

PROBOSCIS: Private Reveries, Public Spaces – Responses to the Brief

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1 – Brief description of the project.

A research project is proposed, a serious social-science research project, into the topology of the social network constituted by mobile-phone users. But instead of standing in institutional isolation, it's deliberately situated in a public arena and in a three-way symbiotic relationship with a social locus and an art venture. Through these relationships, subjective aspects of social and 'connected' space are also emphasised, and a somewhat playful approach to ideas of information and organism also promoted.

The whole thing is presented installationally, as a live, ongoing venture, within a defined architectural space of e.g. 100 sq. m. Primary data for the research is provided by visitors to this space. The project involves among other things an evolution of the mobile phone, a special kind of café table, and small giveaway plastic sculptures.

2 – How does your proposal go 'beyond convergence'?

Largely by sidestepping it, by running with the spirit of 'convergence' more than with (technological) convergence itself, which in this proposal takes the role of a key in a door. And by involving social life (which is divergent) as a primary subject.

3 – How have you addressed the key relationship of public and private spaces?

By interweaving them both (and their mutual threshold) into the installational fabric of the proposal.

4 – Is your proposal a critique of the technologies of convergence, if so in what way?

Broadly speaking, no. But in also embracing the flagrantly low-tech (sculptures made of zip-ties) and no-tech (human-to-human interaction), it might suggest that convergence of a non-technological nature can equally be an interesting topic.

5 – How does your proposal relate to society and community?

- a) by taking an identifiable cross-section of society, defined by its means of communication, as subject for a research project – looking at how we're connected
- b) by integrating into its design and public manifestation a group of individuals viewable as a microcosm of broader social groupings
- c) by making social interchange an explicit mechanism towards the derivation of individual meaning
- d) by presenting itself as a public event

6 – What audience or public does the proposal address?

A general public: a mobile-phone-using public: an 'art' public: and a 'research-community' public.

7a. – Please indicate which of the issues, listed in the brief, your proposal responds to and,

- a) to engage critically with the social impact of technologies on society
- b) to engage with the relationships between the physical and the virtual in public spaces
- c) to address how technologies are changing social interrelations in public spaces
- d) to address how technology changes our concept of community
- e) to address how technology changes our concept of sociability

and,

7b – how it addresses them.

In the case of d) above, by making it the explicit subject of a social-science research project.

In the case of b) above, by making physical and virtual spaces explicit components in a public installation.

In the cases of a), c) and e) above, by presenting a public installation that supports the reading of these issues as clear subtexts, and provides a space for sitting and thinking about such things: in particular, by constructing the installation around three complementary spaces, where the boundary between any two can be seen to act as a liminal zone implicitly harbouring such topics,

and where the space where all three meet also more explicitly addresses point e).