David Rokeby
NML: Neighbourhood Markup Language

1 – Brief description of the project.
On a functional level, my as-yet-untitled project is a data storage / access system which uses locality as its top level organising principle. All data is addressed (for both read and write) using the GPS location of the reader/writer. Images, texts and sounds stored in the system become spatially specific annotations on aspects of the local physical and social context.

2 – How does your proposal go 'beyond convergence'?
My literal response to the question is that the only thing beyond convergence is divergence past the point of meetings Convergence is happening on multiple levels. The web, for example is the convergence of huge amounts of diverse information into one frame. The convergence allows new forms of divergence. The same technologies that make everything accessible from everywhere, can make specific things accessible only from specific contexts, re-rooting information in its original context.

3 – How have you addressed the key relationship of public and private spaces?
Convergence allows people to carry key components of their private and work lives into public space. Spontaneous zones of privacy temporarily colonise public space, without adding much of value to the public quality of the space inhabited. Public and private have always coexisted in public space. My project attempts to emphasise the role of 'space' and 'place' in the equation while bringing the public and private into greater dialog, maintaining the casual aspect of encounter in public space.

4 – Is your proposal a critique of the technologies of convergence, if so in what way.
I was juggling several possible projects for this proposal, most of which critically explored the implications of convergence. But they felt powerless in the face of the awesome seductions of convenience. This project does not critique convergence directly, but attempts to imagine a new kind of social frame for convergent technologies.

5 – How does your proposal relate to society and community?
I thought a lot about dogs and ants the social function of scent-trails and markers. I saw the possibilities that convergence would promote the fragmentation of public space into innumerable private or club-like spaces, co-spatial but not touching. The net admirably serves the requirements of shared-interest groups. Communities, at least in cosmopolitan cities, are collections of extremely diverse interests. My project privileges locality allowing for the exchange of diverse perspectives reinforced by the shared context of street / neighbourhood / city.

6 – What audience or public does the proposal address?
Access is this project's Achilles heel. The work address the general public in the widest possible sense, but participation hinges on access to portable devices with wireless net access and GPS.

7a. – Please indicate which of the issues, listed in the brief, your proposal responds to and,
My project engages most of them, but I suppose the best fit is:
to address how technologies are changing social interrelations in public spaces.

and,
7b. – how it addresses them.
I think I have addressed this question sufficiently in the above answers.