up with the changing world, the fact that this definition is a two-way one, on one hand it does not include a material interest, on the other hand it could. Johan Huizinga defines circle magic circle within the concept of play. “Magic circle” is the area where the player is involved in the game. Within this circle, players have a common experience and create. Although this is considered as a limit, the general definition of the concept of game is actually ambiguous. Salen and Zimmerman (2004) explains the definition of magic circle, as follows: “the frame is a concept connected to the question of the "reality" of a game, of the relationship between the artificial world of the game and the "real life" contexts that it intersects”.

The concept of magic circle is similar to the definition of ARG. Due to the formation of ARGs, it creates a vague distinction between real life and the virtual world.

Salen and Zimmerman (2004, p.11) describes the definition of "Game" as follows: "A *game* is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome". If we open the definition of "game", we can define it as a competitive activity with certain rules, goals, objectives and results. "game" is an activity that we reach the goal as a result. We try to reach the goal through a goal. As a result, success is one of the distinguishing features that define "game". However, the definitions of "play" and "game" have a very complex relationship. Not every "play" is a "game". "Play is both a larger and a smaller term than "game," depending on the way it is framed. In one sense, "play" is a larger term that includes "game" as a subset. In another, the reverse is true: "game" is the bigger term, and includes "play" within it" (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004, p. 2). For example, we follow the rules when playing a video game. We play to defeat the opposing team or to reach the goal. However, we can say that sliding from a slide or swinging on a swing is a form of "play" that does not create a game. "Game" can be considered as a subset of "play" because play forms may not always be as organized as games, and can be considered as games at the opposite situation (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004).

3.1.1. Flow Theory

It is understandable to use the storytelling of transmedia in order to enable the stories created today to reach the audience more effectively. The experience gained by transmedia storytelling is based on an immersive and totally engaging structure. In the experiences created like Alternative Reality Games, which is an element of transmedia storytelling, it is very important, how immersive the game is and how much it entices the person. In this context, we can also examine the *flow theory* of psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Flow is a state of mental flow. The fact that one can concentrate fully on his work and don't know how the hours have passed, he is only interested in what he is doing, or even forgets to eat and drink water, all of which show that the person has a flow experience. We can say that the mental activity that one does with full concentration and focus is flow. Although flow is a mental activity to experience in every activity, it is a very important element especially for games. "Games are obvious flow activities, and play is the flow experience par excellence" (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, pp. 36-37). The more we lose ourselves in a game, the more we continue to play that game. This is one of the biggest factors that make the game considered as successful by the player. However, no game promises flow. Since the game designer cannot integrate objectively with his/her own game, it can be very difficult to achieve (Kapp, p.71). However, he/she will try to maintain the flow status according to the feedback from the players.

According to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), exactly eight components are required for a flow condition to exist:

First, the experience usually occurs when we confront tasks we have a chance of completing. Second, we must be able to concentrate on what we are doing. Third and fourth, the concentration is usually possible because the task undertaken has clear goals and provides immediate feedback. Fifth, one acts with a deep but effortless involvement that removes from awareness the worries and frustrations of everyday life. Sixth, enjoyable experiences allow people to exercise a sense of control over their actions. Seventh, concern for the self disappears; yet paradoxically the sense of self emerges stronger after the flow experience is over. Finally, the sense of the duration of time is altered; hours pass by like minutes, and minutes can stretch out to seem like hours

Csikszentmihalyi defined the maximum state of the flow experience as “optimal experience”. However, although this does not always happen, there is a flow experience in all games (Salen and Zimmerman, 2004, p. 10). Thanks to the flow, players stay connected to the game, which can give the player pleasure and enthusiasm so that it can spread to other players.

3.1.2. ARGs through Transmedia & Play

Transmedia storytelling distributes the existing story to multiple and different media platforms, while Alternate Reality Games connect the story to give participants a unique gaming experience. In addition, the perception of “Is this all real or not?” makes the game a new world to be explored for the player. ARGs combine the concepts of “transmedia storytelling” and “play” through performance. “The

emphasis on playing on the illusion that the media fiction is real is central to the performance. The key words in this instance are “play” and “performance:” the participant is invited to literally play and become part of a performance as if it’s real” (Ndalianis, 2012, p.172). Because ARGs are finely detailed experiences, the player should look extra cautiously and elaborately for hidden clues within the game. Therefore, flow status can occur spontaneously. This explains the immersive side of ARGs through transmedia and play.

ARGs need cooperation. In any transmedia experience, the participant can also obtain parts by themselves to reach the whole story. However, there is a real puzzle-solving situation in ARGs. These puzzles can often be difficult to solve alone. In the ARG world, the player exchanges ideas with other players and is fully involved physically and mentally in game. It also allows the participant to play an active role. It allows players to gain a place in the story and leave a mark. Because ARGs have real life events, they provide a realistic connection to the world created. Just reading the book, watching the movie or playing the video game may be insufficient to fully understand and internalize that world. However, ARGs make the player a part of the story with components such as movement, track tracking, and competition against time. In addition to cooperation, ARGs also include competitive motivation. Players can form specific groups and enter a race to complete the game before the other groups. This meets the competition, goals and objectives of the game.

3.2. Blast Theory

Blast Theory was founded in 1991 under the leadership of Matt Adams, Ju Row Farr and Nick Tandavanitj. *Blast Theory* makes the audience the center of their works by finding answers to social and political questions by merging interactive art, and digital broadcasting and live performance. *Blast Theory* also provides deep psychological analysis in their work. While creating their works, they prefer to use unexpected places such as visually and virtually abandoned houses, pubs, libraries, museums and apps to make their work accessible to everyone (“Blast Theory”, n.d.). With this aim, the *Blast Theory* team put forward many successful works in which they create many social awareness. I analyze and introduce the work of the *Blast Theory* team and compare their common points with my own under this section.

3.2.1. “Karen”: An Interactive Mobile Game

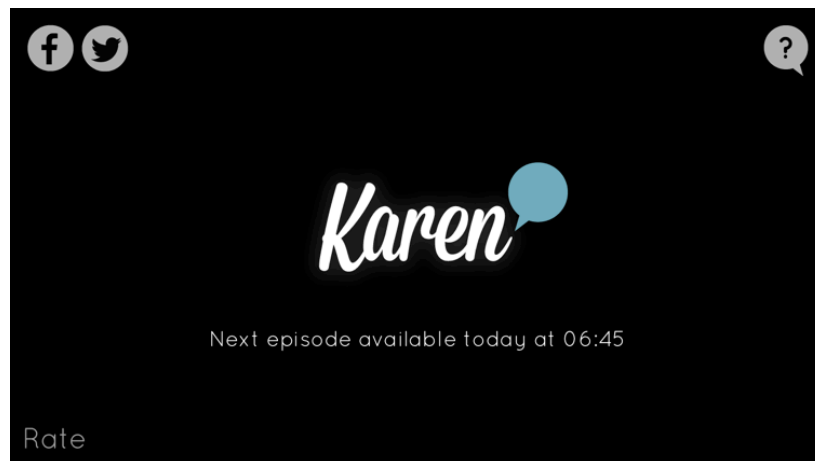


Figure 11. Interface from *Karen*

Karen is an interactive game app developed by *Blast Theory* in partnership with the National Theater Wales in 2013, and 539 kickstarters gave financial support during the creation process (“Blast Theory”, nd). The *Blast Theory* team's work doesn't only include social and psychological awareness, but also offers a political and socially critical outlook. *Karen* was created to create a critical point of view that social media networks such as Facebook collect and store data without permission from users.

We also became fascinated with big data, and particularly how governments and large companies such as Facebook are collecting data on us secretly and using it without our consent. We feel it's our job as artists to pose questions about this new world where technology is ever more personalised and intrusive. We love having our services tailored to us and we're scared of the price we're paying for that personalization (“Blast Theory”, n.d.)

Karen is simply designed as an interactive life-coach app. By interacting with *Karen*, users answer the questions *Karen* poses to them through multiple choice answers and filling in spaces. *Karen* collects this data in her own memory by gathering users' thoughts about the real world, their way of living their social lives and their moral preferences with the questions they ask themselves.

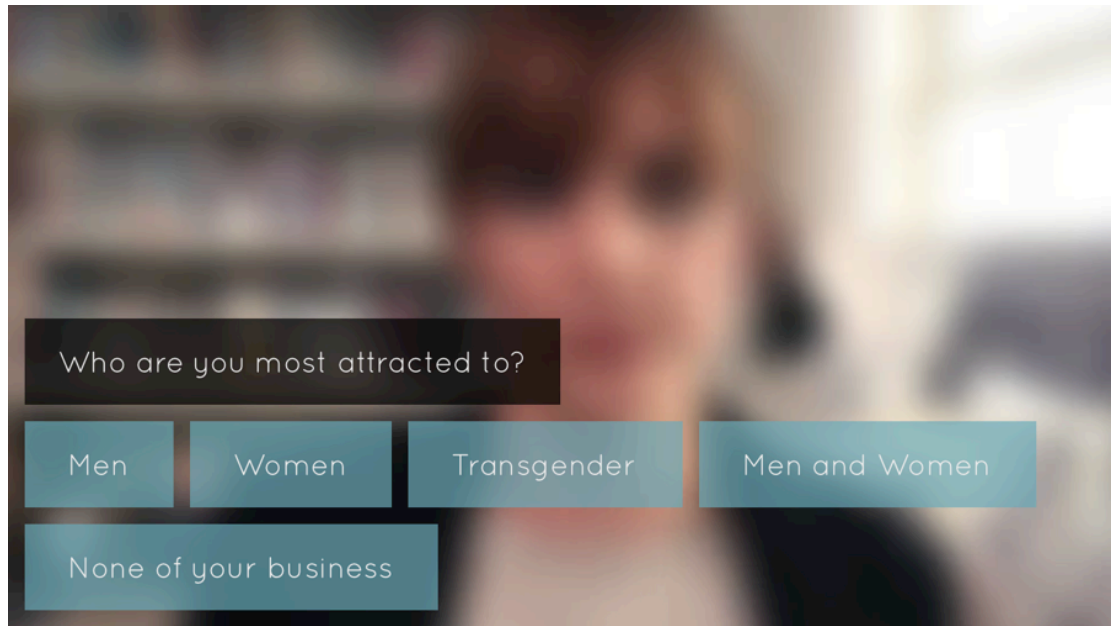


Figure 12. Example of Multiple Choice from *Karen*

Users are completely unaware of the outcome of the game in this process. At the end of this game, which takes approximately 10 days to complete, users can access their psychological data reports for a certain amount of money. Although *Karen* appears to be a very friendly life-coach, she takes an aggressive attitude towards users later in the game. It creates a “role change between the user and herself by sending notifications that can be identified as “spam” to the users' phones.

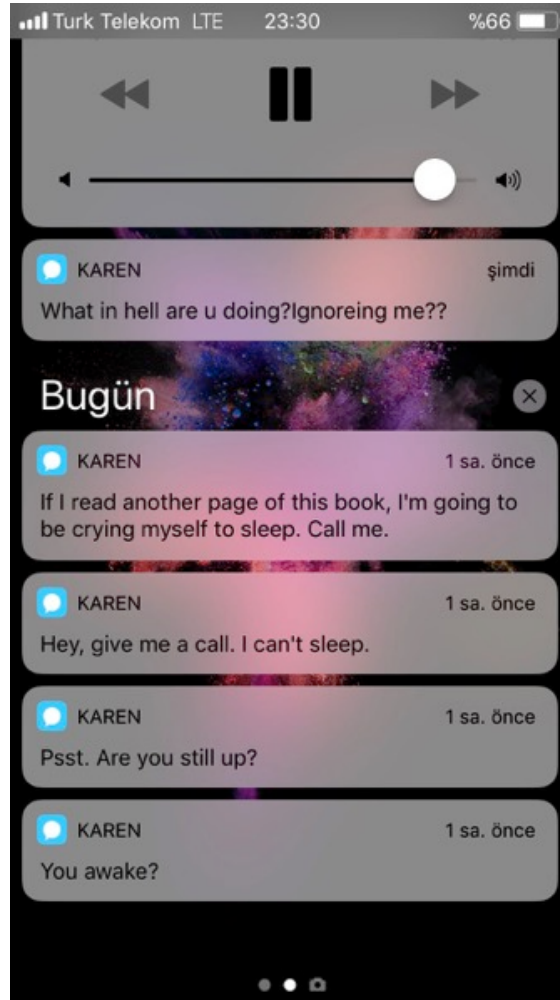


Figure 13. Example of Spamming from *Karen*

Karen specifically applies certain tests to make psychological profiles on users. Tandavanitj as cited in Chatzichristodoulou (2017), psychological profiling questionnaires – specifically the “Big Five” test that measures openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism, and the Myers-Briggs type indicator personality inventory (Chatzichristodoulou, 2017, p. 72).

As if the game has a real appointment system, the user makes appointments to the user at regular intervals and the players' meet with Karen within these specific time periods.

After a while, Karen crosses the limits of her professional relationship with the players and begins to share personal information about herself with them. Then, she wants the users to share information about themselves that can be called irrelevant and private (Chatzichristodoulou, 2017, p. 72).

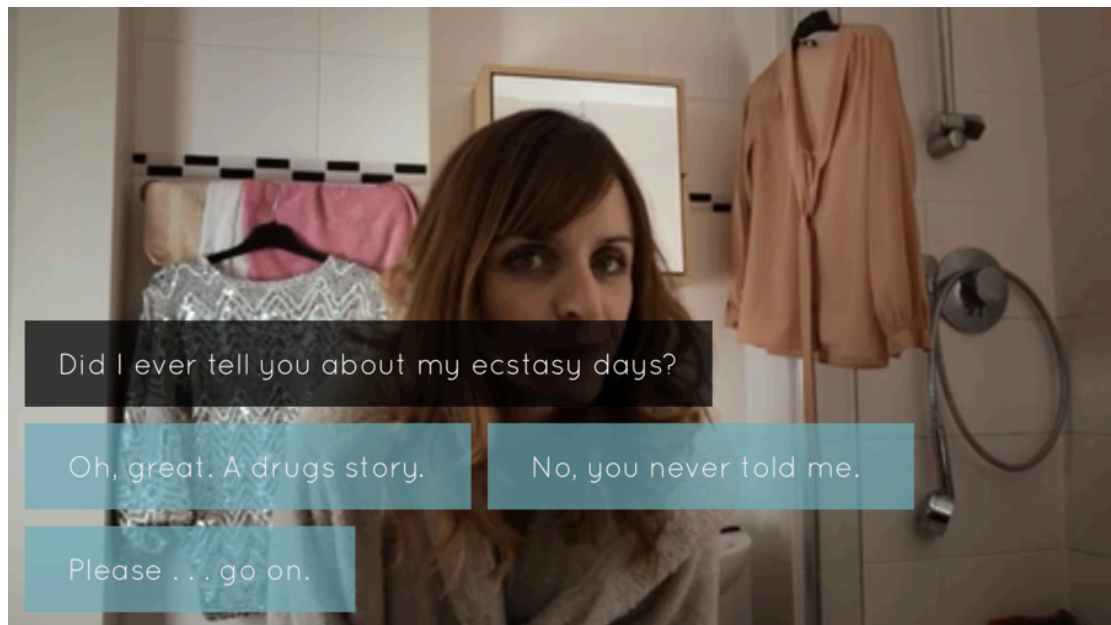


Figure 14. Example of Karen's Private Life from *Karen*

Although *Karen* promises the user to make her life better as a life-coach app, it essentially makes the players the life-coach of Karen. Thus, the game not only

criticizes the users' violation of personal space, but also constitutes a psychological analysis with the preferences of the users.

Karen coincides with her previous Alternate Reality Game and interactive game installation work *At First Sight*, *Play the Life*, *Live the Game* and *Confession* in this sense. The biggest factor that makes these four works parallel to each other is the effort to reach the user through human psychology analysis. *At First Sight* aimed to enliven a story in the minds of the participants with the images they saw. This shows that the current psychological state also changes the way the participants read the images. *Karen*, unlike my own work can be played through an app, and also it consists of video footage, space filling and multiple choices questions.

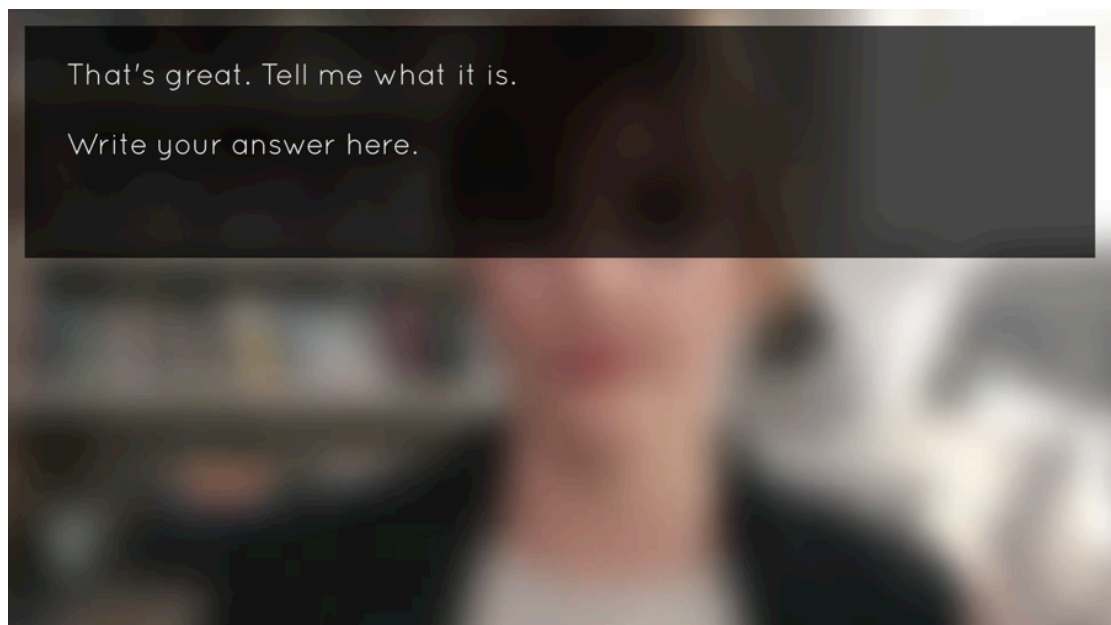


Figure 15. Open Ended Question Example from *Karen*

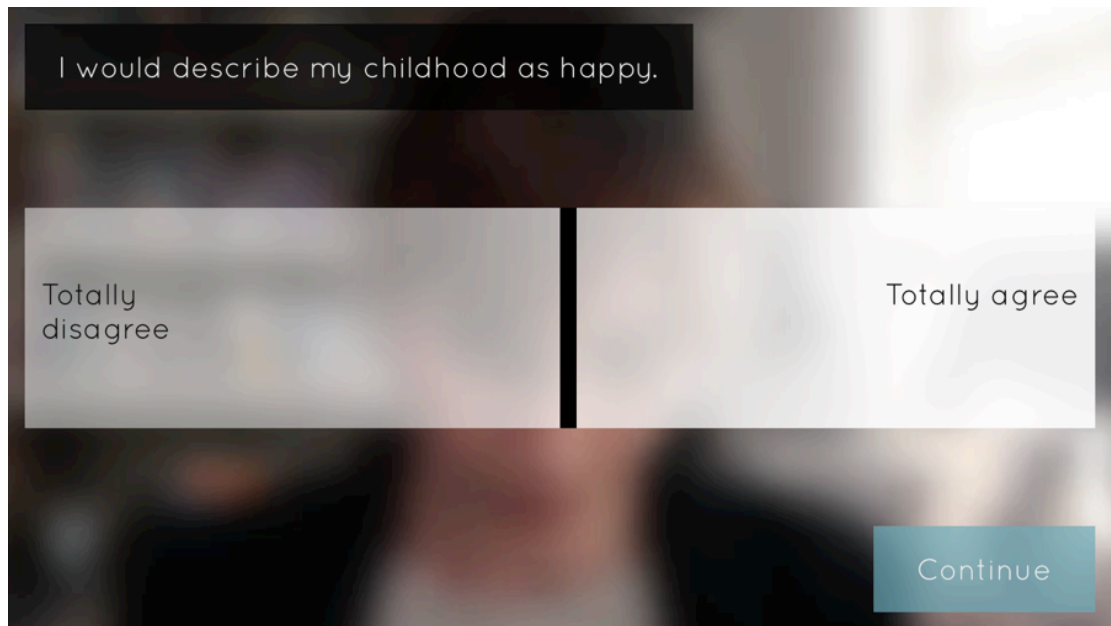


Figure 16. Example of Psychological Examination from *Karen*

While a certain profile is prepared with predetermined questions, the work shapes itself according to the current psychological state of the participant in my own works. We can see this especially in the study named *Confession*. While, in this study, it is seen that the memories and issues that affect the participants and which they are afraid to share with others shape the work through interaction, *Karen* ensures that the participants are included in the game with *Big Five* personality analysis method. *Karen* also has a visual resemblance to the alternate reality game *Play the Life, Live the Game* artwork. The reason for this is that *Play the Life, Live the Game* consists of video footage, just like *Karen*, and gives the participant information to stay connected to the game. These two games enable participants to follow certain stories in the video to answer certain questions and finish the game without breaking the story.

3.2.2. “We Made Ourselves Over”: An Interactive Mobile Game

2097: *We Made Ourselves over* is an interactive and live mobile app experience created by the *Blast Theory* team in 2017. This game is one of the team's greatest works, as well as the *Blast Theory* work co-commissioned by Hull UK City of Culture 2017 and Aarhus European Capital of Culture (“British Council Denmark”, n.d).

The study consists of 5 short science fiction films and includes the participants with the interactive part. It also offers a film experience that is interactive with smartphones.

The game was first played on 1 October 2017 in Hull, Yorkshire. At exactly 2:00 pm, all the telephone booths in the city began to ring at the same time, and those who opened the phone woke up to the city of Hull in 2097 and learned that the world would be destroyed and faced a vision of a new future. (“Blast Theory”, n.d).

On October 30 and November 5, it was played as a live event in Aarhus, Denmark. Since the game is also an app, it has been made playable by everyone except the live event. In the first film, the actors face a dead city. In the second film, the female character, chosen among the 3 young women and confronting the actors with her savior identity, decides from which regions the city will be destroyed.



Figure 17. A screenshot from *2097: We Made Ourselves Over* (Interactive Episode)

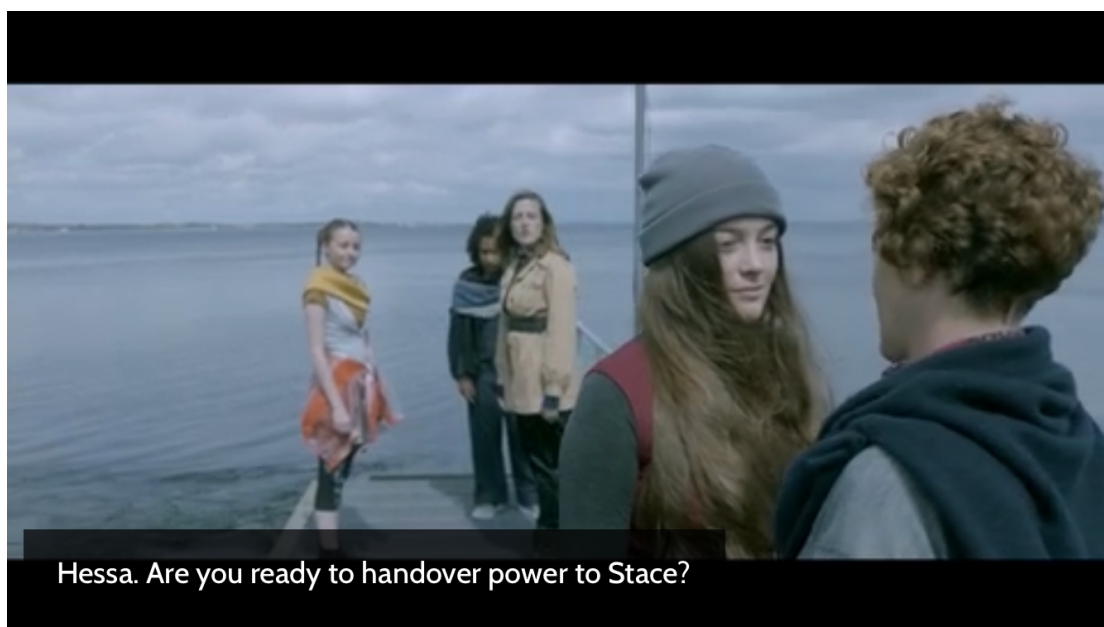


Figure 18. A screenshot from *2097: We Made Ourselves Over* (Interactive Episode)

In the third film, the female character, a rescuer, who left her old city and set out for the new city, directed the question “What can we do to fix everything?” and in this process, with multiple-choice answers, she includes players with her decisions and thoughts. In the first two films, political power balance and social position variability were criticized, while in the fourth film, the actors see that the “Molecular Harvesters” destroyed the city and left the house of the female rescuer (“British Council”, n.d).

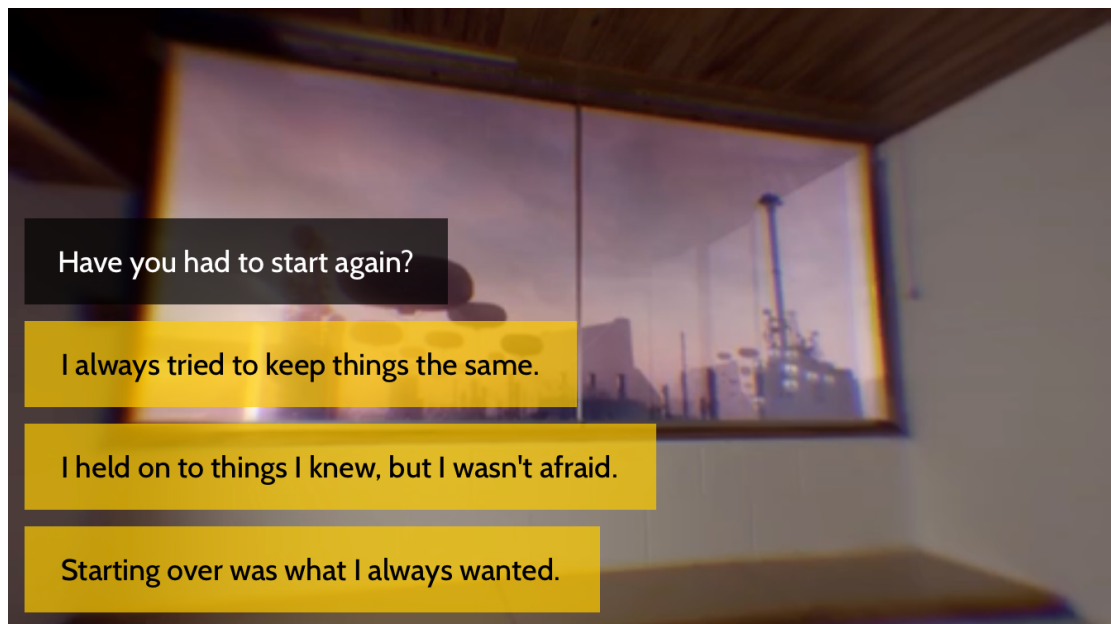


Figure 19. Example of Multiple choice from 2097: We Made Ourselves Over

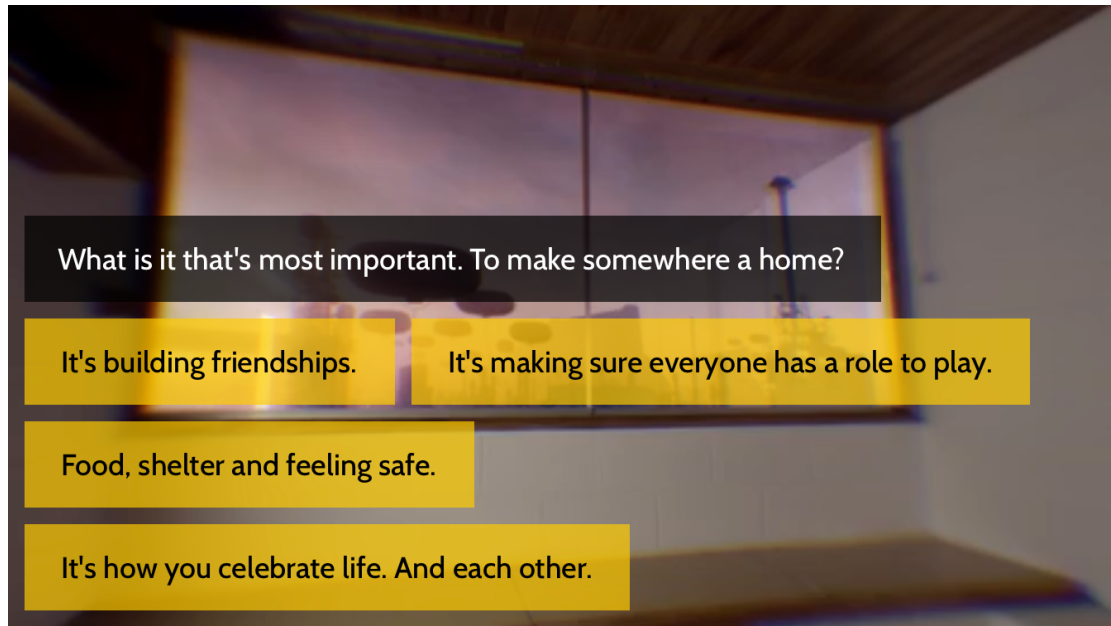


Figure 20. Example of Multiple choice from 2097: We Made Ourselves Over

Meals such as locusts provided by the huge technological aircrafts to the old city, which we see in the game, allow us to question the predictable position of the world in 2097. It also questions the change in political power, migration, loss of assets and the change of technology in our lives over the coming years.



Figure 21. A screenshot from *2097: We Made Ourselves Over*



Figure 22. A screenshot from *2097: We Made Ourselves Over*

Blast Theory, 2097: *We Made Ourselves Over* combines the real world with the virtual world. The game, which started in the real world, has continued through the app. Thus, it is possible to mention that this study carries ARG elements.

In this context, *Play the Life, Live the Game* work meets 2097: *We Made Ourselves Over* in common. Both games, regardless of 2097: *We Made Ourselves Over*'s live action role debut, reach the participants primarily through applications and YouTube videos and narrate the story through video. Then, it allows participants to perceive the game over the story and determine their choices. If we look at *Confession* and *At First Sight*, we can find a common point in the way of using media. All three games enable the participant to explore their environment and complete the story. 2097: *We Made Ourselves Over*, just like *Karen*, gives the participant an opportunity to play an active role in the game by giving a chance to the participant in order to fill in the blanks.

CHAPTER 4

GRADUATE STUDIO PROJECTS

The first projects in this section were created in 2017 Fall and Spring, within the scope of Graduate Studio I and II courses at Media and Design program. My graduation project, *At First Sight*, was created in 2018 Spring semester; all of which, under the supervision of Asst. Prof. Andreas Treske. The purpose of the courses is to make students examine the visual communication problems in contemporary culture. It helps them develop critical thinking by introducing new concepts and perspectives. And after they earn the theoretical knowledge; they are expected to design interactive media, installations, audio-visual experiments, and new media concepts.

4.1. Confession

Confession is an interactive game installation project that aims to create a common ground for people without creating any prejudice against each other.



Please write down your confessions on post-its and stick them on the wall. Please follow the **CONFESSION** lines. I will collect your confess and turning them into an artwork*

**Experimental Typographic Poster Design*

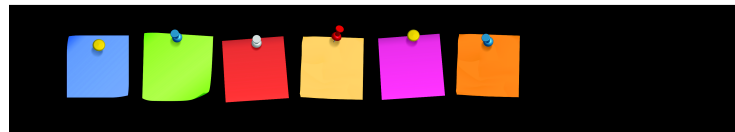


Figure 23. *Confession* Poster Design by Güner Munlafalıoğlu (Jan, 10, 2017)

This installation, which seems to be a black cabin with no appeal from the outside, becomes a sharing tool when the participants enter.

By that, it is planned to break the ongoing boringness of the first impression. The reason that the name of the project is *Confession* is to give the participant completely clear and simple information about the work which they will experience. This project

aims to enable participants to empathize with others, who have been inside the metaphorically created confession cabinet before, by reading the feelings and thoughts of others.

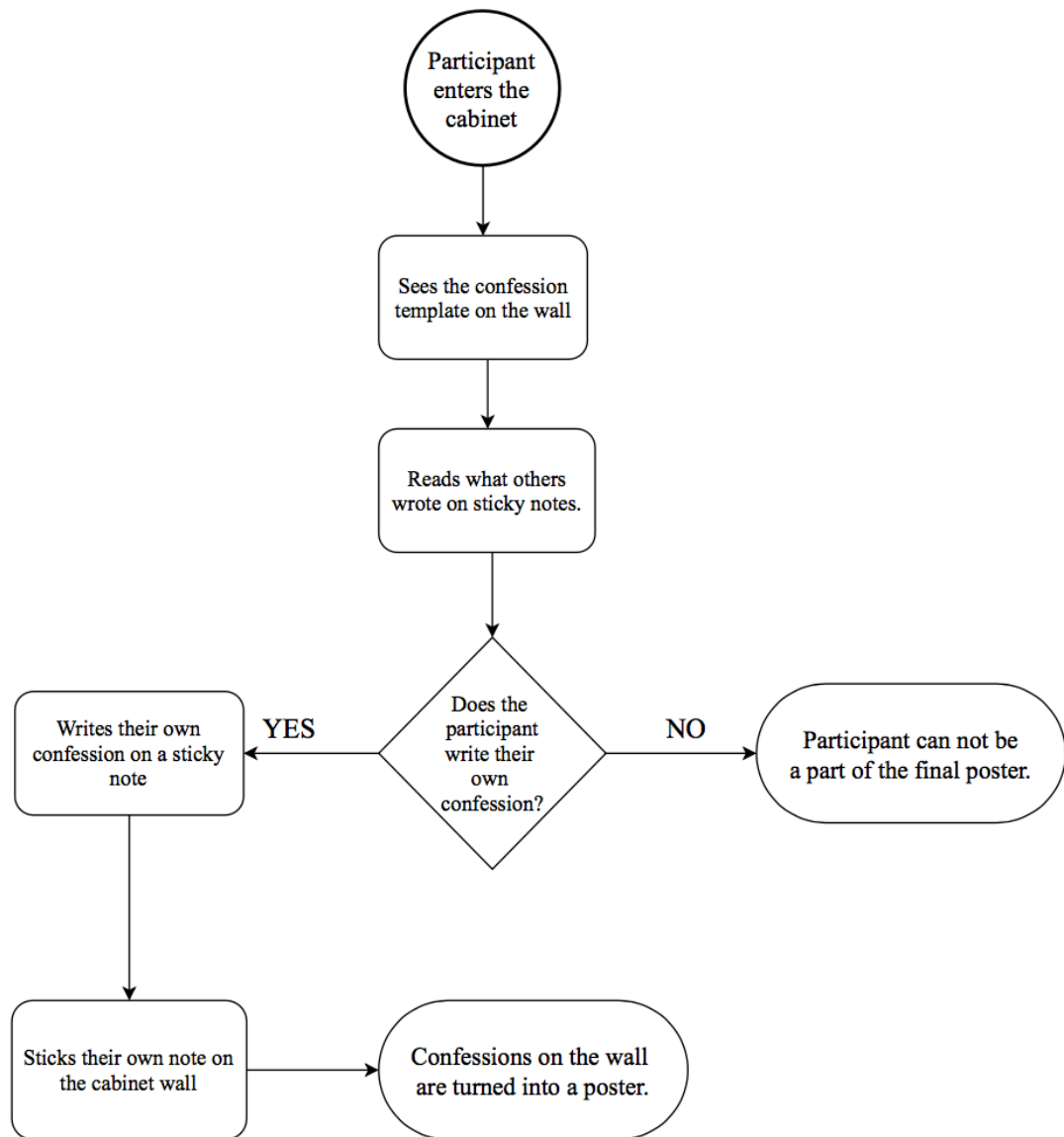


Figure 24. Hierarchic Representations of Flowchart for the process of *Confession*

This chart (See Figure 24) explains the process of the experience. When they enter the cabinet, they see a confession cabinet. Inside the booth, there is a pedestal on whose top, is a stack of unused sticky-notes. And on the wall are sticky-notes with confessions from previous participants that entered before them. Participants can choose to write their own confessions and stick them on the wall among others, or leave the cabinet without writing anything. Confessions are absolutely anonymous and at the end of the day, a poster is created from the sticky notes with confessions that the participants had written. If they choose not to write a confession, they can not be a part of the final poster.



Figure 25. *Confession* in Grad Studio Exhibition (Jan, 12, 2017)

Every person almost can easily confess himself as a sinner but they can just do it within themselves. But, we are afraid of think out loud our sins, our regrets and our fears. Humans are generally afraid of sharing these feelings because they think that other people may judge them in the context of an opinion, idea or even in appearance, religion, language, race and gender. In this project, an environment was created where people share their guilty pleasures, confessions and even sins in an openly way.

People shared their opinions without seeing each other and knowing what other people had shared in the cabinet and this lead to a common language. This helped the confessions cabinet to have a metaphorical meaning. It wouldn't work if there hadn't

been someone inside the cabinet. A bond was created with the confessions that people had shared. Audiences experienced intimacy and mirror effect.

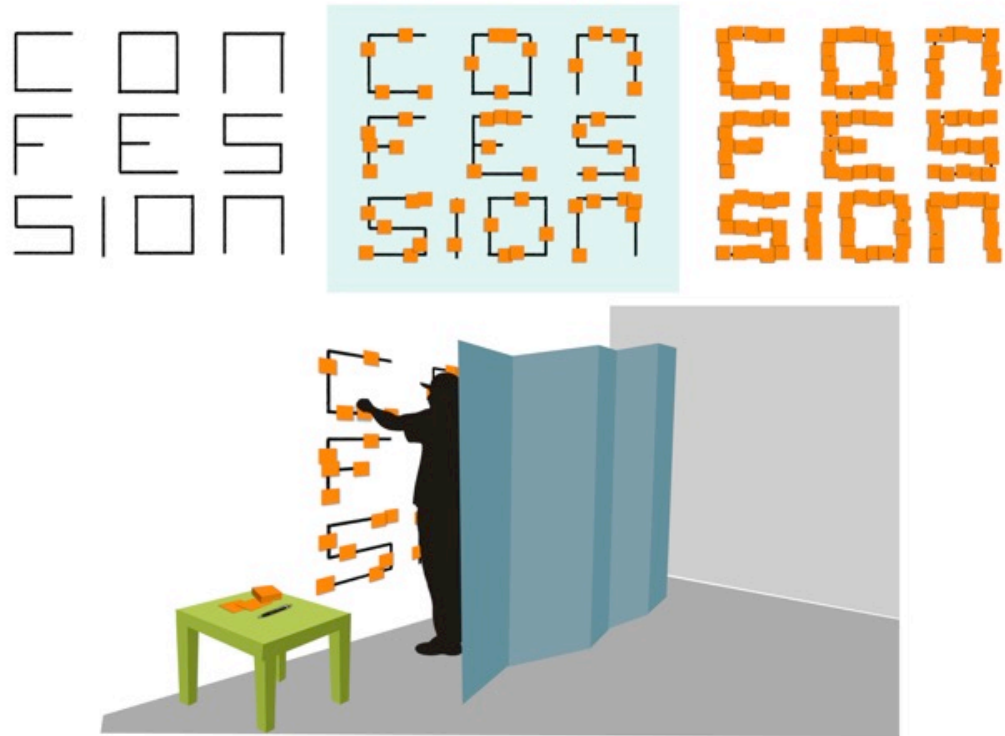


Figure 26. *Confession* Prototype (Jan, 5, 2017)

My main goal was to create a metaphorical confession cabinet. People shared their “secrets” by writing them on post-its and sticking them on the letters of “CONFESSION”, the typographic art piece on the wall, and this act created a common language.



Figure 27. *Confession* in Grad Studio Exhibition (Jan, 12, 2017)

I photographed the art piece on the wall when every part of the piece was covered with confessions and I turned this into an experimental typographic poster. By doing this, the language that they share turned into an art piece.

there and read the secrets and thoughts of others who were present before them.

During the time they spent there, it was aimed for participants to isolate the outside world by discovering other people's worlds.

The participants gave various examples of confessions. While the confessions of the first participants were not serious enough, when the seriousness of the incoming confessions increased, the subsequent participants made more realistic and serious confessions. At first, confessions like “I killed my father” - Juliet and “I love eating pickles” came. However, after serious confessions such as “I was raped 3 years ago” and “I'm stealing my brother's pocket money”, “a year ago I hit a car and ran away” confessions of the project reached the expected goal of seriousness in general (See Figure 29). I observed this development by entering the cabin anonymously in every three people.

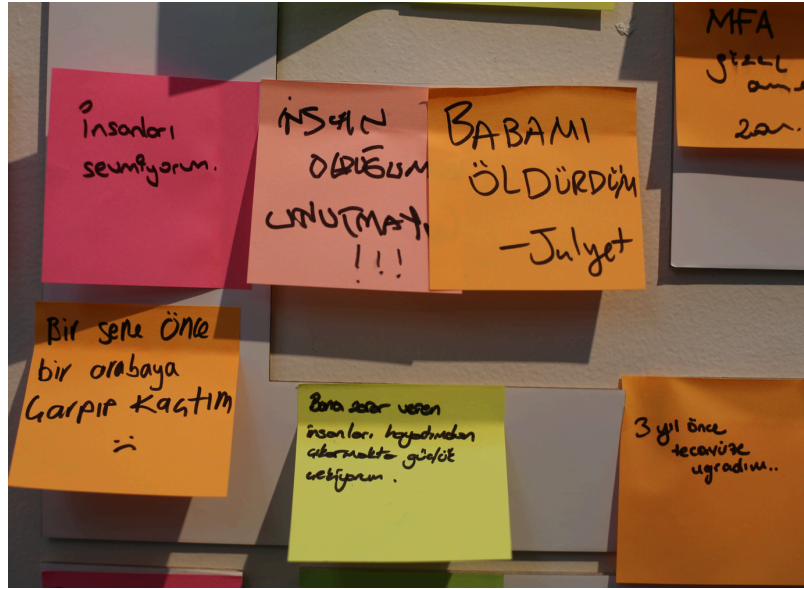


Figure 29. Confessions from *Confession Project* (Jan, 12, 2017)

themselves in this gamelike experience. Since this project is not distributed over multiple platforms, it is defined as an interactive game installation, not ARG, in which ARG is a transmedia storytelling element. However, since it is built as an isolated cabin from the outside world, it meets the characteristics of ARGs by performance, inclusion and impact. If the participants did not put any post-its, the game would not progress and would not be completed. In other words, the active participation and performance of the participants is what makes this project not just an installation but a playful experience.

4.2. Play The Life, Live The Game

Play the Life, Live the Game is an alternate reality game project. A gigantic playground was created for players using social media and location-based tips. The aim of the project was that: “You are not alone and you will not”. We are all living in the same dream with different experiences but in the end we can share same feelings. We all die at the end but it is not the important part of life. We are learning and improving ourselves in every single step. This is the most important part for all of us. We can look at the same sky everyday but every person experiences different emotions. We all die at the end but it is not the important part of life. We are learning and improving ourselves in every single step. This is the most important part for all of us. We can look at the same sky everyday but every person experiences different emotions.



Figure 31. *Play the Life, Live the Game* Poster Design by Güner Munlafalıoğlu
(May, 8, 2017)

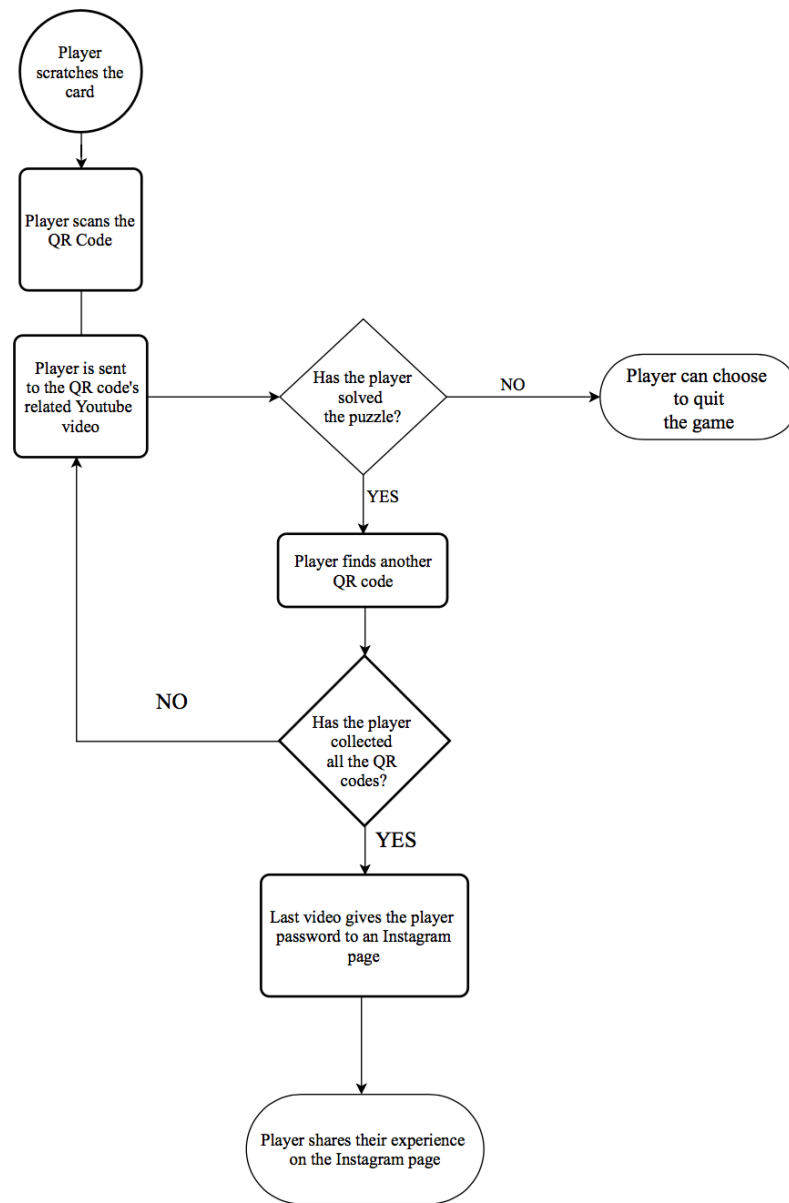


Figure 32. Hierarchic Representations of flow chart for the process of *Play the Life, Live the Game*

Figure 32 explains the dynamics of *Play the Life, Live the Game*. In *Play the Life, Live the Game* the players are given scratch cards. When they scratch them, they see a QR code. When they scan the code, they are linked to a Youtube video where they are

greeted with a puzzle. When they find out the answer, they find a new QR code on a piece of paper. When they scan it, they meet a new puzzle. They have to solve four puzzles in total, to reach four cards scattered around where the game takes place. If the players can not find out the answers to the puzzles, they can no longer continue the game. If they can solve the last puzzle and find the last card, the last code sends them to a Youtube video where it is revealed that there is a special Instagram page made for the game, and they are given the username and password for the page.

This project is an ARG that I developed through transmedia storytelling based on the feedback I received on the work *Confession*. The story, which is integrated into the virtual world and real world game platform, was opened to the participants' experience and the participants became a part of the game. *The Play the life, Live the Game* is a name chosen to tell players the ambiguous line between real life and virtual world. This supports the “This is Not a Game” rule of ARGs. Thus, they question whether their experience is a part of real life or a game. The participants chose to complete the game both individually and in groups. They first joined the game with a scratch card saying ”SCRATCH ME OFF”.



Figure 33. Scratch Cards from Exhibition (May, 8, 2017)



Figure 34. Scratch Cards from Exhibition (May, 8, 2017)

Participants found a QR code in the tickets they scraped, which enabled them to access videos shared with them through a YouTube channel created specifically for the game. Each video tells the story in pieces, as well as the puzzles that participants need to find to complete the story.

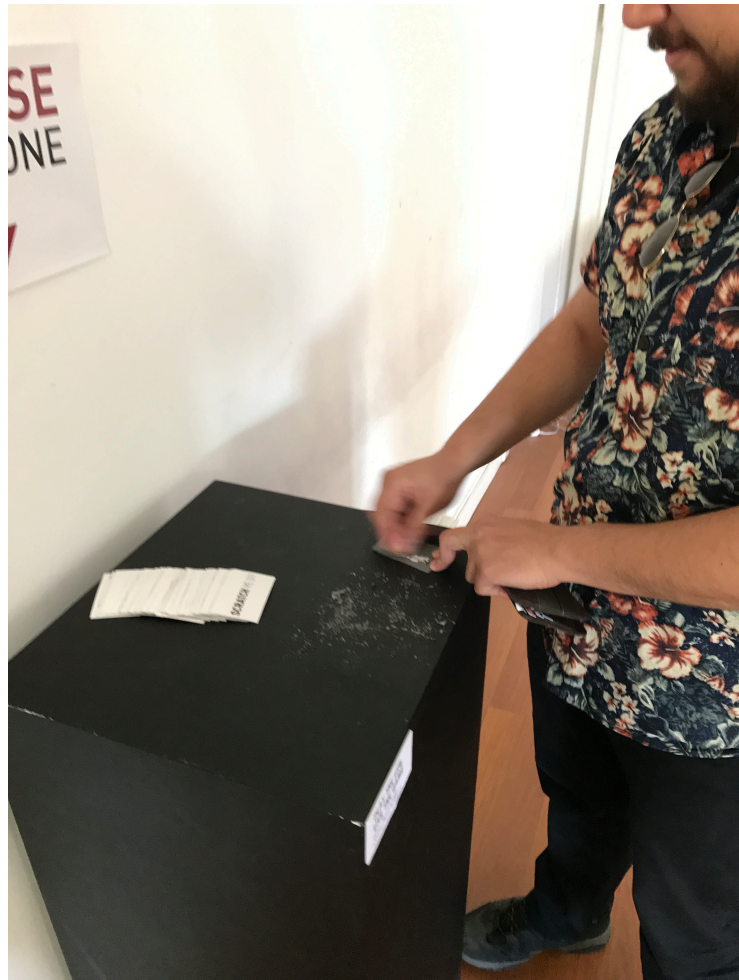


Figure 35. The Usage of Scratch Card from Exhibition (May, 8, 2017)

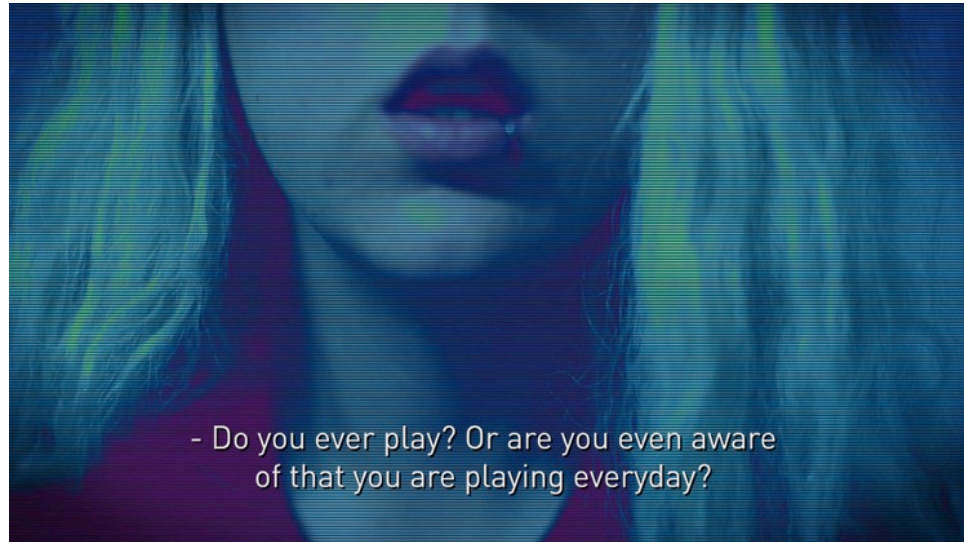


Figure 36. Puzzle Example from YouTube Video (May, 12, 2017)

As the participants solved the puzzles, they found other QR codes scattered across the I.D Bilkent University campus, enabling them to complete the story through videos.

The audience encountered with this project around the main campus of I.D Bilkent University. This project asked its audience to interact with the story and the puzzle.

When they completed the story and solved all the puzzles, thanks to a special Instagram account *playthelifelivethegame* they shared their experience with their videos or photographs. They shared their unique experiences with each other. Within the project, the players were completely focused on the game and a certain flow situation was provided.

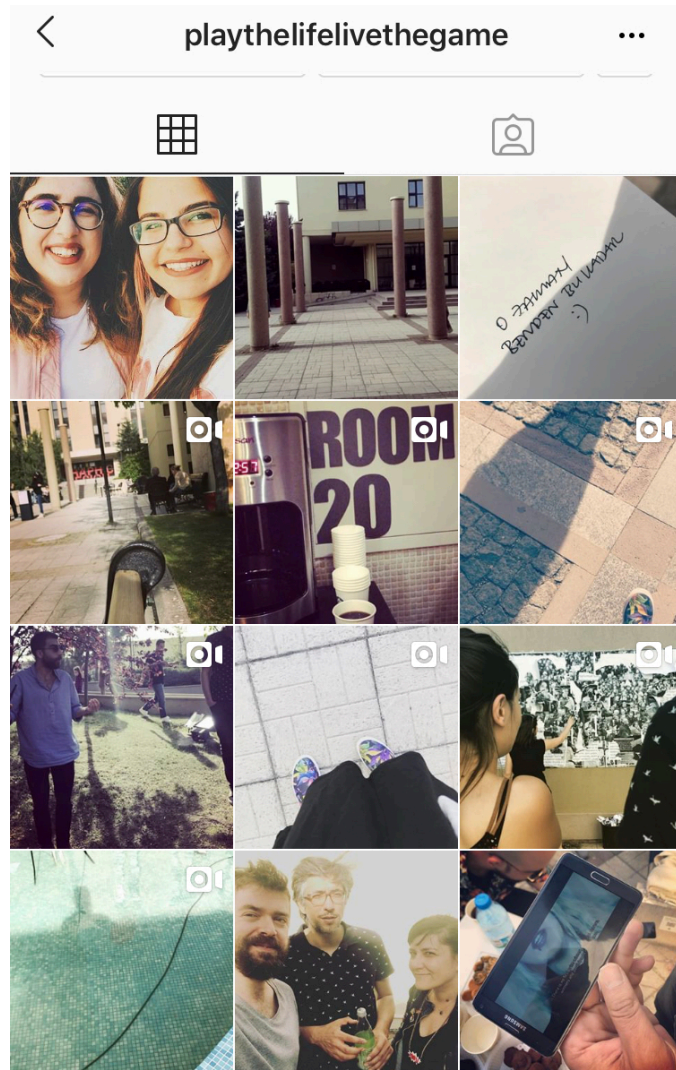


Figure 37. Instagram Example (May, 12, 2017)

While their expectations were part of a real-world game, they stepped into the virtual world with the QR code that appeared when they scraped the ticket. Thus, they solved the story by touching the alternative world within the real world.



Figure 38. Participants from Exhibition (May, 12, 2017)



Figure 39. Participants from Exhibition (May, 12, 2017)

4.3. Case Study: “At First Sight”

At First Sight is a project designed as an alternative reality game and presented to the participants as prototype. When we bring together multiple images, whether they are related or not, we automatically start creating a story in our minds. The reality of this story can only be confirmed by what the creator has shown / told us. This study aims to enable participants to evaluate retrospectively the story that they come across at a later stage, based on an unexpected perspective, after evaluating the images they have encountered based on their initial impressions. The objective challenges the participant's biases and their predictions when they perceive a story. The name *At First Sight* was created to refer to this first impression. When I created the poster my aim was to give clues to the audience how they create a story based on the images they see and how they evaluate the story they had created in the first place when they are presented with an unexpected perspective.

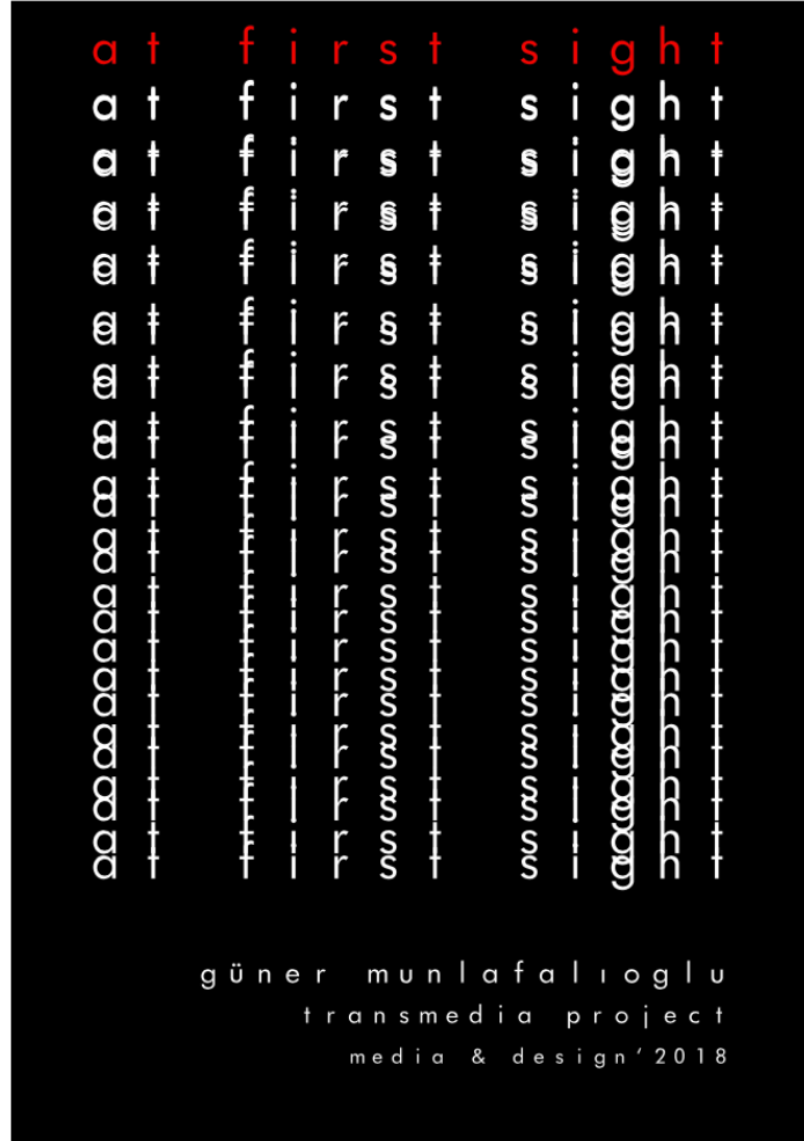


Figure 40. *At First Sight* Poster Design by Güner Munlafalıoğlu (April, 29, 2018)

To show that I started the poster with an easily readable script and it blurred making them lose the 1st perception they had had. Thus, it draws a parallel line with the aim and my work.

The participants are expected to create a story in their minds by looking at eight independent images and then using the social media tools to reach the main story.

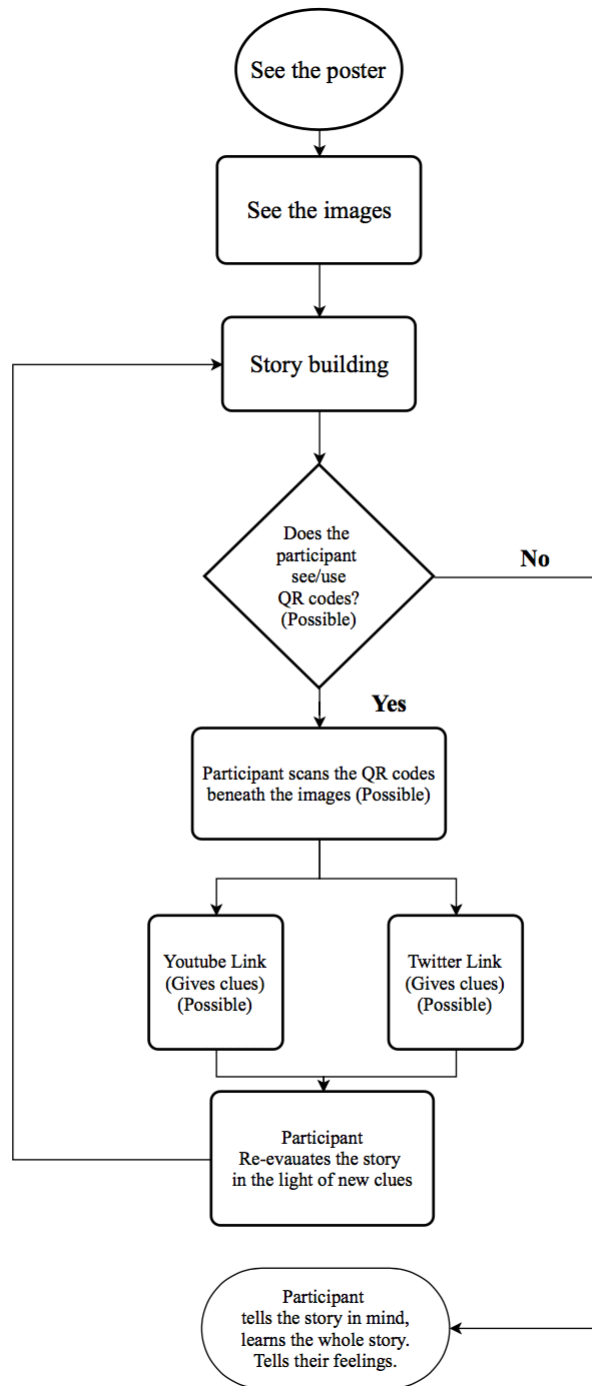


Figure 41. Hierarchic Representations of Flow chart & Possible Stages for *At First Sight*

The flow chart explains how *At First Sight* was conducted. Participants first see the poster and start examining it. They see the images hung on the wall next to the poster. They are asked to create a story using the images they see. As the project was a prototype, some room for improvement was left out. Possible steps that could have been used are given in the flowchart. Participants could have scanned QR codes that would have been hidden in hard to spot places in the photographs. That could have sent them to a Twitter account and a Youtube vlog, both of which seemed to be used by more than one person. That could have helped the participants consider, evaluate and reshape the story they had created in the first place. As more media channels could not be used in the project, steps that involved using QR codes and the social media had to be skipped. Thus, when participants finished creating their story, they were interviewed and then, were told what the photographs had been meant to tell in the first place. Then they were asked how they felt.

This project stayed a prototype so some of the steps in the Flowchart (See Figure 41) had to be named as possible steps. When it is completed it will include social media platforms to complete the whole game.

The photographs are a visual story that opens to the mind of a person with multiple personality disorders. The photo series start with the image of a doorknob. It symbolizes the entrance into the person's mind. The second photo is a gas lamp that radiates red light. With this photograph, I wanted to show to audience, it was

illuminating the person's mind. The third photo is the pick-up. It symbolizes music. Music has always helped me define or change the mood I had. So I chose that object to symbolize harmony of emotions in person's mind. In fourth and fifth photos are, a cracked stump and a broken mirror on grass. There I, symbolized the cracked state of the persons mind and the broken mirror symbolized how the person's personality was as broken as the mind. In the sixth photo, there are dried branches they symbolize how the person is alone against hardships and the mental disorders. The last two photos are door keys of which we only focus on one and the door of a ruined house. They symbolize that there are more than one way to enter that person's mind but when we enter we can see the marks of the mental disorder that person goes through. But, the door opens to a bright garden it shows that there is still hope for that person to overcome the mental disorder.

The story is basically about a person fighting with multiple personality disorder. The person is weak and lonely against the disease but no one can understand or help that person. The person is completely alone. But the end of the story shows that there is still hope for salvation and we should not be hopeless if we are suffering from a mental disorder. In order to avoid deforming the story created by the participant's mind, no human photograph was used to indicate gender. As the project is a prototype, the first impressions of the participants were taken both verbally and through observation technique, the whole story was told verbally and the participants were asked to compare.

This project was a work that I decided to create as a result of the feedback I received through the works *Play the Life*, *Live the Game* and *Confession* that I have presented to the participants' experience. Unlike my previous studies, I realized that I had to work much more systematically to gain some more experience on still images in order to continue this project which I used photographic image for the first time.

When I had the opportunity to observe the participants, I did not encounter only individual participation. At the same time, I realized that they came together in groups and tried to create the story of the photographs by discussing and approaching with the motive of creating a common story. This was essentially the point I wanted and expected for the game I designed as ARG. When I looked at the photographs when I had the opportunity to talk with the participants one by one, they said that in general they formed a very comfortable story in their minds and that the photographs themselves mainly produced feelings such as loneliness, serenity and longing for the past. The participants were surprised when they were given the story of the images, and when they looked again; they said that they started to read together as a whole by combining the visuals and the parts of the story told.

Observation and interview technique was used in this project. Player 1 said, "At first the poster caught my attention. I tried to read the poster. Later, when I looked at the photos, it made me feel nostalgia. These photos reminded me of an old man's peaceful childhood". When I asked him why, he said that, "The gas lamp was

reminiscent of the old times and the tree root was reminiscent of old age”. I spoke to two more players. Player 2 said, “When I looked at the photos, I felt very lonely and sad. The pictures depict a calm, calm world, and I thought of myself as an old tree in this still world. I wondered how the story continued”. When I asked to the Player 3, she said “The story goes on in the past; when a jealous woman gradually loses her mind because of her poor marriage, and she understands the value of the time she wasted only after she got older, but that garden is now very far away”. When I asked her why, she explained that “The mirror symbolised jealousy but it was broken, and she lost her mind in time. Images like the tree stump and dried branches were related to a person who wasted her youth with sadness. The keys showed that she had many opportunities for happiness but she only managed to grab one key at a very late time and the ruined house was her life and the garden beyond the door symbolised happiness but it came only after her life was ruined”. what I deduced from these results is, what they told was similar to the story I tried to tell in tone, but it was not exactly compatible with the story. This is because I could not use more than one media channel. If I could have given the participants more clues about the whole story through different channels there would have been more compatibility.

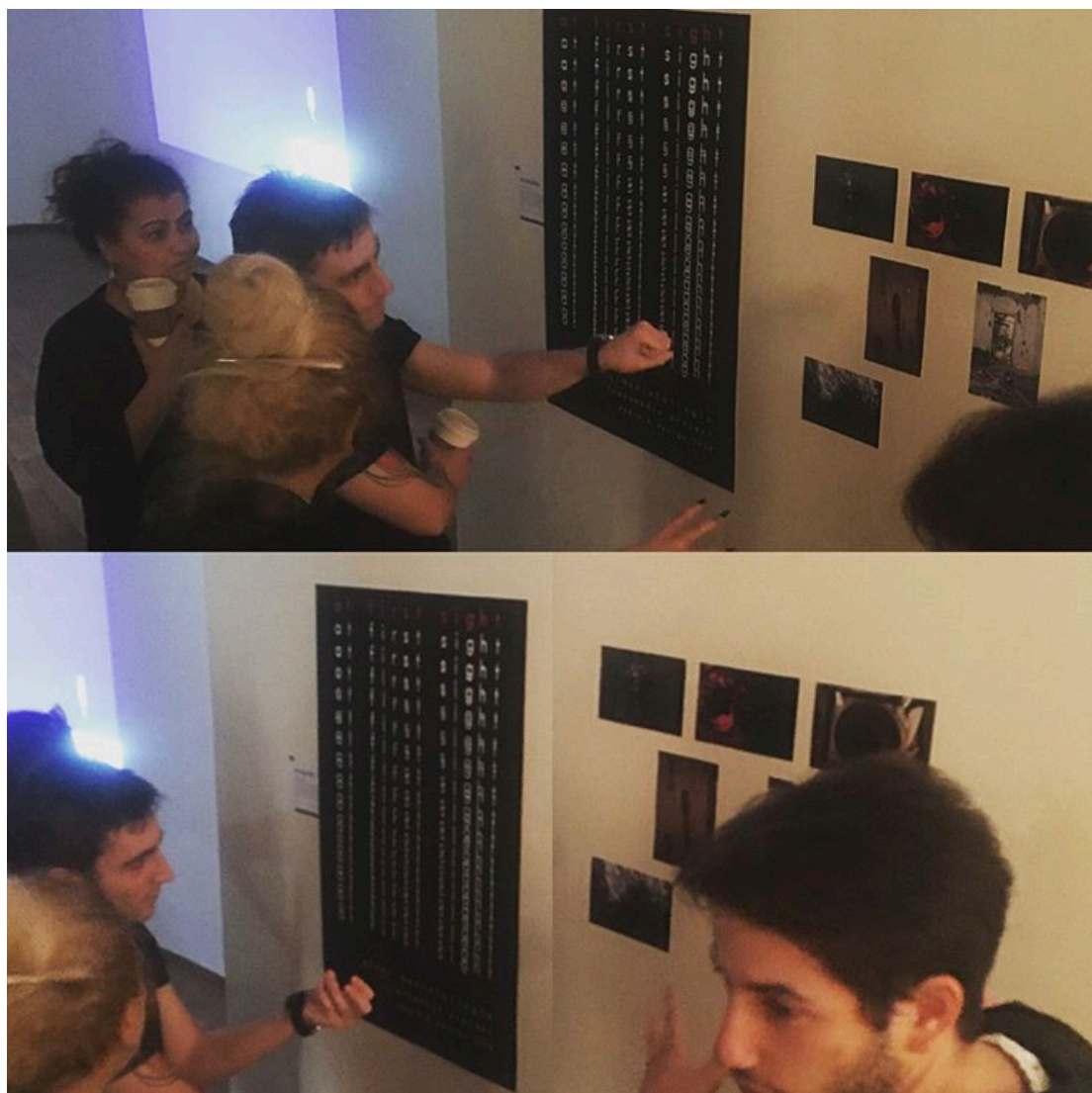


Figure 42. *At First Sight* in MFA Exhibition (May, 02, 2018)

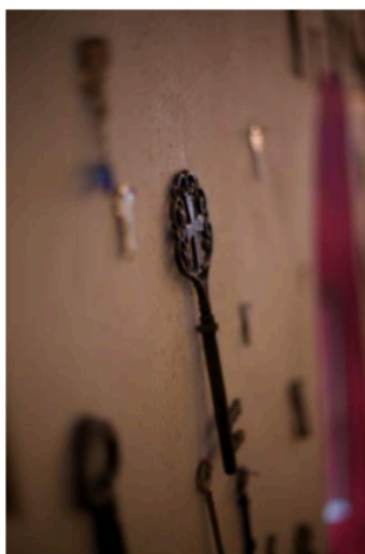


Figure 43. *At First Sight* Photographic Works (May, 02, 2018)

One of the major factors that will remove this project out of being a prototype will be the reshaping of game design in accordance with ARG. Players will not be able to get into the game exactly as long as they reach the story which is integrated into more than one platform, and the game will not achieve its intended success. At this point, we see how important the elements of transmedia are in terms of storytelling when creating ARG. As I mentioned in the Introduction, the answer to the question: “How can we effectively make the audience an active part of the project and create a common ground?” is actually hidden here. Of course, creating a flow was one of my main goals when creating the game, but it was not enough. The fact that the players were not able to interact adequately with this game showed no tangible results in creating a common language. However, this allowed me to receive feedback from the participants, both individually and in a group. In order to tell the purpose of the game precisely, more than one story channel was required. Rather than just trying to tell the story through images, parts should be added to excite the participant by keeping them in the game and allow them to discover new things. If the participant can actively participate in shaping the game and experiencing the flow situation, the game will reach exactly the desired result if it is revised again with new regulations. This can be done by providing areas where the player is more mobile and can explore more deeply. The reason I wanted to create this project as ARG was because I wanted to do a work that was completely immersive and set players as the focus of the game. As I mentioned in the Alternate Reality Game part of this thesis, ARGs allow participants

to communicate and cooperate with each other. This increases the level of entertainment of the story and provides an opportunity to create new stories.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Since I met transmedia storytelling, I have experienced that this is one of the most effective and exciting methods of reaching people through a story. Since the idea of uniting people into a common ground and enabling them to create a new language by enabling them to act together has always been of interest to me, working on this topic fed me during the process of writing this thesis. The Alternate Reality Game, a form of transmedia storytelling, served as a huge playground to apply what I learned. The use of Alternate Reality Game has created a lot of opportunities for me as a transmedia artist to create a common language and to make people unite with the game. Essentially, it helped me answer the question, “How can we effectively make the audience an active part of the project and create a common ground, by using Transmedia Storytelling?”

In the projects I created, I took advantage of some characteristics of the concept “play”, such as not having any material interest, the event happening within the limits of a fixed time and space and within the framework of certain rules. Studying flow theory and trying to create a flow in my projects helped me create an immersive experience. Through this flow, players found the motivation to continue the game and strived to reach more of the stories. This situation of losing yourself in the game allowed them to have a common experience and encouraged them to work in groups.

I also had the opportunity to communicate with people through the game I created, and I had a chance to look from their perspective. Thus, I was able to observe the relationship between the participants' retrospective ideas and their assessment of the post-game story. Observing the participants in the game was also useful to see if they were using the real and virtual world effectively.

The *Confession* and *Play the Life, Live the Game* games I have created are included in this thesis to support my latest prototype project, *At First Sight*. This project remained as a prototype. If it was not, it would have to be spread over a much larger area. Just like in the project *Play the Life, Live the Game*, at least it would extend to a certain part of the I.D Bilkent University campus. This would allow the participants to become more involved in the game and force them to do research to solve the puzzles. In other words, a healthy feedback would be obtained from the participants as they would communicate with more than one story piece not only in the virtual

world through social media platforms, but also in the real world as well. In order to fully develop this project, more data is needed for the participant. For example, with the help of the photographs, the first story created in the participant's minds can be created gradually, instead of just a QR code that connects the story to be told. Or, as we have seen in the *Confession* example, the participants can contribute directly in order to discover the story themselves, so that we can understand the way the audience perceives the images. Transmedia storytelling, in its basic structure, creates a link between the existing work and the participant, since it removes people from the role of spectators and makes them active participants. It creates a sustainable interest in the story for the participant. In order to maintain this interest and to keep the participants active in the work as much as possible, the interactive part should be increased and as a result the participants must see that they have gained a place in the work. As I write this thesis, I often asked: "How can we effectively make the audience an active part of the project and create a common ground?" not only to my work but to myself as well. For this, I realized the importance of reading and practicing much more on gameplay. First of all, when designing the game, I saw the importance of creating a continuum, excitement, reward, or a result that would satisfy the participant in itself. I have experienced that the higher the flow situation in the created games, the more participant is involved in the game, and even with the feedback given to the game designer, an active participant can develop and change the game. Therefore, I understood that I should use transmedia storytelling method as a tool that promises more planned and forward-looking motivations by studying more

meticulously, assimilating theoretically, instead of approaching it solely for constructing games.

This thesis is about transmedia storytelling and also a form of this method, Alternate Reality Game. As a result of these theoretical methods, the project *At First Sight* emerged and in order to support this work *Confession* and *Play the Life, Live the Game* works were included in this thesis. The aim of this study was to eliminate the prejudiced first impression of the participant and to establish a connection with the artist as well as to evaluate the story from a new perspective. For the rest of my life, with the same excitement and passion, I will continue to narrate games through transmedia storytelling and try to create a common language among people.

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