Alone, Connected, Together.

A research on togetherness in a mobile-oriented society:
A case study of the multi-player mobile game Quiz Battle.

Final research study
BA Communication and Information Science

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Subject: New media and digital culture
Study year: 2013, part 4
Date: June 24th, 2013

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1. Introduction

Some weeks ago after a busy evening in our bar, we were done working and were sitting down with my colleagues, having some beers. I take out my phone, as the others do so as well, and I see a notification "It's your turn against Diango". Quiz Battle, the new mobile game "hype" is asking me to play back, so I do. Diango is my fellow colleague and happens to sit next to me. I play back and it feels relaxing. The challenge is on, Diango plays back and we chat. The other colleague suddenly addresses us with the concern that we only focus on our mobile which he thinks is unsocial and rude. Is it really? My attention is on the mobile interface, but I am interacting with the other colleague in a challenging, pleasurable way. Is interaction in real life neglected? Or can the mobile interaction be seen as complementing to really being together? I decide to put my mobile away.

Multi-player mobile games are games for smartphones where two persons play against each other, like Wordfeud or Quiz Battle. Often, they are an adjusted version of an already existing analogue or computer game, transformed into a smartphone friendly mobile game. The last few years those games have established themselves in society due to their social characteristic of connecting people (De Vries, 2009: 81). By providing an alternative platform of having contact with others, those mobile games create new forms of being together. The embraced togetherness in this paper will concern already existing relations with a preceding face-to-face connection. This research aims at identifying the new way(s) of social togetherness the mobile interaction possibly causes by answering following research question:

> What is the meaning of togetherness in a mobile orientated society during a game of Quiz Battle?

The social aspect of technology will be central in this research. Danah Boyd, a social media scholar, contributes to the debate by considering the value of the technology of a multi-player mobile game as being formed by social constructs (Boyd, 2011: 12). People influence technology by making it an integrated part of society. "Technology shapes and is shaped by those who use it and the society in which it is embedded." (Bijker and Pinch, 1987: 12) The claim of this paper is that the mobile telephone and the act of play became an essential part of social life through their social aspect. This research can be embedded in the academic debate of the construction of an ongoing social process. The

value of choosing Quiz Battle as a case study lies in the characteristic of it being mobile and bringing people together in a playful, unobvious way. Furthermore, it expands the current research on games, which focuses mostly on single player games. The aspect of the multi-player interaction is a crucial one. Can Quiz Battle be considered as an enrichment for the interaction with others? In order to be able to understand the social enrichment provided by Quiz Battle during a mobile interaction, the existing position of the term mobile togetherness will be explored first. Following three supporting questions will aid doing that:

A) What is the meaning of the phenomenon of togetherness in a mobile society?

B) What is the utopian and dystopian approach of the mobile togetherness?

C) Can playing a game of Quiz Battle be considered as a form of togetherness?

The method used to answer these questions is a mixed method, meaning that I will apply different methodological approaches and use them in conjunction with one another (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011: 285). Firstly, this includes the use of conceptual analysis. With conceptual analysis aids I will interpret and analyze the concept of togetherness during a mobile interaction. The concept of togetherness can be split into different components. Each component shall be examined thoroughly. The components assembled together create the framework for the concept of togetherness (Greene et al., 1989: 255-256). With the help of this specific method the first two supporting questions will be approached through breaking down the concept of togetherness in its parts. Besides the conceptual analysis I will make use of game analysis in order to interpret and explain the meaning of togetherness as – consciously or unconsciously – provided by Quiz Battle. The game analysis as done by Suzanne De Castells and Jennifer Jenson (2007) provides a concept inspecting the structural composition of a digital game. This game analysis helps identifying important structural elements of a game and the relationship between them (De Castells and Jenson, 2007: 22). By looking at the affordances of the game it can be figured out which parts turn the game into a social activity and subsequently reform togetherness. Using mixed methods, I am able to approach togetherness in different fields concerning social studies, media studies and game studies. It is essential to have a profound understanding of the different components of mobile togetherness in order to interpret the being together during a multi-player mobile game. Pre-existing interactions and conventions affect the

togetherness reached with Quiz Battle. The mixed method analysis covers the conceptual as well as the descriptive-exploratory part of my research. With the support of this method my research will have following structure:

Chapter two will deal with question A by concentrating on the analysis of the concept of togetherness. I will have a look at the components of closeness and intimacy in the mobile oriented society as well as the social-mobile relation as a bigger concern. Moreover, (new) communication in relation to mobilization will be addressed. The understanding and representation of the term togetherness in the digital field will further be worked out by taking account of the utopian state, which reaches for a perfect, high-valued society (Gordin et al., 2010: 1-3). The conceptual analysis of togetherness in dystopian terms will take place afterwards. Question B will be central and the utopian mobile togetherness in chapter two will be reconsidered in chapter three. The concept of dystopian mobile togetherness will be analyzed in depth by looking at its undesirable, negative effects caused by mobile technology (ibid). The following part concerns the analysis of Quiz Battle. Its components are examined in chapter four, the chapter working with question C. A case study on the game is done in order to explain the matter of togetherness manipulated by a multi-player mobile game.

Several academic publications provide support for my research. Mobile togetherness addresses the consciousness and the subjective meaning of human relations during a mobile interaction (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Boyd, 2001; De Mul, 2002; De Vries, 2009; Ling and Yittri, 2002; Myerson, 1997). Imar de Vries, for instance, describes mobile telephones as "powerful devices that possess an unlimited connective potential […] reflected by the strong emotional and cognitive investments that people make in wireless communication technologies" (De Vries, 2009: 83). This approach recognizes the omnipresence of individuals in society with the support of mobile interaction. However, in order to understand the relevance of togetherness through a mobile telephone we also need to consider how mobile companionship has diminished the being together. Sherry Turkle deals with this dystopia and sees relationships influenced by mobile technology as making individuals feel more alone than together (Turkle, 2011: 13). Turkle, a media scholar in the field of social studies of science and technology, delivers an important contribution to my research. She switched from celebrating digital technologies in one of her early books (Turkle, 1995) to critically addressing them and accusing them of being a temptation for the user (Turkle, 2011). By doing that she contradicts her own, earlier published utopian views on digital technology. This switch

from pro-digital to critical-dystopian is interesting for my analysis of the new mobile togetherness due to the reconsidered theories of the author, focusing on the attractive as well as the negative aspects of the new togetherness.

For the case study on Quiz Battle, the concept of immersion as addressed by Eric Gordon et al. (2011) is crucial because of the involvement of the user through immersion into the game and into a new state of being together. The individual plays an important role. Joost Raessens' (2006) talks about the transformation of the personal and cultural construction of identities caused by playing games. What is the role of the individual in the construct of Quiz Battle? The individual places himself in a mobile game environment. Adriana De Souza e Silva and Daniel M. Sutko (2008) contribute with their focus on game play as intrinsically connected to the physical space to the question around games reforming space. Concluding, my research aims to reconsider and reframe existing concepts related to social constructions and social interactions in order to rethink togetherness.

2. Being together

Before attaining the meaning of togetherness during a mobile game of Quiz Battle I will have a look at the term and how it was and is used before and during the digital revolution. The digital revolution as described by new media and digital culture scholars Marianne van den Boomen et al. started in the last quarter of the 20th century when integrating computers, e-mail, Internet, mobile phones and other new media in the society (Van den Boomen et al., 2009: 7). The culture and the society adapted to the new machines resulting in new ways of living with them. Subsequently, they changed the way of being together. The position of the phenomenon of togetherness with the rise of the mobile telephone is an important one and will be central in this chapter. In order to get an understanding of the phenomenon of being together I will discuss the traditional and current meaning of the term togetherness as approached by different authors.

The degree of closeness
First, I will have a look at the social construction of reality from a traditional approach by the sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in order to gain an insight into the consciousness of human relations while being together. The two authors belong to one of the first introducing social construction in social science. The degree of closeness

and remoteness, spatially as well as temporally, has to be reconsidered thoroughly in the new digital society. Closeness stands for the zone that is most directly physically accessible and that draws the attention to the immediate surroundings and the own actions: what someone is doing, has done or plans to do (Bergmann and Luckmann, 1966: 3). Remoteness is less intense: it is the area further away with no direct contact: actions that (might) affect someone but where a person is not directly in touch with. The use of mobile telephony manipulates the state of closeness and remoteness: being close is no condition for having access and getting attention. With the mobile telephone this can be achieved anywhere and anytime. The social construction of the society used to be a conscious and intentional process characterized by immediate presences and prearranged realities (ibid). In today's mobile world the 'here' and 'now' get another meaning due to the lack of presence of the other. Face-to-face situations used to be vivid and present by offering a place for continuous interchange of expressivity (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 6). Nowadays, people are more distanced and digitally connected, resulting in different ways of expressing themself to others and interacting with others. Face-to-face interactions provide space for direct reaction and real emotions which a mobile interaction accomplishes digitally. The authors state that the experience of closeness with others depends on factors such as interest and intimacy (Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 9). Face-to-face interactions provide this automatically. They leave space to adjust according to reactions and presentations of others. A mobile conversation is able to achieve interest and intimacy by offering different affordances that are equipped with alternative ways of responding and expression. They are similar to the ones people are used to when interacting face-to-face. According to these findings the possibility of reacting and showing emotions turn out to be two key characteristics of togetherness and carrying out human relations.

Achieving intimacy

An important aspect of the emotion of togetherness is intimacy. How is intimacy achieved during a mobile interaction? Danah Boyd, a social media scholar, contributes to this debate with her work on the architecture of digital environments and the positioning of the individual in it (Boyd, 2001). The underlying architecture during a mobile interaction, which is the given environment where the mobile interaction takes place, is of essential importance for the state of intimacy. Here the own identity is presented to others (Boyd, 2001: 11). An emotional relationship is based on how this identity is perceived by others. Digital interaction, however, is complex. The degree of intimacy is more difficult to accomplish than face-to-face. The main reason for that is the

lack of embodiment that restricts individuals to express themselves physically and emotionally, though it does not hinder or suspend the possibility of expression. The interpretation of the perception of others turns out to be more difficult because of the not direct interaction with another person (Boyd, 2001: 12). Digital environments have adapted ways of articulation, making togetherness more open for interpretation and, at the same time, withdrawing intimacy. Danah Boyd states that the

> "interface to the digital world is explicitly constructed and designed around a user's desires […] Performing online requires that people be aware of and adjust to these differences as to achieve the same level of social proficiency that they have mastered offline." (ibid)

The interface has architectural constraints and limits some social performances. An example is the not seeing the other and not being able to interpret body expressions. Nevertheless, it offers new possibilities to express oneself by responding to human desires in a digital way, like sending an emoticon when smiling, which the user knows as the emotion of happiness. The digital world is constructed to meet the need of its inhabitants by playing onto these already existing structures the user is familiar with (Boyd, 2001: 17). The goal is to achieve the same way of intimacy as offline. Mobile communication offers different possibilities of expression and reflection based on the physical identity. It applies new mechanisms for managing representation and interaction. Individuals are responding as it deems appropriate to the situation. A good perception of the social implication is fundamental to make a social interaction successful in order to reach a high level of intimacy.

Social mobile constructs
A third approach to togetherness comes from the anthropologist and philosopher Jos de Mul. Taking his theory of the technological interactionism, a human relationship can be seen as expanded through the use of a mobile telephone, making the state of being together through a mobile phone more social than it was before (De Mul, 2002: 30). A mobile phone increases the possibilities of being together due to the social construction of the device. The mobile technology is a conglomerate of a technical device, specific knowledge and skills of the user, the social infrastructure and economic and diverse social standards (ibid). The development of the mobile device did not happen in a vacuum but was driven by external social factors (De Mul, 2002: 33), like the society's faster and more modern life style or the change of social networks. As a result the device

accomplishes to complement the existing human interaction and being together. What does that mean in particular for a mobile user? He is given the possibility to potentially connect anywhere and anytime. A compression of physical and geographical space is the result of these developments (De Vries, 2009: 81). Imar De Vries specialized in the communicative affordances of mobile telephony. He frames mobile communication in utopian terms as an idealized way of communicating. Mobile services are truly ubiquitous due to social, technical and cultural factors like for example the mobile's portability characteristic or the intuitive use of the phone in the society (ibid). Mobile togetherness enriches the face-to-face social interaction with its state of absent presence: being together while being separated (De Vries, 2009: 87). The mobile phone psychologically builds a feeling of closeness and makes the mobile a convenient personal item by offering increased connectedness. The new accessibility creates paradoxes of communication and achieves a state of immediate togetherness. Individuals subsequently are omnipresent. The mobile possesses a broad connective potential on the level of relationships. This leads to a new scenario of the experience of being together with perpetual contact as the new norm for togetherness.

Communication follows mobilization

Eventually, the term mobilization plays an important role in the analysis of togetherness. By considering the encounters of communication revolution and mobile utopianism of the last two centuries George Myerson delivers a valuable contribution to this topic. He deals with mobilization as a result of a cultural process, causing a change of communication (Myerson, 1997: 9). Mobile telephony turned the activity of talking into an operation of communication. Communication is richer and quicker. Additionally it is centered around desires and human intentions, whereas talking simply occurs (Myerson, 1997: 19-20). The ability to always have access to a communication channel leads to an always being able to be together. Communication therefore offers more individual freedom (Myerson, 1997: 25). It is more about understanding than about entirely fulfilling the desire. "The phone has become part of an idea of the family, of intimacy, emergency and work." (Myerson, 1997: 9) The device offers space to experience being with others even though they are not physically present. Pre-existing social structures are managed in a new environment. Accessibility of a social network becomes explicitly structured to meet the digital needs of the user. Mobilization and mobile communication therefore lead to the structuring and rationalization of interaction (Ling and Yttri, 2002: 7) and it accelerates the pace of communicating (Myerson, 1997: 15). Two characteristics are important: first, the significance of human

actions, experiences and connections between and among people. Moreover, the mobilization turns out to be a way for continuous and ubiquitous communication. The value of mobilization is subsequently linked to closeness (Myerson, 1997: 49). For this study it is relevant to understand the richer, eventually utopian way of mobile communication and mobile togetherness. The power of the mobile of being together whenever and wherever someone chooses is a fundamental characteristic for the new approach of togetherness.

After this analysis of different approaches to togetherness it is time to reconsider the meaning of a new way of being together. The utopian approach of the state of togetherness during a mobile interaction can be doubted. The new togetherness does not bring us physically closer together, but does it contribute to a psychological closeness?

3. Alone, but connected

"We expect more from technology and less from each other." (Turkle, 2011: 281)

The central paradox of being together while not being together is approached by Turkle. That we expect more from technology than we do from our friends and family is the result of technological and social developments in the last few years (Turkle, 2011: 11). Turkle accuses the mobile technology of offering a temptation of companionship with the illusion of providing a platform to build a relationship with others. But how does Turkle come to this conclusion? What is the role of the mobile phone in the dystopian debate of togetherness? People search for a state of being together and the mobile device is offering this company. Technology appeals the most where people are the most vulnerable and people are vulnerable to a desire to control their connections (Turkle, 2011: 283). The individual is able to control the intensity of togetherness. Mobile connection seems to turn into a convenient way of being together due to the given power of control. However, we seem to neglect the real-time relations and interactions due to our concern and involvement with the mobile togetherness. According to Turkle, we are part of a technology network which is suited to our busy lives, which defends us against loneliness and which gives us control of the intensity of our connections (Turkle, 2011: 13). This dystopian vision of the integration of the mobile can be doubted when considering the utopian concepts of togetherness as found in chapter two. Mobile

technology appeals to our needs and desires. It provides an alternative platform for being together where the user feels satisfied and understood by the device (Myerson, 1997: 27). The idea of the mobile telephone of being a temptation should be reconsidered. Instead of being a substitute for being together it can be seen as a supporting factor, which is not blurring the intimacy of relations but translates the intimacy into digital terms.

Furthermore, Turkle's opinion on the mobile technology is that it affects how we handle emotions and connections. The digital, mobile way of relating to emotions of others becomes socially sanctioned (Turkle, 2011: 177) and people hide behind the technology's nonchalance (Turkle, 2011: 198). Mobile connectivity turns into a social craving: it can control the emotional exposure. Controlled connecting prevents fear of isolation. It is the anxiety of being alone which makes connection a symptom of the mobile society, favoring digital togetherness. Mobile technology gives comfort and convenience with its easy way of reflection and interaction. As a result, the quick intimacy overrules solitudes. Turkle's idea of the mobile sociability is a harsh and negative one. The mobile companionship is accused to make the ability to be separated easier: individuals are connected even when being separated, however this connection actually manipulates us. Connectivity satisfies the individual: the nervous system responds by giving a shot of dopamine and stimulates a positive feeling when getting a reaction from the device (Turkle, 2011: 227). It does not give us real companionship. People do find company through the mobile connection but don't get each others full attention. Encounters are experienced as tentative and connections are at distance, but at the same time they let disappear individual loneliness and solitude. It is a complex paradox we encounter here. A perception of being together is created. Nevertheless, the perceived mobile togetherness is actual togetherness that relates us to others. A physical encounter is redundant. However Turkle makes a point by seeing the mobile as disturbing in a physical space (Turkle, 2011: 155). While being physically present people have their attention on the mobile, making them absent from the 'here'. Mobile interaction therefore influences existing and real encounters in a negative way.

Individuals seem to be satisfied by having access to continual connection even if not getting someone's full attention. This lowers the pressure of performance of the act of being together (Turkle, 2011: 280). The convenience of being able to be together is weighing more in this case than focusing on simply one act of togetherness. I consider interruptions and multi-tasking as part of this mobile togetherness: they distract the

attention on one single act of togetherness. The mobile interaction offers convenient space for those two factors, whereas a real being together has socially sanctioned interruptions and multi-tasking as rude. This is not what the traditional togetherness was reaching to achieve. Individuals seem to have become accustomed to reductions the mobile phone caused in the society (Turkle, 2011: 285). Subsequently performing togetherness is simplified through connecting by being able to control the degree of attention and interaction. Mobile togetherness creates a fantasy of control and provides a convenience of spontaneous being together, but it attacks a pure state of interacting with others. Concluding, in the dystopian mobile interaction which people encounter on a daily basis they are confronted with a moment of temptation and an illusion of companionship. Mobile togetherness confuses real-life relationships by offering an authentic communication channel. People are connected instead of together; they are alone but in contact. The mobile device is reshaping the relationship with others but not destroying it. Individuals relate differently to others due to the technological and social changes around this technology. The use of the mobile telephone affects the intimacy of relationships without damaging the relation, however it makes it corrupt. The user deals with this degree of solitude by accepting being alone but demanding to stay connected. While being rejected by Turkle, this way of coping with a mobile situation increases the pace of building relationships, resulting in a very individual but not secluded relationship (Turkle, 2011: 288).

4. Together in the game

The mobile technology as a form of being together on the one hand and a form of being alone but connected on the other has been put central in the last two chapters. This chapter provides a case study on the togetherness achieved by the multi-player mobile game Quiz Battle.[1] What is the qualitative meaning of togetherness during a game of

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[1] Wetenschap in Beeld Quiz Battle, as the full title is called, is a Dutch mobile game played by two persons against each other at a time, where the victory is achieved by knowledge. In rounds of five questions, every player has to answer them by choosing five of the seven topics, subordinated in six categories. By placing a question on the play-board the two players make together the trail from the starting point to the goal, receiving points for any good answered question, scoring extra points when hitting a doubling or tripling field, increasing the points when answering more questions right in a row, and winning the game when having the higher score when reaching the goal. The path to the goal can be short or long and is determined by the players (strategic) decision.

Quiz Battle? Does Quiz Battle convince of providing (new) togetherness in the sense of the pre-analyzed state of being together? This will be analyzed in the next few paragraphs.

The user gets immersed into mobile game world while playing a game of Quiz Battle and also into the social world of the game. Immersion provides a feeling of presence of the self in the game and also of the other. Gordon et al. talk about a shift from a sense of 'being here' to a status of 'being there' in the mobile game, however the user gets disconnected from the subject matter and gets immersed into the game, making the 'there' unconsciously again the 'here' (Gordon et al., 2011: 509). Subsequently, the other player is 'here' as well. This immersion is in favor of the new togetherness as being a present being together, and works against the idea's of Turkle on a social isolation. Quiz Battle manages to attach the user to its constraints and its game world and brings him together with the other player. The social environment of the individual is combined with the game world. The mobile game world is always 'here' and presents togetherness as a state of being close. Quiz Battle convinces the user that he is together through the mobile game immersion. De Souza e Silva and Sutko focus on the interconnection between play and ordinary life: the mobile game space connects players in differentiated spaces (De Souza e Silva and Sutko, 2008: 448). An interconnection is a supporting factor for the immersion and for the new togetherness. With the immersion, multiple spaces are made one. That results in one global togetherness through playing a game of Quiz Battle. Connection, having contact and togetherness become the same. However, some elements disturb the aimed full immersion. After each game, there is advertisement in Quiz Battle, reminding the player of the mobile game world he is sitting in. The state of togetherness gets interrupted and the shift of the 'there' to the 'here' is set off. Again we encounter a collision between digital and real space during the act of coming together. Immersion is a powerful mechanism for social engagement (Gordon et al., 2011: 516), however it has to be taken care of. Enough elements of the game should contribute in favor of the immersion instead of reminding the player of the game environment. Immersion is about expanding the environment of togetherness in Quiz Battle by merging physical and digital space and creating new spatial perceptions and new possibilities for togetherness and companionship. The individual conducts himself to the game environment: unconsciously he gets immersed in the digital space of Quiz Battle but also perceives the game consciously due to the interruptions. He develops an attitude towards the game and the relationship he is building there. Playing this multi-player mobile game causes a transformation of the construction of the

personal and cultural identity (Raessens, 2006: 52). This new identity in the 'there' equaling the 'here' contributes to a new sort of togetherness by establishing an immersed relationship with the other in the game through accepting the environment and playing with it.

Immersion turns out to be one important trigger of the new being together. The underlying structure of the game supports the immersion. Suzanne De Castell's and Jennifer Jenson's analysis of the ontological language of games provides a helpful structural insight of games analyzed in terms of game space and structural clusters (De Castell and Jenson, 2007: 21). The structure of the mobile game begins at the interface. This is the place where the user directly experiences the game and is in direct interaction with it. The user takes action according to a prearranged reality and a prearranged structure of the game (De Castell and Jenson, 2007: 26). He agrees to participate in the game with someone else in an arranged space. Quiz Battle offers visual and haptic affordances which support the immersive character of the game. Examples are touching a square and moving it onto the play board in order to be able play the game and interact with the other.

Furthermore there are rules to be followed that influence the open and immersive character. These constraints position the user in a pre-arranged settlement of a platform for being together, allowing as well as limiting what can be done. By regulating the development of the game the basic interaction is conducted in a constructive way. The restriction of togetherness results in a limited freedom but at the same time these restrictions actually provide a framework for a new platform of being together which hasn't been there before. Suddenly there is a new environment which explicitly demands social interaction and togetherness. Quiz Battle is more than only playing the game due to its multi-player characteristic. The interplay is required in order to be able to play the game. The new being together according to prearranged rules and realities can be considered as regulated togetherness.

Another important affordance is the goal (De Castell and Jenson, 2007: 28). The user must reach an objective in order to succeed in the game. Quiz Battle requires their users to answer every time five questions correctly. With this goal driven approach Quiz Battle is asking response of the user if he wants to get an interaction back in return. For games in general, the highest goal may be win the game. However the mobile play of Quiz Battle works onto the level of competition and puts the aspect of interaction next to

the goal of winning. The interwoven connection with the other player is necessary to win the game. If the other does not participate, neither player can win. Togetherness can be regarded as a higher goal of the game. Quiz Battle requires a being together in the game and playing onto each other in order to be able to play (and win) the game. The aiming of achieving the goal requires and supports the act of togetherness.

The mobile game can be defined in contrast and opposition to the ordinary life and the daily activities of people (De Souza e Silva and Sutko, 2008: 448). Can mobile gaming with a multi-player game be seen as an escape from a dream-utopia? Possibly. The user gets immersed into the game world of Quiz Battle which makes him very flexible and mobile. The aspect of playfulness seems to support the new togetherness through giving pleasure and concentrating on the relationship between players. It is an important factor due to the occurring unawareness of the immersion into the game and with others. Togetherness now seems natural on a digital, mobile level. Playfulness emerges out of the social interactions between people who not necessarily need to be together in person. De Souza e Silva and Sutko refer to Simmel's observation that "spatial relations are only the condition, on the one hand, and the symbol on the other, of human relations" (De Souza e Silva and Sutko, 2008: 452). Now commute time becomes playtime and a moment of being together. Play and ordinary life merge together and connect people. With Quiz Battle the user moves in and out of the mobile game world throughout the day. The online, digital actions turn into real consequences bringing people together. Instead of physically disconnecting with others a new mobile space evolves for togetherness.

5. Conclusion

This research concentrated on the meaning of being together during a mobile interaction on the case of the multi-player mobile game Quiz Battle. I applied mixed methods in order to combine the for my research suitable approaches of the different fields of study. With the help of conceptual analysis I analyzed the concept of togetherness profoundly in the first place. By breaking the term in different parts I was able to place the meaning of the phenomenon of togetherness in the frame of my study (question A). It turns out that togetherness consists out of several different components: closeness, intimacy, social accessibility, communication and mobilization. All these parts create and contribute to a state of togetherness. The offered degree of responding and

the possibility of showing emotions through the mobile phone influence the being together through mobile interaction. This results in the mobile telephony bringing us closer together even if separated spatially. Moreover it provides an additional environment (in addition to a real gathering) for intimate expressivity by responding to human desires like getting reflection from others or preventing loneliness. The user should be as close and as connected through the mobile as offline. Mobile togetherness is characterized by its convenience and the increased connectedness, anywhere and anytime. This makes togetherness more mobilized than before and accelerates the pace of communication. While analyzing the concept of togetherness I addressed important utopian ideas of being together in the mobile society (question B). This covers for example the convenience of always being reachable. This characteristic increases the connectedness. What I consider as the dystopian reality of mobile interaction (question B) is the idea of the mobile telephone responding to the vulnerable desires of humans to connect: people are tempted by the mobile togetherness as the solution for loneliness. The control of connections satisfies us. This is manipulative and we encounter a paradox of being together while spatially being separated. As a consequence it can be said that we encounter a simplified version of togetherness which consists out of reductions of attention for each other.

Secondly, by applying game analysis I examined the visual and haptic components leading to immersion of the player in Quiz Battle (question C). The player becomes part of the game world. The world of being together expands in the digital environment. However, rules and goals cause a more tight togetherness: they make aware of the game and position the player again facing the game instead of immersing him. Nevertheless, thanks to the degree of playfulness of the game Quiz Battle serves as a supporting factor for the building of a mobile togetherness. We find a manipulation of the game and the reality, where play and ordinary life merge together: the game connects people in real life and causes a new togetherness.

With these compiled insights I am able to answer my main research question: What is the meaning of togetherness in a mobile orientated society during a game of Quiz Battle? Quiz Battle brings people together, therefore it is a (new) form of togetherness. However, the meaning of being together in a mobile society got adjusted from the offline togetherness people are familiar with. Reason for that are the reductions of an offline togetherness that the mobile togetherness has to undergo, like the decreased attention for the other during the act of being together or the socially sanctioned interruptions.

Togetherness is simplified. The attempt of fulfilling all characteristics of togetherness fails due to structural constraints of the game. However, there is an expansion of the existing being together with mobile intimacy, closeness, communication, mobilization et cetera. The meaning of togetherness adapts to the mobile and to the game. Quiz Battle as a game form especially is an important contributor to the transformed being together: playfulness is making mobile togetherness more smooth. It causes unawareness of the strict structure, immersing the user into the mobile phone and the game. Togetherness through Quiz Battle is socially important because it satisfies the social demand of constant involvement and gives control of interaction. Players are present even if being absent. The new being together is a nuanced state of alone but more connected. The creation of mobile togetherness redefines how individuals relate to and get involved with each other, offering comfort and convenience but also a kind of illusion of companionship. Quiz Battle therefore creates an adapted togetherness, desired from a technology-orientated, fast and modern society.

The mixed method was very useful for this type of research: conceptual as well as game analysis were needed in order to work out the concept togetherness but also define its place in the game environment. However, there is space for further research. This study was done by the example of Quiz Battle. Other multi-player mobile games can have a different effect on togetherness due to a different structural format. I did not have the capacity to test other multi-player mobile games like Wordfeud in these findings. Moreover, additional methodological approaches could be used. Taking interviews are an example to get to know more about the perception of the mobile togetherness of a player. Besides the methodological considerations, the cultural implication is important. The consequence of the mobile being together for the society lies in the continuously increasing importance and integration of the mobile phone in the daily life. This is affecting the being together. Because of the culture developing around mobile togetherness, this study shall stimulate further research in the field of mobile togetherness.

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