

AN INTERACTIVE DIGITAL MEDIA MASTER'S THESIS

# Content Potentials in Transmedia Storytelling



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# Abstract

Presenting an inquiring approach to the subject of this work, I seek to peel the layers of misconceptions and constraining theories from the subject transmedia storytelling with the purpose of being able to identify distinct qualities of this type of experience in relation to interactivity and narrativity and, subsequently, discussing how these qualities can be made operational to practitioners and in other experimental contexts.

From researching current theory on transmedia storytelling, I argue that three subfields exist: narrativity, design and culture. These subfields can be further viewed as layers from which a transmedia storytelling production is constituted. Most theory can be found inside each field while few choose to explore the relations between these fields.

This basis is followed by an analysis of the relation between interactivity and narrativity. Interactivity is argued to be the element from the subfield of design which operationalises narrative properties into specific narrative segments distributed to users.

The approach to the general aim of the work is formed as a result of initially framing transmedia storytelling by pulling apart and examining the definition by Henry Jenkins as well as other core publications on the subject. An underlying hypothesis to this is that the lack of a common frame of reference in terms of the mechanics of transmedia storytelling withholds the field in a state of flux.

From this stage of the work, form and content of transmedia storytelling are discussed through a synthesis of theory on interactivity, interactive storytelling and configurable or non-configurable systems. In other words, the work additionally attempts to converge perspectives from both aesthetic and functional rationales.

The research question “What are the distinct qualities between interactivity and narrativity in transmedia storytelling?” is unfolded from the foundation of the discussion on form and content.

As a theoretical result, the work proposes that a new and unexplored content potential in transmedia storytelling exists. This content potential can be described by the transgression between narrative segments as well as the influence of one narrative segment on the subsequent.

It is concluded that the result should be further validated as well as built upon by including the subfield of culture which has currently been left out of the analysis. I suggest that such further research could be carried out as experiments, taking into account that the mapping of theoretical narrative properties would both be hard to carry out exhaustively as well as not be as useful in practical contexts.



# Preface

This report has been composed as a result of continuously narrowing down my focus of interest as well as increasing my knowledge hereof. The presented work, a master's thesis, has been carried out during my 10<sup>th</sup> semester at the cand.it. in Interactive Digital Media degree as offered by Aalborg University during Spring 2014.

## Reader's Guide

I suggest to read the report in a chronological order. However, each chapter is provided with individual methodical considerations so as to make it possible to read individual chapters separately.

The APA citation style is used for documenting the resources behind this work.

Below, I provide a short explanation of two terms used frequently throughout the work but not further elaborated. The explanations represent my individual conception of the terms.

**Alternate Reality Game (ARG):** A game anchored in the real universe with narrative segments spread according to the most appropriate formats.

**Crossmedia Storytelling:** The same narrative segment represented through different formats.

## Acknowledgements

The past months have presented a number of mind-boggling challenges which, at times, twisted my mind into venturing down paths not always immediately apparent. However, I have not travelled as a lone adventurer, and I want to acknowledge the people who were present at difficult times during this journey.

First, I wish to thank my supervisors Claus Andreas Foss Rosenstand and Peter Vistisen for providing valuable critique on the way as well as occasionally putting a smile on my face during cloudy days.

I also wish to thank the small yet important group of students between which we all shared our ideas and provided each other with new thoughts and academic critique. It was both helpful in terms of my own master's thesis as well as interesting in terms of following the development of your projects.

Lastly, the importance of having a stable home environment has increased throughout these years at Aalborg University. Thank you, Dennis Lundgaard Thomsen, for creating an unshakeable basis. And to you Mr. Kitty; you have chosen to capture and kill a total of three animals throughout this period. While I do not care for such reckless murdering of defenseless animals, you have certainly made me keep one foot in reality at all times.





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# Chapter One

## Introduction and Initial Analysis

This chapter introduces initial considerations and provides a general overview of the field of transmedia storytelling leading to the formulation of the specific research question.



## 1.1 Catalysts and Exploration

The general aim of this work is to clarify the mechanics of transmedia storytelling in terms of how interactivity and narrativity might relate in this context and which distinct qualities can be unfolded within this relation.

Conducting a master's thesis, though, requires a certain amount of travelling through time. A combination of personal and academic experiences has accumulated throughout 25 years, and to understand the chronology of how I got to here, I look back upon a few of these experiences.

As a child of about five years old, I used to pick the wings off flies and hide them in an old glass jar underneath my bed. While this was, arguably, a questionable and somewhat cruel act to engage in, I did not fully comprehend the gruesomeness of my deed. Rather, I took their wings because I truly believed that, some day, I would be able to construct a set of large wings for myself and be able to fly.

Of course I never succeeded in getting my wings. However, the idea of deconstruction and reconstruction has never left me. Pulling known objects or concepts apart and examining the possibilities of how the substance of these parts change in different contexts initially led me to apply for the Medialogy degree at Aalborg University within The Faculty of Engineering and Science. This technical education allowed me to create both theoretical ideas as well as explore these ideas by constructing experiments within the boundaries of computer science. However, I found a need to connect the constructive practice with the perspective of the humans for whom I was constructing. As a result of this, I am now writing this work as a student under The Faculty of Humanities.



OBJECTABLE

ANE

PANDORA

CITY ESCAPE

Figure 1 - An excerpt of executed projects during my time at Aalborg University.

My time at Aalborg University has led me to this final stage at which I can, with a fair amount of confidence, say that the phrase attributed to Socrates of the more you know, the more you are aware of not knowing, is becoming the mindset of my involvement with projects (Stevenson, 1994).

Following this mindset, this particular work is a continuation of previous studies within the field of simulative narrative experiences. On an initially blank canvas, certain colours and shapes have been experimented with and now form a foundation from which this work sets sail.

Among other subjects, previous projects include testing pattern recognition in the context of touch tables, creating a digital labyrinth for test subjects to navigate through using only sounds in the form of echoes, building a physical interpretation of Pandora's Box and a digital window to a fictional universe as well as investigating the effects of physical acts in the context of immersion in digital games (see Figure 1 for a visual excerpt of the content of the projects).

As such, the content of each subject of investigation has gradually been narrowed and dissected in order to uncover core challenges and uncertainties. In the context of my time spent as a Medialogy student, this resulted in a study of telepresence of digital objects in the physical world. While the term *telepresence* was coined by Marvin Minsky as the subjective experience of being situated in a digital scene, our definition related to the criteria for digital objects in virtual scenes to seem real (Minsky, 1980) (Borg et al., 2012).

The reason behind exploring how artificial, digital objects might be perceived as real is a direct result of an interest in how the border between opposing realities becomes increasingly more fluent and transparent as technologies for producing these virtual realities are developed.

The impacts of the technological development on how virtual realities are experienced by users sparked an interest in the communication of these fictional universes. Stories are no longer presented through either film or books but, in some contexts, delivered to users through a number of channels, such as the universe behind the film trilogy of *The Matrix* (1999 & 2003) and the universe behind the television series *Sherlock* (2010-). The increased complexity of society has formed a basis for an increased complexity of delivering stories through media systems. While each media platform is characterised by unique affordances (Gibson, 1979), storytelling, as the basis of communication in this context, seeks to relate to individuals regardless of the form of presentation (Bettelheim, 1976).

On a personal level, it has become interesting to me to explore the form of storytelling as its audience becomes active and participates in stories rather than viewing them. This interest has been unfolded in two semester projects as well as an internship at the game company Kong Orange in Aarhus, Denmark. The first semester project as a cand.it. Interactive Digital Media student related to interactive film theory in relation to user experience (Jensen et al., 2012). The results of this project suggested that the particular experience in this context was similar to the experience of a game – containing several of the same emotional responses (Jensen et al., 2012, pp. 57-59).

With an increasing focus upon the user, I came across the term *transmedia storytelling* where users were no longer mere spectators to a fiction but rather participants who are, in some cases, even named cocreators of an experience (Staffans, 2011). While this is not specific to just transmedia storytelling, the experience in which users participate is segmented and delivered through a number of media platforms. The roles as well as the delivery channels are further discussed throughout this work. My action towards the subject was, in line with the previously mentioned general approach, defined from an idea that the subject needed to be dissected so as to define a unique, in this case narrative, quality hereof. This action came as a result of combining my own observations (Johansen,

2013) with what has previously been observed by other theoreticians within the field (Dena, 2009); that is, a certain confusion within the field of practitioners of how to successfully construct this specific type of stories.

A similar confusion was also observed during my following internship throughout which it was apparent that approaches to interpreting transmedia storytelling are different to such an extent that a number of previously developed methods are rendered hard to use to practitioners. The speculated reasons for this are elaborated further in Chapter 3.

During the latest semester project mentioned above, I initiated the focus of this final work as a cand.it. student. Having previously explored the functions of technological systems, my individual perspective has been formed as a result of connecting knowledge of the aesthetics of an experience to this. As such, I wonder which connections between these viewpoints might exist.

### The Field of Transmedia Storytelling

Centered around transmedia storytelling, this master's thesis seeks to elaborate a field of research which is continuously being expanded and unfolded by a number of researchers. Initially, the term *transmedia* was coined in 1991 by Marsha Kinder who stated that "...transmedia intertextuality is a powerful strategy for survival" (Kinder, 1991, p. 38), referring to the fact that networks and connectivity were becoming factors of sustaining and maintaining a position within specific groups (Kinder, 1991).

In this work, the initial understanding of the concept of *transmedia storytelling* is brought by Henry Jenkins who defined the term in the book *Convergence Culture* as such: "A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 95-96). This definition will be returned to at a later stage in the work.

The definition by Jenkins has been centered as a basis in a discussion throughout the following years of how to approach transmedia storytelling in practical contexts. The measure of success within this field can be argued to previously having been determined by the number of users participating and contributing to an experience. However, even when deemed successful, the productions are often created from unique foundations and backgrounds making it a challenge to organise them into specific categories other than as top-down or bottom-up productions as defined by Marie-Laure Ryan (2013a) – with this structure, she refers to top-down productions as productions in which transmedia was a fixed goal initially, contrary to bottom-up productions wherein transmedia aspects are added at a late stage as part of franchising a fictional universe or marketing an existing production.

Different approaches to producing transmedia storytelling have previously been described in the Ph.D. dissertation *Transmedia Practice: Theorising the Practice of Expressing a Fictional World across Distinct Media and Environments* (2009) by Christy Dena. The dissertation "...seeks to understand the nature of creative practices that utilise more than one distinct media, and environments" (Dena, 2009, p. 4). Specifically, the areas of concern in the dissertation are narrative, game, media, art, and semiotics. Where Dena

focuses upon the perspectives of practitioners within the field, I propose to create an overview of theoretical approaches since several of these construct theory of specific practical viewpoints. I will return to the dissertation by Dena in Chapter 2, though, since it provides many valuable points and observations.

To uncover approaches to theoretical studies of transmedia storytelling, possible entries to information were utilised. Other than observing discussions within the Facebook groups Transmedia Nordic (88 members), TRANSMEDIOLOGY (766 members) and Transmedia for Good Network (852 members), a meeting with an information specialist was set up at Aalborg University Library with the purpose of exploring current publications within the field. Additionally, a comprehensive search was carried out online in terms of which databases are available to students (this includes Google Scholar, ProQuest Research Library, Academic Search Premiere and SCOPUS) as well as reviewing the references of uncovered publications. For this reason, I consider the result a valid foundation on which to consider the field of transmedia storytelling. The results of the information search as well as an overview of the resources utilised can be found in Appendix 1. The publications uncovered are quantified and explored in Chapter 2.

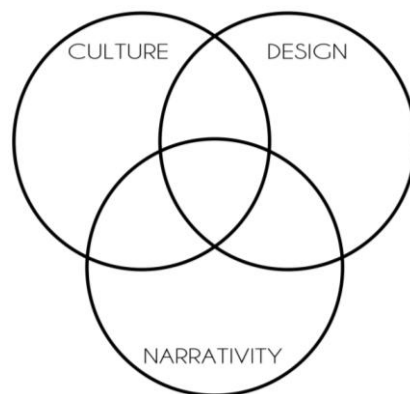


Figure 2 - Three general perspectives are argued to influence the approaches, including hybrids of these (overlapping areas), to unfolding theoretical aspects and practical considerations of transmedia storytelling.

An underlying hypothesis of this work has been initiated by previous observations of how theory of transmedia storytelling is mostly based upon specific perspectives as I have presented it in Figure 2: culture, design and narrativity. The category of design refers to both design oriented studies as well as publications on good practice of producing transmedia storytelling which are, arguably, mostly minded towards business strategies. While it can be argued that no author within each subfield in the figure suffers from tunnel vision as a result of a specific perspective, the studies are framed by their initial field of research. A small number of hybrid approaches were uncovered; these include the dissertation by Dena.

As can be seen in Figure 3, it might be argued that the current state of the field of transmedia storytelling is becoming a closed space in which theory is created by building upon previous theory. However, in this project, the question is raised of what the



phenomenon of transmedia storytelling might be? When considering transmedia storytelling as a fluent subject which has only recently been grasped and formed into a static shape, it might be considered what this fluent shape really is and how it might be characterised? This assumes that a transmedia storytelling phenomenon can actually exist beyond what is constructed within the field of theory and practice.

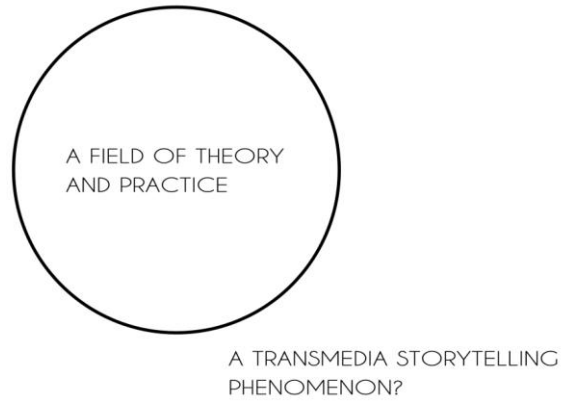


Figure 3 – Transmedia storytelling can, arguably be thought of as a living phenomenon which lies behind the ideas of theory and practice but has yet to be fully grasped.

Following this line of thoughts, it can be argued that storytelling in general exists as a phenomenon which has developed throughout human history as a way of speaking to a human yearning for learning more about ourselves. Accepting this statement, transmedia storytelling can be argued to be a way of building upon this culturising process by planting a sense of narrative control within the hands of the audience – thereby activating this yearning in a new sense almost as a re-emergence of the ideals of Romanticism of dramatic stories.

In order to explore the core of the concept, or phenomenon, of transmedia storytelling, it is interesting to explore current thoughts of how this type of storytelling is actualised by practitioners within the field. As is apparent from Appendix 1, current theory mostly present guidelines or guiding questions which, while arguably valuable, do not describe the core functionality of transmedia storytelling.

This functionality might be referred to as the mechanics of transmedia storytelling in that it is what allows for the experience to progress. In other words, mechanics might be thought of as potential methods for practitioners to allow users to interact with the specific narrative.

The following work hypothesis has been defined from the above considerations:

The lack of a common frame of reference in terms of the mechanics of transmedia storytelling continues to withhold the field in a state of flux.

While the studies uncovered in the initial search provide valuable insights to context specific instances of transmedia storytelling, I hypothesise that it would also be useful to define the boundaries and qualities of this type of production as a foundation for forming

knowledge of how to approach transmedia storytelling. This could also be the basis for constructions of case studies. This hypothesis and the presented work hypothesis will be supported and explored throughout this work.

## 1.2 Focus of This Thesis

While several challenges might be considered a result of the above formulated hypothesis, the observations have, in this work, led to wondering how the explored subfields might relate in terms of which qualities might be unique to transmedia storytelling? Also, defining the qualities of this specific type of storytelling can be argued to be basic in order to review other challenges since the qualities would, presumably, found common grounds from which to carry out further work. Forming such a foundation can also be argued to clarify the functions of transmedia storytelling to a higher extent than the otherwise numerous subjective definitions of the term based mostly upon case studies.

At a recent conference, *Rethinking Intermediality in the Digital Age*, keynote speakers Marie-Laure Ryan and Henry Jenkins discussed challenges and qualities of transmedia storytelling (Ryan, 2013a) (Jenkins, 2013). This supports the hypothesis that a current need of such an overview exists.

Even though Ryan generally treats the subject from a theoretical perspective, both speakers use case examples of transmedia storytelling in order to identify useful points of reference for both practitioners and theoreticians. Additionally, the presented speculations suggest that the initial assumption of there being a set of unique qualities of transmedia storytelling is supported.

It can be argued that Henry Jenkins' position towards transmedia storytelling lies mostly within the field of culture as his points are mostly based upon societal observations and theory.

This statement is supported by Jenkins' stated vision of his work presented on his blog:

"I take it as a personal challenge to find a way to break cultural theory out of the academic bookstore ghetto and open up a larger space to talk about media that matters to us from a consumer's point of view."

("Confessions of an Aca-Fan," n.d.)

As such, his definition previously presented should be considered within this specific framework which does not cover the other perspectives to a full extent – it is noted, however, that the definition does provide a general starting point from which to explore other perspectives. For this reason, I find it relevant to explore other subfields of transmedia storytelling and relate these fields in terms of unfolding a general understanding of the concept. It can be argued that a definition of transmedia storytelling

should be considered in relation to all subfields; the center of Figure 2. However, this definition requires an understanding of all the relations between subfields.

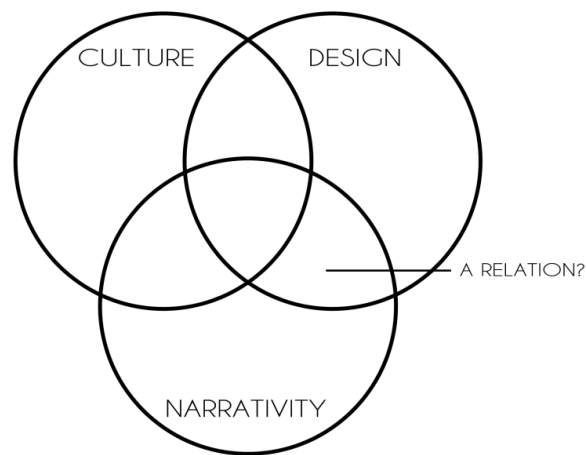


Figure 4 – The specific focus of this work is to unfold the relation between interactivity, an aspect of the field of design, and narrativity with the purpose of clarifying core mechanics of transmedia storytelling.

In relation to Figure 2, my position in this work is mainly focused upon the subfields of design and narrativity (see Figure 4) as a result of my previously presented specific perspective formed by exploring both technical as well as humane subjects as well as an underlying assumption that cultural aspects of transmedia storytelling lie beyond the particular mechanics of this type of storytelling. In regards to the field of design, I find it relevant to focus upon the interaction between users and media system as interactivity can be argued to be the design means to express and distribute a narrative; which can be considered the initial purpose of transmedia storytelling. In this way, the relation between interactivity and narrativity can be argued to be core parts behind the mechanics of transmedia storytelling. Also, it can be mentioned that none of the uncovered sources provide a theoretical analysis of interactivity from a functional point of view specifically in relation to transmedia storytelling.

My individual stepping stone for this position is further characterised by a previous focus upon the narrative aspect on transmedia storytelling. The role of the previous results is clarified in Chapter 4.

As a result, it is the aim of this work to uncover an approach to systematically identify a basis of distinct qualities of transmedia storytelling as well as to investigate how the field of design, through interactivity, relate to the field of narrativity in terms of how user interaction and the experience of a simulative narrative might be considered in relation to each other in the context of transmedia storytelling. A causal connection between particular interactive mechanics and the experience of narrative segments in transmedia storytelling can be hypothesised to exist.

It is also hypothesised that by creating a frame of reference for how to interpret transmedia storytelling and how to practice the same, studies incorporating cases as well as general practice might be easier to discuss in relation to each other and in relation to

the theoretical nature of transmedia storytelling. It should be noted that this work does not assume full coverage of this extensive field. Rather, it should be understood as a point of departure for further research.

The below theoretical research question is formulated with the purpose of forming a point of departure for the work.

What are the distinct qualities between interactivity  
and narrativity in transmedia storytelling?

Following this theoretical research question, a discussion on how to operationalise such results can be carried out with the purpose of clarifying the realm within which the results might be useful. Therefore, unfolding this question is considered to be relevant both in terms of academic value as well as the practical context of initiating a clarification on how to approach the subject in an appropriate way. This can be further expanded by considering the fact that most research within the field is initiated by claiming a position towards transmedia storytelling while I argue that a systematic approach towards the subject might clarify common grounds for researchers to take as well as be a start for removing misconceptions of the subject such as thinking of other concepts such as alternate reality games (ARG) as equal to transmedia storytelling on the grounds of such concepts having multiple delivery channels.



# Chapter Two

## Creating a Foundation

Initially, the field of transmedia storytelling is explored in order to validate the initial work hypothesis of this work. The method and structure for unfolding the previously presented research question is described and explained. Furthermore, the theoretical foundation is clarified as well as the specific contribution of this thesis.



## 2.1 Fields of Transmedia Storytelling

I shortly wish to unfold the fields uncovered during the initial information search of transmedia storytelling with the purpose of validating the statement of the field being currently fragmented. In Figure 5, the number of core sources uncovered in relation to specific optics can be viewed. These sources have been selected from the following criteria: the articles should be peer-reviewed, and the books should be either cited by a large number or written by a transmedia storytelling practitioner who is mentioned in peer-reviewed work. As might be observed, the optics can also be considered as layers of transmedia storytelling where narrativity is the core of the experience as intended by practitioners, design is where specific mechanics are assigned to specific narrative parts, and finally culture entails considerations of how these mechanics fit into cultural settings and meet certain audience expectations.

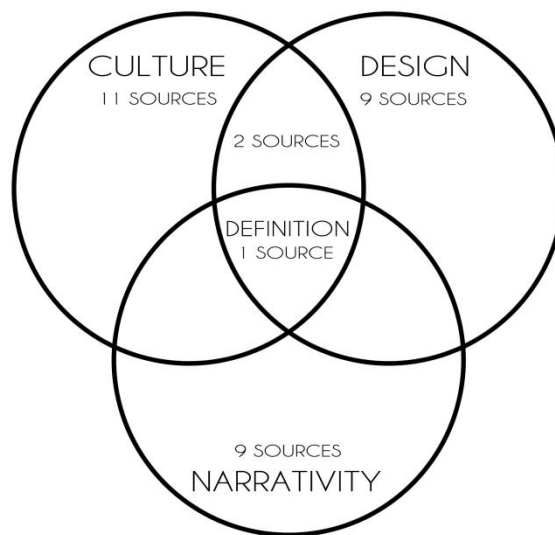


Figure 5 - An overview of the sources uncovered. Of 32 publications, 3 hybrid sources were uncovered - one which brought in perspectives of every subfield (Dena, 2009).

In the cultural field, Henry Jenkins is situated as has previously been unfolded. It can be assumed that since Jenkins' definition has laid the foundation for new interpretations of transmedia storytelling, the field is mostly shaped by the cultural perspective. This can for instance be seen in the way the term *media* is used as a fluent term within the context of convergence rather than understanding it through the basis of a systematic and idiomatically dependent approach.

Additionally, it can be noted that, with few exceptions, authors focus upon how a transmedia storytelling production fit into participatory cultures as well as the effects of these productions on groups of audiences - Jenkins refers to the behaviour of media audiences as "migratory" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 2).

The design area of transmedia storytelling is widely characterised by guides and principles of good practice. The following uncovered titles of publications can be mentioned as a selection of this string of approaches: *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment* (Miller, 2008), *The Producer's Guide to Transmedia: How to Develop, Fund, Produce and Distribute Compelling Stories Across Multiple Platforms* (Bernado, 2011), *Getting Started in Transmedia Storytelling: A Practical Guide for Beginners* (Pratten, 2011), *A Creators Guide to Transmedia Storytelling: How to Captivate and Engage Audiences Across Multiple Platforms* (Phillips, 2012), and *Transmedia Storytelling: Principles, Practices & Prototypes for Designing Narrative Experiences with the Audience* (Spaulding, 2012). While design as a concept can be assigned a number of meanings, as is pointed out by John Heskett with the sentence: "Design is to design a design to produce a design" (Heskett, 2005, p. 3), it can be noted that the presented publications relate mostly to design in that they suggest frames within which a plan for implementing and distributing a transmedia storytelling production can be created and executed.

Of other publications in this field, focus lies mainly on transmedia storytelling techniques and aesthetics (Long, 2007) (Giovagnoli, 2011) (Dowd et al., 2013).

The publications shaped from narrative perspectives follow an approach much similar to design oriented publications in the sense that they provide guidelines and structures wherein transmedia storytelling narratives can be conceived and shaped. They focus mainly upon creating fictional universes and characters which can be suited to this type of storytelling.

One hybrid source was uncovered in which the challenges of varying perspectives of practitioners are expressed. Similar to culture-specific sources, Christy Dena considers *media* all-encompassing in the sense that the term is specific to practitioners' traits.

However, differing from other sources, Dena draws "...on research questions from a variety of fields in order to enrich understanding of the phenomenon of transmedia practice" (Dena, 2009, 315). Similar to the observations stated in Chapter 1, Dena considers the field of transmedia storytelling fragmented – though from practitioners' points of view. She suggests a "design ecology" (Dena, 2009, p. 315) as an influencing factor of the decisions made by practitioners. This can be seen in relation to the previous discussion of how the field of transmedia storytelling theory is, arguably, becoming an enclosed space separated from the actual phenomenon of transmedia storytelling.

Of all uncovered sources, only Dena operates across each area of transmedia storytelling. While other sources draw certain perspectives from different fields, such as the narrative perspectives from Carlos Alberto Scholari (2009) and Bryan Alexander (2011) who touch upon culture and design respectively, the sources mainly build upon general methods within their specific field such as ethnographic studies in cultural perspectives, practical experiments in design oriented studies and finally, theoretical analyses in narrative studies. Equally relevant in general terms, an approach to merge the results of these works is seemingly missing.



With this brief analysis supporting initial assumptions of this work, I find that the structure can now be established from the previously formulated research question.

## 2.2 Method and Structure

The structure of this work increasingly narrows the discussion towards the research question. It is established in order to create an overview of the procedure of the work. However, it should be noted that each section of the work is not planned but rather opened and unfolded in order for the theoretical material to develop naturally and unforced. For this reason, the parts of the structure are first outlined in terms of the general approach in this section and then nuanced with specific work questions in each chapter formed by the results of the previous chapter. When appropriate, the work questions are framed with relevant literature unfolded in Section 2.3.

The work might be considered as two parts: a theoretical and a methodical exploration. The initial part of the work seeks to unfold distinct qualities between interactivity and narrativity in transmedia storytelling, in reference to the research question, whereas the last part aims to use this knowledge to unfold and discuss how to create operational approaches to transmedia storytelling. The primary method for this is desk research. The overall structure can be viewed in Figure 6.

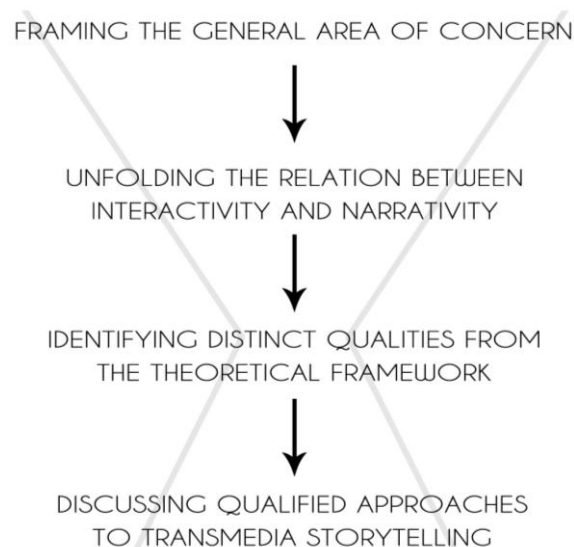


Figure 6 - The overall structure of this work created from the research question.

With the mindset of pulling apart and explaining the initial understanding of the field and working towards uncovering basic unique qualities of transmedia storytelling, the main principle for argumentation throughout this work is abductive in the way that the subject of interest is explored through general and relative hypotheses for which economically beneficial explanations are sought. This is done under the premise that the study can be argued to be idiographic which is implied by the fact that the researched

field is in a state of constant change due to technological advances (“Idiografisk,” n.d.). This change can be considered in the context of a more abstract and metaphysical level in terms of how the field might ultimately develop as a result of technological advancement. However, this is beyond the scope of the current research focus and, as such, will only shortly be put into perspective in the last chapter of this report.

## 2.3 Theoretical Foundation

This section seeks to elaborate the theoretical foundation in terms of examining the fields of interactivity and narrativity in the context of transmedia storytelling and throughout the process of unfolding the research question.

My position towards studying this field of interest has been inspired by the mindset of Espen Aarseth who states that: “Studies of computer-mediated phenomena often suffer from a lack of insight into neighboring phenomena, again caused by a missing frame of reference, a general theoretical overview based on a broad comparative study, and a dialectic between neighboring fields” (Aarseth, 1994, p. 762). While this statement was made 20 years ago and regards a much broader perspective, it does apply to the field of transmedia storytelling in the way that the same fragmented formation of study approaches has emerged. Aarseth’s interest in the area of tension between interactivity and types of narrative also makes this statement particularly interesting in relation to this work.

The statement supports the initial hypothesis of this work that the field of transmedia storytelling currently suffers from studies almost exclusively focusing upon case studies or upon defining good practice and thereby possibly overlooking points of relevance. It should be mentioned that the content of Jenkins’ blog provides a detailed insight into thoughts on current and past productions as well as interviews with practitioners and theoreticians in the field. However, the perspectives presented have not previously been structured and organised – and for that reason, the content of the blog serves more as a portal for speculations and academic inspiration rather than an overview of theory and practice of the field.

As Jenkins states in his keynote speech at the 2013 ISIS Conference (Jenkins, 2013), the inception of his thoughts on transmedia storytelling was initially grounded in observations of the practice in the media industry. In this work, I propose that the current development of the field serves a foundation for considering the theoretical aspects of this practice in which many relevant speculations have already been made. With this proposition, it is not assumed that practice serves no purpose in analysing challenges of transmedia storytelling. Rather, it is argued that both theory and practice should be converged in the results of such an analysis.

From this theoretical point of view, I choose to lean towards Marie-Laure Ryan who mainly considers transmedia storytelling from a self-stated narratological perspective.

Here, I wish to clarify that, in this work, *narrativity* is referred to in the same way as narratology from Ryan's point of view – that is, knowledge of narrative. The reason for this is to maintain the term narrativity on the conceptually same level as interactivity, making the relation more meaningful to consider.

Aside from her recent article “Transmedial Storytelling and Transfictionality” (2013b), Ryan operates within a general field of narrativity in the publications *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence and Narrative Theory* (1992), *Narrative as Virtual Reality* (2003) and *Narrative across Media* (2004) – the latter of which being a collection of several theoreticians' considerations of narrativity in relation to media theory. These publications form a foundation for considering the narrative aspects of interactive storytelling. In relation to this work, they have previously been used in terms of considering narrativity in relation to transmedia storytelling (Johansen, 2013) and as such, they form an initial stepping stone for how to consider the concept of narrative.

It should be noted that a new publication edited by Ryan and Jan-Noel Thon, *Storyworlds across Media*, is to be released in July, 2014 – that is, past the work period of this thesis. The book explores cross- and transmedial validity of several narratological concepts such as narrator and storyworld, issues regarding intermediality across media as well as the relation between media convergence and transmedial storyworlds through a collection of essays. As such, it can be observed that the book is a step towards considering transmedia storytelling in relation to both cultural media theory as well as narrative in the general question of the book: “how can narratology achieve media-consciousness?” (“Storyworlds across Media,” n.d.). The need for this consciousness has also been stated by Christy Dena who describes the fact that media awareness depends upon the viewpoint of each practitioner (Dena, 2009).

As written, Ryan explicates the distinction between top-down and bottom-up transmedia storytelling in her talk at the ISIS conference (Ryan, 2013a). Within the scope of this work, I focus upon top-down productions for the reason that these productions have been created under the prerequisite that they should be transmedial. This decision is made on the basis that bottom-up and top-down productions might be imagined as entailing differing design processes. As such, the results might be further developed in relation to bottom-up productions in future research.

In order to explore the subfields of transmedia storytelling, I choose to include perspectives outside of the specific field. This choice is made on the basis of considering the fact that the field has not yet been explored to a large extent as well as the fact that new perspectives might provide new understanding of the currently fragmented nature of transmedia storytelling. While Dena, in a similar way, notes the fragmented state of the field (Dena, 2009, pp. 3-4), I choose to focus upon the perspectives of theoreticians rather than practitioners.

Throughout the following paragraphs, I briefly describe a selection of the core literature of this work which is, additionally, presented in relation to specific work questions in the

appropriate sections. This literature forms a foundation on which other relevant sources will also be gathered and used according to each chapter.

In the context of discussing interactivity in transmedia storytelling, I choose to refer to publications of a general character since this area has not been explored in the core literature within the area of interest. For the reason that this work focuses upon specific mechanics of transmedia storytelling, the article *Interactivity* by Jens Frederik Jensen (1998) is used since it aims to clarify the concept of interactivity in relation to media and communication studies – both in terms of a definition and in terms of types of interactivity. The article presents a general definition which is useful in the context of gaining an overview of what is understood by interactivity. In order to gain insights to interactivity in relation to narrative systems, peripheral studies to the area of interest are incorporated. Mainly, I refer to Chris Crawford who discusses the core concept of interactivity as part of reviewing challenges and misconceptions within the field of interactive storytelling (Crawford, 2012).

Of other sources, it might also be relevant to review sources within the fields of user experience, experience design, and user experience design; such as *Sketching User Experiences* by Bill Buxton (2007). However, as is discussed by Jens Frederik Jensen (2013), these terms are continuously being used in different ways, and the distinction between designing a model or object for an experience and not designing an experience directly should be made. As such, I focus upon interactivity between a user and a narrative system rather than focusing upon user feelings or convenience.

In regards to the subfield of narrativity, I mainly refer to the literature provided by Marie-Laure Ryan as has been clarified above. Of other sources, I refer to *Kreation af Narrative Multimediesystemer* (2002) and “Genre Transgression in Interactive Works” (2011) by Claus Andreas Foss Rosenstand since these publications discuss the theoretical implications of narratives in simulative media systems.

Additionally, I refer to the essay “Towards a Transmedial Narratology” (2004) by David Herman. The conception of narrative has arguably been subject to discussion as a result of electronic games becoming a new form of entertainment throughout the last years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Claims of games having narrative properties sparked the emergence of a school of ludologists stating that, in terms of a methodology, specific game forms should be classified and compared rather than be approached as stories. While the discussion of narratologists and ludologists is beyond the scope of this work, it should be noted that because of this new paradigm of considering narrative theory, the sources to discussing narratives in relation to transmedia storytelling should, to a certain degree, match this new terrain of narrativity and interactive storytelling. For this reason, I find it relevant to use the source by David Herman as a result of it being relatively recently published as opposed to sources written before the above described discussion as well as it being related to the subject of interest. (Murray, 2005)

While the book *Hamlet on the Holodeck* by Janet Horowitz Murray was published in 1997, I find the discussion of procedural authorship as well as agency in relation to medium aesthetics relevant in the context of discussing the relation between interactivity and narrativity since Murray connects user action to aesthetics of an experience.

In order to further connect the theory of interactivity and narrativity to each other, I will use the book *Objektorienteret Analyse* by Mathiassen et al. (1993) for maintaining a distinction between “interface”, “function” and “model” (own translation (Ed.)) (Mathiassen et al., 1993, p. 10). Forging the subjects of interactivity and narrativity might imply a relation between these three aspects of media systems.

Of related subjects, I might have included literature on crossmedia storytelling. However, as the subjects of crossmedia and transmedia storytelling do not represent the same treatment of narrative content, I choose to incorporate more general literature at times when current theory on transmedia storytelling is insufficient to the analysis.

## 2.4 Specific Contribution

The contributions of this work are both academic as well as methodical. In terms of the methodical contribution, functional and aesthetic optics are sought connected as a result of my individual academic background as well as interest. This contribution can be viewed as a proposed method for general research within the field of computer science and communication.

Relevant to the specific field of interest, the work initially frames transmedia storytelling by identifying possible confusing aspects of the subject. This is viewed as a contribution countering the current state of the field where theory is built upon theory without considering the phenomenon being studied as separate from already constructed ideas. While a stepping stone for research within the field is certainly needed, it might be useful to keep inquiring the original subject rather than theoreticians.

Of academic contributions, the theoretical analysis results in a clarification of what can be argued to be the core of transmedia storytelling in relation to interactivity and narrativity. A new, currently unidentified, content potential characterises this type of storytelling. This content potential exists on the basis of representing content through different formats as well as the transgression between these formats.





# Chapter Three

## Framing Transmedia Storytelling

This chapter seeks to clarify the general framework which is referred to and reshaped throughout and according to the rest of this work. Initially, it is discussed how theory of transmedia storytelling has developed the field into seeming like a wicked problem which in turn has resulted in more complex discussions within the field that, arguably, might not be fruitful in terms of academic advances. Additionally, a general conception of transmedia storytelling is dissected and examined with the purpose of clarifying whether or not this complexity can be reduced.





### 3.1 Initial Framing of the Area of Concern

In order to enhance the conception of the fragmented field of transmedia storytelling, this first step of the work structure is formulated specifically as such:

Framing the overall area of concern, transmedia storytelling, in order to establish a valid foundation from which to consider the research question

The reason for framing transmedia storytelling as suggested in this initial step is to establish a valid framework from which to further consider the research question. As can be seen in Figure 5, core publications concern subfields to an almost equal extent which indicates that each subfield is of equal concern and importance to theoreticians. However, within these areas as well as their relations, no definite set of problems can be imagined – this being partly a result of the rapid development of the overall field. I propose to ask why this might be? Therefore, the following work question is asked.

1. Is the phenomenon of transmedia storytelling a wicked problem in the context of understanding it?

Primarily framed by: Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning (Rittel & Webber, 1973) & Dialogue Mapping (Conklin, 2005)

With this work question, a Socratic approach towards the subject is taken in the sense that an academic distance towards the subject is kept through an inquiring approach rather than relying on the building blocks of the subject already being provided.

The question is framed in the context of understanding rather than practicing transmedia storytelling. Given the added social context of practice, one might imagine differing results from a similar analysis.

As such, the method for unfolding the work in general begins to form itself. The particular approach is inspired by the *hermeneutic circle* as defined by Hans-Georg Gadamer (Gadamer, 2004) and nuanced by Jacques Derrida as explored by Diane P. Michelfelder and Richard E. Palmer (1989). The subfields in question are understood from a common point of reference, the initial framing of transmedia storytelling, while this common point of reference is shaped from unfolding the subfields. Additionally, it is acknowledged that the knowledge generated from the analysis is shaped by tentative work questions, the clarifications to which leading the direction of the work. Also, even though the analysis depends on my individual phenomenological perspective, form of argumentation as well as decision-making, this way of connecting possibly differing realms of understanding will, presumably, bring the research closer to the core of the subject rather than only providing a subjective perspective.

The interaction between two horizons, understanding the relation between subfields and considering a common point of reference, should be seen in the context of Judith Nisse Shklar who provides critique towards the idea of perceiving the process of

understanding in the form of a circle which implies a central point of view as well as a set circumference (Shklar, 1986). Rather, it is argued in this work that the circle represents an innovative process of exploring as well as both expanding and reducing the theoretical framework in which theoreticians and practitioners operate.

Explaining transmedia storytelling, I do not intend to formulate a new definition of transmedia storytelling. Rather, components of the current definition as formulated by Jenkins (2006, pp. 95-96) are examined in relation to points of critique stated by Ryan (2013a) as well as the concept of *media* as discussed by Finnemann (2005). Besides the theoretical value of unfolding current theory, a practical value can also be argued to exist for the reason that the fragmented state of the field renders theory hard to utilise in practice. This statement was further validated in a closer examination of the subfields presented in Figure 5 in Chapter 2.

## 3.2 A Wicked Transmedia Storytelling Fog

The idea of connectedness within societal formations as presented by Henry Jenkins in *Convergence Culture* (2006) might be argued to be the reason why transmedia storytelling has gained popularity to an increasing degree. Bo Kampmann Walther refers to new media platforms as *contingency handling instruments* (own translation, Danish: "kontingens-håndterings-instrumenter") with the purpose of describing how these platforms reduce and expand information technology (Walther, 2005, p. 32). As a result of users being able to select and deselect information on the basis of a large span of possible choices, emerging media platforms of the latest century have formed a foundation for a specific culture which both Walther and Jenkins name convergent (Walther, 2005) (Jenkins, 2006). While it might be argued that this is a valid description of current media culture, the distinction does not further any operational understanding of this supposed development in the context of transmedia storytelling.

For this reason, I intend with this work to follow Jenkins' proposal of viewing his definition of transmedia storytelling as "a provisional definition that's intended to allow people to try to explore a space" (Jenkins, 2013). While Jenkins' point of not constraining any innovative storytelling ideas to a limited definition is commendable, I argue that the current lack of coherence within the field might be equally limiting. As such, the aim of this work is to initiate an identification of this coherence operational to both practitioners and theoreticians.

Experts of transmedia storytelling each represent points of view towards the subject, equally relevant and useful. However, the lack of coherence in relation to the terms used within the field can be argued to further fragment theoreticians and practitioners from each other. This development has left transmedia storytelling as a subject in a state which is similar to a *wicked problem* initially defined by Rittel and Webber (1973) as an area of which no conclusive set of problems can be defined as well as no set of definite solutions.

Transmedia has become a multi-discursive concept which is dependent on the context of different field of studies. It might be argued that it is the constructed reality of current theoreticians which is wicked – and not the subject itself. Throughout the following, I seek to support this statement.

While the article on wicked problems by Rittel and Webber was originally written in the context of social planning, the definition has later been unfolded more directly in the context of design approaches (Buchanan, 1992). In a review of the development of the liberal arts, natural sciences and social sciences, Richard Buchanan notes that each field is continuously becoming more specialised and, as a result, more fragmented from each other. Citing Richard McKeon, Buchanan states that the fields have lost the connection to each other as well as basic matters of daily life, creating a need for integrative disciplines which has resulted in the emergence of design thinking. (Buchanan, 1992)

This can be related to transmedia storytelling in the sense that the fields of knowledge seem to lack an integrative approach to understanding the basics of transmedia storytelling, resulting in less successful productions created with the purpose of enriching users' lives. Buchanan refers to the needed approach as "integrative thinking" (Buchanan, 1992, p. 6).



Figure 7 – The Design Squiggle by (Newman, 2006).

Furthermore, Buchanan points to a fundamental issue behind design practice in the relationship between *determinancy* and *indeterminancy* of problems (Buchanan, 1992, p. 15). A common linear model of design practice lies in identifying the frames of which a problem occurs and create a solution. Damien Newman created a drawing in 2006 which has become popular under the name The Design Squiggle (see Figure 7). While this model describes the process of working with determinate design problems, in the sense that a definite set of conditions to the problem can be defined, transmedia storytelling is, arguably, characterised by the fact that the conditions are seemingly endless and no final conclusion to the development of innovative storytelling in general itself can be made.

In practical contexts this can, as an example, be observed in the approach to transmedia storytelling as suggested by Ian Ginn: "Adopt an Instalment Approach" (Ginn, 2013, p. 25). The high complexity of these productions can be simplified by making story episodes which can be developed along the production and are fundable and manageable. However, this also reduces the number of possible interactive instances of a transmedia experience, thereby reducing the narrative flexibility of such productions.

From this example it can be observed how the current perceptions of transmedia storytelling leaves a field which is difficult to tame and practice within. I therefore return to the work question initially stated in this chapter.

Of the criteria for wicked problems originally defined by Rittel and Webber (1973), Jeff Conklin sums up and nuances these into six general statements which characterise how transmedia storytelling can currently be perceived as a result of the above presented considerations (Conklin, 2005, p. 5):

1. You don't understand the problem until you have developed a solution.
2. Wicked problems have no stopping rule.
3. Solutions to wicked problems are not right or wrong.
4. Every wicked problem is essentially unique and novel.
5. Every solution to a wicked problem is a 'one-shot operation'.
6. Wicked problems have no given alternative solutions.

Conklin suggests that a way to handle wicked problems is to create experiments from which valuable experience can be gained. This fits well with Jenkins' suggestion of keeping any restricting definitions from the subject area as this could inhibit the level of innovation. However, I argue that with the previously presented overview of subfields of transmedia storytelling, it is possible to create a foundation which is not wicked since, as an example, a determinate number of qualities of transmedia storytelling might be imagined within certain boundaries. While being part of a precursor to practical experiments, such boundaries might also prove useful in theoretical contexts. It might be speculated why the field of transmedia storytelling has yet to confine itself to such boundaries?

Throughout the following section, I choose to dissect the foundation for the subject as created by Henry Jenkins (Jenkins, 2006) (Jenkins, 2007). From this section, it has been shown that current practice handles transmedia storytelling under the assumption that it is a wicked problem. As will also be apparent from the following section, the lack of clear, unambiguous use of terms has left the state of the field in a wicked fog presumably the cause of such practice.

### 3.3 Explaining Transmedia Storytelling

Marie-Laure Ryan writes, in the context of comparing transmedia storytelling with aspects of transfictionality, of a number of statements by Henry Jenkins that "...memorable catchphrases are a powerful way to promote new ideas and start theoretical conversations" (Ryan, 2013b). While this is agreed upon in this work, I now seek to unfold some of these statements by Jenkins. The aim of this discussion is not to discard the theory by Jenkins but rather to shed light on what might be inferred in the statements as well as to create a more operational theoretical foundation.

As a subheader to his book *Convergence Culture*, Jenkins wrote “Where Old and New Media Collide” (Jenkins, 2006). Since the subheader is not further explained in the book, the reason behind that distinct articulation can be speculated upon. Interpreting *collision* as an event during which two or more bodies in movement apply force to each other throughout a relatively short period of time, whether it be physical objects such as cars or particles or more abstract concepts, this means that Jenkins implies an effect caused by both old and new media applied to the same which, already present in this subheader, indicates a mystification of the terms used throughout the book.

Rather than a collision, the development of media might be argued to occur continuously and, as a result, a prevalent shift is observable in how existing storytelling theories and technologies are being intertwined with a new scene on which to present stories which, in turn, has meant the foundation for new ways of interpreting and working with storytelling.

While this foundation has been used in transmedia storytelling contexts such as marketing the video game *Halo 2* (2004) and the film *A.I.: Artificial Intelligence* (2001), *The Beast* (2001) and *I Love Bees* (2004) (descriptions in (Johansen, 2013)), before the book by Henry Jenkins was published, Jenkins sought to structure the conception of transmedia storytelling and define general aspects thereof.

An updated summary of the discussion in his book was posted on an online blog by Jenkins from which I will draw attention to two points of relevance to this discussion of clarifying the basic understanding of the concept of transmedia storytelling. Referring to transmedia storytelling as “...a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience”, Jenkins has provided an initial point of reference (Jenkins, 2007).

As a point being continuously expanded upon, Jenkins mentions a changing focus from characters and definitive plots to creating fictional worlds as a new way of appealing to users’ interest and expressing fictional content (Jenkins, 2007). In a short analysis of the success of the transmedia storytelling marketing campaign *Why So Serious?* (2007), Andrea Phillips, game designer and transmedia writer, argues that the fictional space created for users to interact with is critical to engaging the same (Phillips, 2010). A consequence of this is, according to (Riedl & Stern, 2006), a requirement of a director or system to be able to adapt to user choices while still moving forward the plot of the story. This disrupts some of the experiential aspects of more established storytelling types such as film as is pointed out by Bordwell (2009): “Another drawback to shifting a story among platforms: art works gain strength by having firm boundaries”. However, Jenkins points out as a response to this (2009): “By definition, a serial text is not self-contained”. He refers to transmedia storytelling as “...a work which pushes beyond its frame” (Jenkins, 2009).

This statement, similar to the rest of the blog entry, does not present exactly what *pushing beyond a frame* actually means. In an etymological sense, a *frame* suggests an enclosed structure from which content cannot travel beyond. Since the fictional content is constrained by the form of the presentation, the statement by Jenkins lacks further

explication in order to provide a solid theoretical foundation. As a counterpoint, the statement might be considered in a more philosophical sense. In this way, *pushing beyond a frame* becomes independent of physical constraints and, as such, the statement provides an interesting illustration of fictional content which cannot be contained in the same way as film or books.

However, rather than dismissing the firm boundaries as mentioned by Bordwell completely, it might be speculated whether the frame for transmedia storytelling can be drawn to a certain degree or only be considered in a mutually excluding context where either a definite frame or no frame at all exists. And is this imaginable span of degrees characterised by the intimacy of a local story versus the unifying generality of elements each only presenting certain aspects of an overall universe as simply filling in the gaps? Another aspect of the definition by Jenkins which might be considered unclear is his focus upon fictional transmedia storytelling. A documentary approach might easily be imagined as transmedial on a similar basis as original fictional content.

In order to establish a general reference point for this work, I propose to discuss the nature of transmedia storytelling in the context of how specific conceptions of *media* presupposes one's understanding of *transmedia*. This will, additionally, remove the focus from whether or not the content should be fictional as this is, arguably, not the core to understanding transmedia storytelling.

Defining transmedia storytelling in *Convergence Culture* (2006) and later on his blog (2007), Jenkins shifts from using the distinction "media platforms" to "delivery channels" which might be argued to be a less confusing choice of terms. However, Marie-Laure Ryan (2013a) points out that the sentence following Jenkins' updated definition again uses the term *medium* as an element which, ideally, should make its "...own unique contribution to the unfolding of a story" (Jenkins, 2007).

Ryan further notes that Jenkins states in his book that while delivery channels become obsolete and replaced, much similar to the theory of *remediation* by Bolter and Grusin (1996), a medium is also a cultural system, the content of which changes according to social dynamics (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 13-14). In relation to Figure 2 of the three general perspectives upon transmedia storytelling, it can be observed how Jenkins only relates his understanding of *medium* to a cultural point of view as a set of social and cultural practices existing on the basis of technology.

Since the use of the term *medium* is not further explained by Jenkins, Ryan seeks to explicate what is entailed in the use of this term by considering it polysemic in the sense that at least three conceptions of which all suggest a transmittance of information might be imagined: *semiotic*, for example music, text or sound, *technological*, for example writing, radio or television, and *cultural*, as a "vehicle for mass communication" (Ryan, 2013a) or art forms. In this context, it should be noted that the cultural conception as explained by Ryan is not equal to the description in *Convergence Culture*. It can be observed how the examples of semiotic and technological conceptions of media overlap with each other in the description by Jenkins from which an example of recorded sound is given. Ryan

states that it is not clear whether or not the medium is the sound itself or the fact that it is recorded – putting it into a social context.

Ryan exemplifies her conception of transmedia storytelling with a book which generates a certain amount of online fanfiction – this is, in her view at the ISIS Conference 2013, not transmedia storytelling as both fictional elements are textual and as such, the Internet serves only as a delivery system. Note, though, that Ryan writes of fanfiction in her article of the same year that it can be viewed as a kind of transmedia storytelling (Ryan, 2013b). Returning to the role of the delivery system in this example, however, the Internet becomes a meta-medium transporting other types of media. While this distinction between technological and semiotic media can be made, however, I suggest that the fact that the Internet as a delivery channel can be perceived as such a meta-medium as well as the rise of digital, interactive systems makes the distinction difficult to maintain when discussing transmedial storytelling – especially considering that remediation, as mentioned above, cannot be thought of in the same way in terms of making existing delivery channels obsolete as suggested by Jenkins. (Ryan, 2013a)

To support this statement, the description of media made by Niels Ole Finnemann (2005) as constrained by a certain set of perceptual, semiotic, temporal and spatial characteristics can be used. Finnemann states that:

“The new traits characterising digital media are, it is claimed throughout the following, of such a nature that it is necessary to rephrase the concept of media since, as a result of textualising the mechanical procedure, a fundamental new form of mediation between the meaning and the physical-material substratum is present.”

(Own translation (Ed.)) (Finnemann, 2005, p. 79)

Finnemann calls attention to the fact that the relation between a significant object being mediated and the basis of this mediation, the material substratum of the object, has changed as a result of a former mechanical procedure now being shaped by certain contexts. He concludes that because of an invariant border between the functional architecture and the content of digital media, they hold the potential to shape the signified object of a medium rather than simply distributing it.

Because of this, I argue that while Ryan suggests a necessity of a certain multimodality of transmedia storytelling for it to not be a mere example of transfictionality, in regards to the fanfiction example, the above characteristic of digital media entails a more clear distinction between the delivery of fictional content and the actual content itself as this delivery, in the context of digital media, shapes the content.

Finnemann distinguishes between media and genre where digital software dependent on certain content to be distributed forms, as one of five levels, the narrative and discursive space in which the potential for hypertextual interactivity exists on computer-based media types (Finnemann, 2005, pp. 163-165). As such, it becomes unclear whether storytelling across these genres upon computer-based media is transmedial – would a story separated into fictional elements and distributed through Twitter, a separate video

file and a sound recording be transmedial since the elements would certainly be multimodal and require user action for every piece to make a unique contribution to the understanding of a story while still being presented upon the same computer-based medium?

Pointed out by Ryan (2013a), transmedia storytelling might suffer from the same obstacles such as hypertext fiction since the user actions required between elements of fictional content, or media, disrupts the possibility for building emotions such as suspense – this relates to the critique previously stated by Bordwell. And as is explained by Finnemann, the activity of handling digital hypertextual content is more characterised by navigating towards the content rather than processing it (Finnemann, 2005, p. 143). Throughout the following chapter, I, among other aims, seek to shed light on whether or not this means that transmedia storytelling is characterised by narrative navigation to a higher degree than experiencing fictional content.

In conclusion to this particular discussion, I choose to distinguish between physical media and digital media in this work as a result of the presented dilemmas of the current definition of transmedia storytelling. As a result of this, the distinction between semiotic and technological media is still kept but further nuanced by this new perspective. I argue that it is possible to create transmedia storytelling not dependent on having a number of technological media types such as a smartphone and a laptop since the potential genres within computer-based media, for example video or music players, function as delivery channels, or mediators of content, themselves.

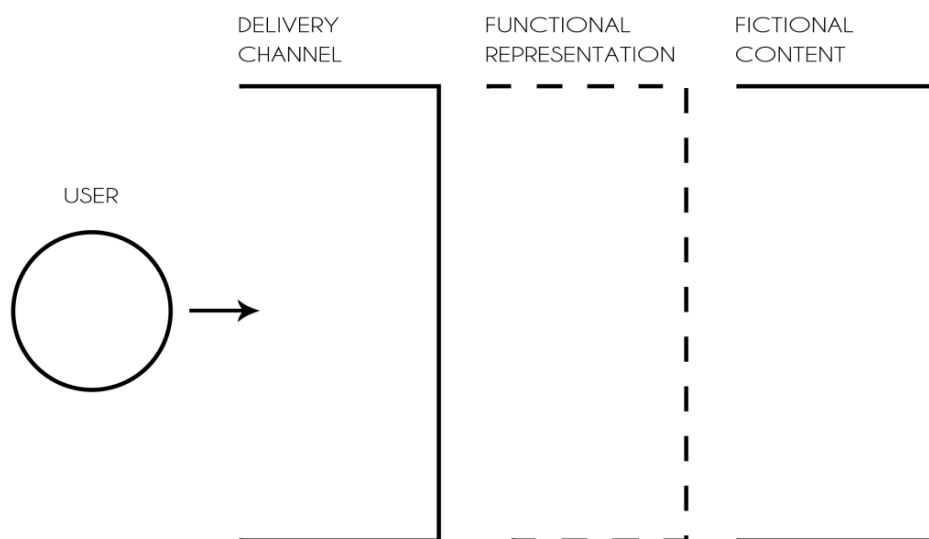


Figure 8 – The user approaches transmedial content through three layers: a delivery channel, a functional presentation of the content and the actual content itself.

This is illustrated in Figure 8 where the functional representation of the content represents the genres unfolded by Finnemann or what might otherwise be referred to as *platforms* when not only considering technologically defined platforms. This infers that



the concept of platform can be interpreted at different levels. The functional representation, or genre, is furthermore what shapes the format of the fictional content. As this part of the model only relates to digital distribution of content, the line is dotted. For non-digital distribution, the functional presentation of content is inherent in the delivery channel. One might distinguish between configured and unconfigured media in the sense that the functional representation represents the configuration of digital media.

The figure can also be seen as a way of visualising the distinction made by Bo Kampmann Walther of observed information versus not observable information where a single medium illustrates the frames through which distributed information is predetermined (Walther, 2005, pp. 31-32). The attention of an audience relies on what is being presented rather than what is not even though these two dimensions cannot be separated. In order to further validate Figure 8, a discussion of different cases is made in Appendix 2.

From this point, I refer to functional representation as representational format in order to converge this part of the model with terminology already used within the field.

In regards to the specific definition by Jenkins, *pushing beyond the frames* is interpreted as the content both being multimodal as well as being delivered through particular technological media or through potential genres of the narrative space within configurable media types. This interpretation is made on the assumption that the *frames* in Jenkins' statement correspond to a single media platform from which users depart or return. The consequences of this framing will become apparent in Chapter 5 wherein distinct qualities between interactivity and narrativity are unfolded.

Returning to the initial work question of this chapter, it is concluded that transmedia storytelling is not a wicked problem. This means that an analysis of the relation between interactivity and narrativity can be carried out under the assumption that specific mechanics of transmedia storytelling can be uncovered.





# Chapter Four

## Interactive Transmedia Narratives

Argued in this chapter, several misconceptions on the role of interactivity in transmedia storytelling exist. For this reason, I initiate the discussion of interactivity in transmedia storytelling with a clarification of the term *interactivity*. From this point of departure, the subfield of narrativity is unfolded in relation to interactivity.



## 4.1 Creating a Theoretical Framework

Having unfolded the theoretical point of reference, the following work step is formulated:

Unfolding the relation between interactivity and narrativity  
in relation to transmedia storytelling with the purpose of  
creating a theoretical framework

The theoretical framework is created on the basis of the following work questions as well as core literature:

1. What is interactivity in relation to transmedia storytelling?

Primarily framed by: Interactivity (Jensen, 1998) & Chris Crawford on Interactive Storytelling (Crawford, 2012)

2. How do interactivity and narrativity in the context of transmedia storytelling relate to each other?

Primarily framed by: Kreation af Narrative Multimediesystemer (Rosenstand, 2002), Chris Crawford on Interactive Storytelling (Crawford, 2012), Transmedia Fairy Tales (Johansen, 2013) & Transmedial Storytelling and Transfictionality (Ryan, 2013b)

From these discussions, I hypothesise that types of transmedia storytelling according to interactivity and narrativity can be unfolded. Therefore, I additionally seek to unfold the following work question:

3. What are the functions of transmedia storytelling?

Primarily framed by: Objektorienteret Analyse (Mathiassen et al., 1993)

The structure has loosely been inspired by the approach by Rosenstand (2002, pp. 95-130) who discusses the identification of, definition of types of and qualification of narrative multimedia systems in the context of determining a general frame of reference for creating narrative multimedia systems of good quality. The need for a special foundation within the field of transmedia storytelling has been observed previously and for this reason as well as the field of interest being within the scope of the referenced approach of narrative multimedia systems, it is argued that the approach can be useful in this context. In an epistemological sense, boundaries to the scope of knowledge within this specific field is sought.

In short, this approach is directed towards gaining a theoretical understanding of the field as well as providing a foundation on which to discuss how pragmatic, context-specific decisions can be made. This foundation is first unfolded in this chapter and then structured in the next in reference to the hermeneutic approach presented in the previous chapter. Throughout the process of the following work, it is, however, kept in mind that

the perspective upon the subject is kept within a certain scope of research and as such, provides an initial framework which should be further operationalised through practice. In order to unfold the work questions, work carried out previously is incorporated in a new, updated and condensed version (Johansen, 2013). Throughout the previous work, focus was kept upon uncovering a distinct quality within the field of narrativity as opposed to this work which seeks to bridge narrativity with interactivity. The specific use of previous results will be described more thoroughly in the appropriate section.

As has previously been discussed, the subfields of transmedia storytelling might also be considered as layers where narrativity can be considered the point of departure on which specific design and cultural aspects can be added. I have visualised the layers of interest in this work in Figure 9. Here, focus lies in the relation between the two subfields rather than the actual subfields. The reason for this lies in the fact that the layers of narrativity, design and culture can also be found in several other types of narrative production such as games whereas the relations between subfields are relatively unexplored when considering both functional and aesthetic rationales. The layer of culture might be thought of as above the layer of design. As stated in Chapter 1, this work does not encompass this subfield, though.



Figure 9 - The subfields of transmedia storytelling as layers which shape and develop each other.

Described in the research question, the point of focus is unfolding distinct qualities between design and narrativity in transmedia storytelling, a type of storytelling which is argued to be characterised partly by interactivity as allowed by a system. Note, however, that the actual interaction happens between the layer of design and culture – the sphere in which participants operate.

To expand on the above reasoning for the chosen focus, discussing the qualities between narrativity and interactivity in relation to transmedia storytelling entails a discussion of how these might relate since knowledge of this relation can, arguably, point to the optimal connections in reference to the law of parsimony of things usually being connected and behaving in an optimal economical way. The subfields of transmedia storytelling are arguably connected, and understanding this connectedness could create a more simple foundation for theoreticians and practitioners to operationalise within. This is assumed with the knowledge that a principle in one research context is not global in the sense that it should span diverse subjects. This approach can be seen as part of the overall work structure of clarifying one horizon for further discussion as well as a more narrow discussion of different horizons.

In the scope of this work, it is hypothesised that a connection between user interaction and the experience of a narrative can be made. In other words, it can be speculated how

knowledge of the ability of a media platform to “...let the user exert an influence on the content and/or form of the mediated communication” (Jensen, 1998, p. 201) might be used in the context of defining qualities of transmedia storytelling. While the definition by Jensen regards a general concept of interactivity, it will be applied here in a narrow sense. This is due to the fact that the subfield of design mostly regards collected experiences of practitioners rather than investigations on the how user interaction in a general sense applies to transmedia storytelling.

## 4.2 Interactivity and Storytelling

I might start by asking: Why is it useful to explore interactivity in relation to transmedia storytelling? Other than being the aspect which operationalises narrative events or properties, this particular type of storytelling often depends solely on human computer interaction (HCI) which makes the concept of interactive transmedia storytelling complex since, beyond presenting a narrative through an interactive delivery channel, one might additionally consider the specific narrative interactive, such as an interactive film presented on a laptop or an alternate reality game presented through multiple delivery channels.

This argument is based upon the statement by Lev Manovich that “In relation to computer-based media, the concept of interactivity is a tautology” (Manovich, 2001, p. 55). Since a computer in itself is interactive, I use the distinction of *closed* and *open* interactivity as proposed by Manovich (Manovich, 2001, p. 56) where closed interactivity refers to fixed structures of content and open interactivity refers to real-time generated dynamic structures as a result of interactions between user and system. In this particular distinction, *structures* might also refer to content rather than the form of representation noting that, presumably, the structure of the content is still predefined. In terms of open interactivity, transmedia storytelling might even hold the potential of being structured real-time as a result of interaction between user and multiple systems.

Interactivity in narrative contexts is not a relatively new concept. Being able to interact with fictional content through digitally configured delivery channels is, however. In several cases such as interactive film, practitioners have predefined a set of possible lines for users to choose. The sense of affecting the narrative is real but in many cases the actual causal effect of a user’s choices is very limited. To be able to discuss the concept of interactive narratives further, I define the bounds in which this concept can be imagined and practiced. For a narrative to exist, the activities involved in the experience, including user activities in this context, must be oriented towards a final aim. These activities can be further characterised by the causality between user actions and events within the fictional universe.

With this consideration, it might be wondered what the exact boundaries to interactive storytelling could be? And how does it relate to transmedia storytelling, a type of storytelling in which the concept of interactivity is presumably used more extensively

than other types, when considering that the narrative segments might not only be distributed through digitally configured computer systems?

While the concept of interactive storytelling can certainly be diverse, discussions of the definition on interactivity itself are characterised by a number of disagreements. Chris Crawford refers to interactivity as “...the most grossly misunderstood and callously misused term associated with computers” (Crawford, 2012, p. 27). This, he argues, is a result of most definitions being fuzzy.

As a result of this, I choose to lean towards the definition provided by Crawford as well as a more general definition by Jens Frederik Jensen (1998) within the field of communication and media studies. These definitions are both well recognised, as can be seen in both the number of times they have been cited as well as the prominent theoreticians being the citers, and complementary as I shall seek to show throughout the following paragraphs.

### Establishing a General Understanding

Departing from the more general definition, Jensen defines interactivity as “a measure of a media’s potential ability to let the user exert an influence on the content and/or form of the mediated communication” (Jensen, 1998, p. 201). This definition relates interactivity to interaction as an inherent quality which can be exercised by a user. As is stated by Jensen, the concept of interaction is context dependent (Jensen, 1998, p. 188). As such, this definition relies on a sociological perspective on the concept of interaction in the sense that it refers to “...actions of two or more individuals observed to be mutually interdependent” (Jensen, 1998, p. 200).

	<i>Information produced by a central provider</i>	<i>Information produced by the consumer</i>
<i>Distribution controlled by a central provider</i>	<b>1) Transmission</b>	<b>4) Registration</b>
<i>Distribution controlled by the consumer</i>	<b>3) Consultation</b>	<b>2) Conversation</b>

Figure 10 – Four patterns of communication as defined by Bordewijk and Kaam.  
Copied from (Jensen, 1998, p. 187).

While Jensen’s definition provides the general conception of interactivity in this work, it has also been nuanced and elaborated through Bordewijk and Kaam’s matrix of four communication patterns: transmission, conversation, consultation and registration (Bordewijk & Kaam, 1986), see Figure 10. These patterns are relevant to this work since the user role in transmedia storytelling experiences does not rely on a single form of communication such as transmitting a film through a television. I will shortly unfold Jensen’s use of these patterns which will lead to the second definition of interactivity relevant to this discussion.

Jensen distinguishes between four mutually independent dimensions of interactivity determined by the four patterns of communication in Figure 10. He visualises this in a



model where selective interactivity represents both consultational and transmissional interactivity since both are characterised by the potential ability to let users choose information. Representing these dimensions as a three-dimensional cube, Jensen argues that 12 different types of interactive media can be identified.

It can be noted, though, that Jensen chooses to characterise the case of no registrational, conversational or selective interactivity as a type of interactive media. While I recognise the importance of clarifying this instance of the model, I would argue that the relevance of it in terms of defining interactive media types lies in the fact that it describes which media types are not interactive or have zero degree of interactivity. Two coordinate systems might be imagined in which interactivity could be described in a matter of degrees according to either conversational, registrational and transmissional interactivity or conversational, registrational and consultational interactivity within a certain sample space. To understand the system, it is essential to understand the origin of the dimensions. While this origin is characterised on the basis of types of interactivity, it rather describes a state of non-interactivity. Additionally, one might also distinguish between interactivity in a local environment versus interactivity between user and central provider. This would clear up what seems paradoxical when Jensen, as an example, describes a type of interactivity which can both be transmissional and conversational. For these reasons, I choose to not include the three-dimensional cube in this work. The distinction between selective, registrational and conversational interactivity is, however, useful since it provides an overview of how form and/or content can be influenced.

In relation to this work, Jensen characterises interactive fiction as a combination of consultational and registrational interactivity (Jensen, 1998, p. 202). Thus, he argues that interactive fiction should rather be seen as a simulation of conversational interactivity rather than actual dialogue between a consumer and a central provider. Before forming an opinion on this, I turn to the definition by Crawford who states that “the value of this definition lies in its reference to conversation, a well-understood form of interaction” (Crawford, 2012, p. 28).

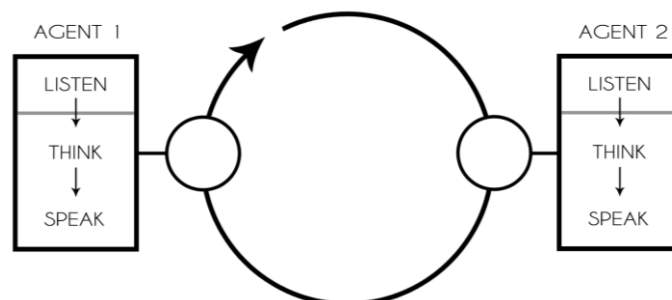


Figure 11 – An illustration of Crawford’s definition of interactivity as a process between two active agents (Crawford, 2012, p. 28). A line has been drawn below ‘listen’ as an indicator that this action is carried out continuously.

Specifically, Crawford defines interactivity as “a cyclic process between two or more active agents in which each agent alternately listens, thinks, and speaks – a conversation of sorts” (Crawford, 2012, p. 28). I illustrate this concept in Figure 11. In this context, I

interpret *agent* as an entity holding the capacity to act within a universe – fictional or real. I propose to nuance this definition with Janet Murray's description of *agency*, however, since she presents a perspective of how participation in narrative contexts often limits participants' sense of agency – that is, carrying out meaningful actions and experiencing the consequences of these (Murray, 1997). I return to the relevance of this statement in the following section.

For now, it should be underlined that Crawford's definition has been made in the context of discussing interactive storytelling. As such, it is interesting that the term conversation is used in both publications in a similar way while the authors view its potential in storytelling as either possible in philosophical terms or essential.

It seems relevant how these seemingly contradictory statements on the type of interactivity in interactive fiction might relate and prove useful to each other in the particular context of this work. The argument that conversational interactivity is not possible to a full extent in the context of interactive fiction might be considered true since users in any case operate within frames distributed by practitioners. For this reason, I take a closer look upon interactivity in transmedia storytelling narratives in order to validly proceed with identifying types of transmedia storytelling in relation to interactivity and narrativity.

## 4.3 Form and Content in Transmedia Storytelling

Initial thoughts on particular interactive instances of transmedia storytelling are lead towards terms such as *user participation* (Jenkins, 2006) (Miller, 2008) (Davidson, 2010) (Marwick et al., 2013), *audience agency* (Evans, 2008) (Stackelberg, 2011) or *cocreation* (Dena, 2008) (Beddows, 2012). These are terms which provide individual connotations to interactivity in transmedia storytelling. It can be assumed, though, that all authors within the field find user participation essential to transmedia storytelling since the delivery of the story requires certain user activity. Similarly, user agency and cocreation are not terms which relevance is subject to discussion. However, do these terms actually imply *interactivity* in the context of a transmedia storytelling experience or has the misuse of the term also affected these analyses? As an initial support, Janet Murray states that "...activity alone is not agency" (Murray, 1997, p. 128) where agency refers to a potential for interactivity which can be exercised by users.

A mismatch between the conception of interactive storytelling and transmedia storytelling can, as an example, be observed through many cases of documentaries being given the adjective transmedia; among others, these include *Inside the Haiti Earthquake* (2010) and *Hollow* (2013) which are both named transmedia documentaries but are, in reference to the model presented in Chapter 3, only multimodal and not transmedial.

The reason for the confusion might be found in the fact that user participation in online narrative and simulative environments is misinterpreted as equal to a transmedia experience. Additionally, it can be noted that the three different terms are based on a

cultural understanding of transmedia storytelling which might be attributed to the prominence of Jenkins' considerations on the subject.

Crawford draws attention to a quote by Chris Klug in which it is argued that the essence of interactivity in art is that it "evokes reaction from the audience" (Lebowitz & Klug, 2011, p. 118). In line with the question stated above, Crawford notes that the argument points to a dichotomy of active or passive rather than a dichotomy of interactive or reactive. By reactive, I refer to reactions from participants which do not affect the acting system in terms of the represented narrative – be they mental or physical reactions. User participation, audience agency and cocreation, while relevant concepts within the field of transmedia storytelling, do not specifically describe interactivity in this context but also encompass reactions to the content provided. Additionally, these terms seem to be falsely used as conditions to deeming a production transmedial.

In order to unfold interactivity in relation to narrativity in transmedia storytelling, the narrative aspect is examined more closely. Considering narrativity the fundamental layer of transmedia storytelling below a layer of design where certain user actions can be defined and assigned to the narrative layer, it is relevant to consider this basis in order to understand the interaction between the two layers.

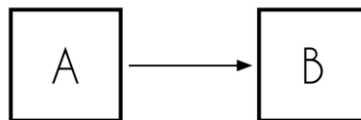


Figure 12 – A simplified example of the action required of participants in the context of transmedia storytelling – a movement from platform A to platform B. Figure created from (Johansen, 2013, p. 37).

Discussed in a previous semester project (Johansen, 2013), consider the simplest form of spreading story segments to a number of platforms as presented in Figure 12.

By considering which distinct features might be found in transmedia storytelling in relation to the semiotics of simulative narrative experiences as described by Claus A. F. Rosenstand (Rosenstand, 2002), a distinct narrative quality has been clarified in terms of the composition of the transgression in which users engage when moving from one media platform to another.

Unfolded by Rosenstand in a more recent article, three dimensions of control characterise the variation possible of a participant's role within a simulative narrative system: orientation (through structure), moral (through premise) and fate (through plot) (Rosenstand, 2004). Since a unique potential for interactivity in transmedia storytelling is the transgression between platforms (the movement between A and B in Figure 12), control of the three dimensions can be distributed here. (Johansen, 2013)

Further examined throughout the previous semester project (Johansen, 2013), the aspect of control connotes a challenge to a number of practitioners while also proving to be a

core aspect of a transmedia storytelling production. For this reason, a visualisation of how control might be understood in this context has been created (see Figure 13).

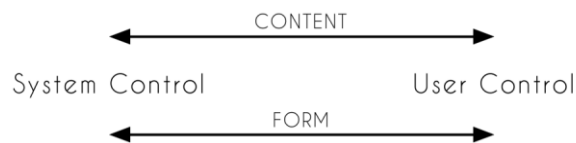


Figure 13 – Dimensions of control as is exercisable by either users or the system described in terms of content and form. Figure created from (Johansen, 2013, p. 46).

In Figure 13, the dimensions of control are defined from the previously presented definition of interactivity by Jensen who distinguishes between user influence on form and user influence on content (Jensen, 1998, p. 201). A differentiating factor, though, is that this potential ability of each medium should be viewed as part of a span between two mutually exclusive extremities – user control representing one, and system control representing another.

From the above, the transgression represents a span of potentials for interactivity in transmedia storytelling. Other potentials can be speculated upon such as how the relation between the subfields of culture and design is constituted from choosing certain platforms since each platform is connected to particular culturally embedded conventions apart from any genre which might be represented on that platform. In transmedia storytelling, utilising a number of potential platforms rather than a single one might be argued to hold the potential of each platform supplementing other utilised platforms in social contexts – such as how smartphones and laptops constitutes different social interactions. As stated previously, however, the cultural aspect of transmedia storytelling is not within the scope of this work.

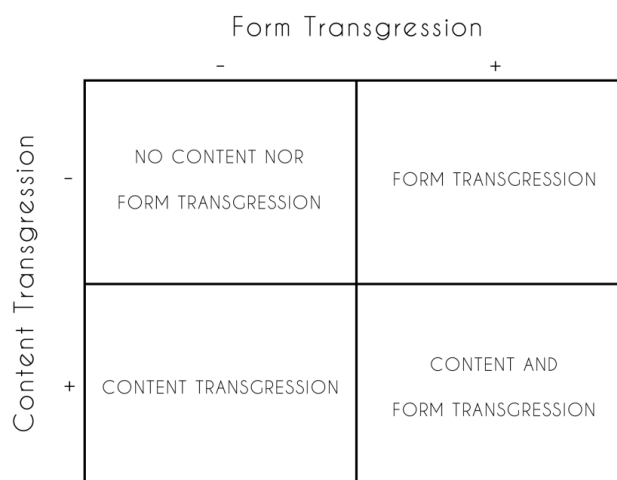


Figure 14 – A matrix of four ideal types of transmedia storytelling according to platform transgression.

From Figure 13, it is possible to derive four ideal types of transmedia storytelling through transgression characterised by differing control of form and content – form through the

narrative dimension of structure, and content through the narrative dimensions of premise and plot. I organise these types in a matrix as showed in Figure 14. Discussing types of transmedia storytelling can be done in several contexts in reference to the three subfields of this area of research. Therefore, I underline that the following is based solely upon the specific focus in this work: the area between design and narrativity in transmedia storytelling.

In Figure 14, the case where no content or form transgression exists can be argued to be of limited use to practicing transmedia storytelling. However, the concept of delivering narrative segments of the same fictional universe through multiple channels still applies to this practice. In order to further discuss the relation between interactivity and narrativity, I will consider two cases of different ideal types. Continuously rooting theoretical reflections in practical examples ensures that the analysis will move forward rather than becoming more theoretically complex. I note, though, that the use of cases should be carried out as a means for theoretical clarification and not as a basis for creating a theoretical foundation as this was previously argued to be a cause of thickening the wicked fog.

The cases used for providing such a starting point are *Quantum Break* (n.d.) and *The Matrix* (1999). The reasons for choosing these cases are: they are both examples of top-down productions and they present different approaches to handling interactivity which will become apparent when comparing them to the ideal types of Figure 14.

When searching for transmedia storytelling productions, many examples of ARGs emerge. This particular type of transmedia storytelling can be seen as an example of practicing both form and content transgression. However, since the structure of these productions encompass an inherent aim of creating a game, I choose to not include such a case as the aims of transmedia storytelling might be thought of as different than those of games.

The cases are not analysed as such but the use of interactivity in relation to the narrative as well as the transgression between representations of fictional content is unfolded for the purpose of relating it to presented theory at a later point in the work.

## The Matrix

Specifically, *The Matrix* was chosen as a case on the basis that this particular production has been mentioned in several transmedia storytelling context starting from Jenkins' publication which, arguably, founded and popularised the general conception of transmedia storytelling.

Forming the point of departure for participants, the first film presented a website and a password at the end of the credits: [whatisthematrix.com](http://whatisthematrix.com) (no longer functional – see Figure 15 for a screenshot of the website). This website invited participants to hack their way to information behind the film. While most of the content was not fictional, and as such not an expansion of the particular universe, the content did include teasers for

upcoming fictional segments such as a game, *Enter the Matrix* (2003), and an animated series, *The Animatrix* (2003).

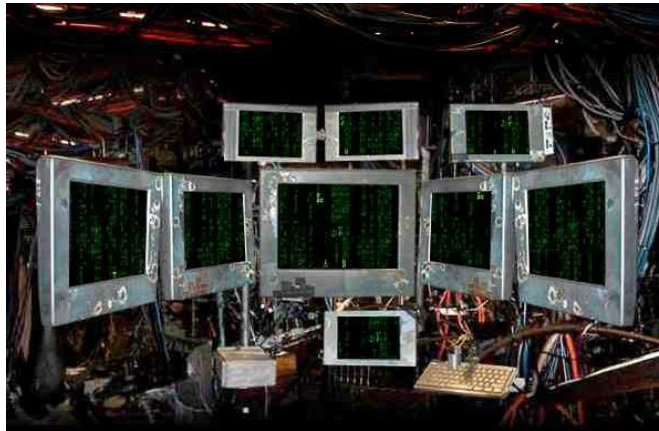


Figure 15 - A screenshot from the website [whatisthematrix.com](http://whatisthematrix.com). The screenshot was taken with the help from Wayback Machine ("Internet Archive Wayback Machine," n.d.).

In relation to the four ideal types of transgression in transmedia storytelling, it can be observed how this particular transmedia storytelling production consists of the type where no form or content transgression can be argued to occur. The film trilogy itself and the animated series are examples of the communication pattern of transmission, as defined by Bordewijk and Kaam, where the game is a combination of consultational and registrational interactivity. In general terms, this observation can be made in many transmedia storytelling cases where the patterns of communication are shifted throughout the experience. This, however, is also the case in crossmedia storytelling productions, imagine a game presenting the same storyline as a film, and thus, is not a distinct quality of transmedia storytelling.

While the expansions are interesting within themselves, the method for gathering information on them makes *The Matrix* a unique case. The transgression between fictional content in this case is characterised by an extensive riddle which was solved by a number of participants. Provided with one initial password, users were given the opportunity to hack their way to information using a binary access code and hexadecimal access codes. This riddle was given in line with the fictional universe with which participants could engage.

Murray writes on the computer in her book *Hamlet on the Holodeck*:

"The computer itself, even without any fantasy content, is an enchanted object. Sometimes it can act like an autonomous, animate being, sensing its environment and carrying out internally generated processes, yet it can also seem like an extension of our own consciousness, capturing our words through the keyboard and displaying them on the screen as fast as we can think them."

(Murray, 1997, p. 99)

This might be argued to especially be true in the context of transmedia storytelling since the object handled by participants sometimes also functions as an extension of fictional artifacts. It might be considered that the computer in itself cannot be viewed as a mental extension of a participant's consciousness since the mental capacity of that participant is not changed. However, the fundamental foundation for interaction changes according to the development of computers.

The idea that fictional content can traverse its form is not new. Murray unfolds that the border between a representational and the actual universe is subject to exploration by many practitioners within interactive storytelling (Murray, 1997, pp. 103-106). In transmedia storytelling, though, the border cannot be thought of as separated by the form of presentation, such as the smartphone separates a user from the fictional content of *Angry Birds* (2009), since the form of presentation can itself be fictional as well as real.

In relation to Janet Murray's statement of the computer becoming a mental extension of our consciousness, the fictional universe of *The Matrix* was not only presented through film, game and animated series but also in the transgression between story segments. Therefore, the extension in this case might be considered both real and fictional in the sense that participants carry out real actions but do so under the constraints of a fictional universe.

In terms of the narrative progression for each participant, the case of *The Matrix* shows that the method for constructing the transgression can be shaped in line with fictional content. However, the progression is temporarily cut off in the sense that participants are presented with for example a game trailer rather than providing more clues through which to progress towards the game.

## Quantum Break

In the case of *Quantum Break* (see Figure 16), the concept of transmedia storytelling will be handled very differently than was the case with *The Matrix*. Since the production has not yet been released, the following paragraphs have been based on information from the production company Remedy Entertainment's online descriptions ("Remedy Entertainment," n.d.).

Sam Lake, creative director of *Quantum Break*, explains on the website that the production consists of an action video game and a drama television series. The general narrative of the experience begins with a time travelling experiment failing, causing time to stop at random points and, at other points, speed forward or backwards.

In the game, participants gain control of a character with time altering powers. Throughout the gaming experience, the choices of participants affect the progressing narrative. This is made explicit in the parallel series. Certain choices unlock certain episodes of the series, connecting participant choices to the general plot. Lake explains in a teaser behind the scenes of the production: "In the game, your choices define your director's cut of the show. That's what Quantum Break is about" (Remedy, 2013).



Figure 16 – Teaser art of *Quantum Break* (“Remedy Entertainment,” n.d.).

The production will be released for Xbox One, and while it might be argued that *Quantum Break* is not a transmedia storytelling production since both game and television series is presented through this platform, I argue that the core experience of each fictional segment still remain separated from each other. The series is watched on a television as other series might be, and the game is played in the same way as any other Xbox One game.

To further elaborate on this, I consider *Heavy Rain* (2010). In this game, regular gameplay is mixed with cinematic video sequences. Here, a participant is not provided with a choice of viewing sequences as he or she pleases, nor is the video content fitted into a format such as a television series or a film. Rather, it is presented continuously as part of the game.

I return to *Quantum Break* and consider the production in relation to Figure 8, p. 38. While the delivery channel, Xbox One, is the same for both the game and the television series, the representational format for these is not. The series is presented as a regular television series and the game can be played according to standard Xbox One constraints. A similar case might be thought of where a game and a film are viewed separately on a laptop – this being the same delivery channel but containing numerous representational formats.

While the above cases of *The Matrix* and *Quantum Break* present different strategies in terms of handling the concept of transmedia storytelling, some similarities might be observed.

Both cases operate with narratives whose fictional universes are based upon reality. Fictional aspects not far from what might be imagined as possible within realistic constraints are added to the fictional universes. This narrative aspect makes coordinating participants’ transgression possible in terms of utilising existing technological artifacts within immediate grasp of participants. The threshold of moving from one fictional segment to another is lowered through this approach. The approaches vary, though, since



*The Matrix* apply fictional content to the transgression while *Quantum Break* makes the form of the transgression less visible.

Another similarity can be seen in the way a narrative is viewed as a linear concept. In *The Matrix*, a number of narratives are presented to participants through film, game and series following a more general narrative of events within the universe. The local narratives are intertwined at some points made obvious through certain characters or events. A participant is, however, able to choose segments in a random order. *Quantum Break* does not allow such an amount of control by participants, and the narrative is presented in a chronological order.

As a way of handling the complexity of the various ways control can be distributed of what is perceived to be linear, an increasing focus is given to building the fictional universe in which the linear narratives are unfolded.

The focus on the universe rather than one local narrative indicates that cases such as *The Matrix* are equally relevant to the other ideal types of transgression since stories are delivered through individual channels while bound to the same fictional universe. The previous analysis of media as physical or digital, configurable or not, delivery channels in transmedia storytelling suggests that such a scenario could be considered franchising a universe rather than creating transmedia storytelling since it could be argued that the narrative segments would not provide each other with more value than merely broadening a participant's understanding of the universe. However, the three narrative dimensions of control can be applied here as a way of clarifying this issue. In *The Matrix*, the narrative segments overlap at several points throughout the overall story. This means that the narrative segments, presumably, provide value to each other as well as the *storytelling* rather than the *story*, a point by Crawford which will be returned to later in this section.

In relation to this way of constructing a production, Ryan states that the main role of story segments is to fill plot holes in order for a user to comprehend an overarching story (Ryan, 2013a). In most cases of transmedia storytelling, these plot holes can be large or small. This can be related to Thessa Jensen and Peter Vistisen who argue that, in crossmedia contexts, the universe is expanded from a tentpole production (Jensen & Vistisen, 2012). By *tentpole*, they refer to Drew Davidson who describes the term as "...a term used to describe one big media experience that supports a lot of other related media experiences" (Davidson, 2010, p. 9). From this, it is indicated that a large story segment might function as a tentpole from which users travel forth.

However, as previous results show, control is not only distributed in relation to the plot of a narrative but also the premise and structure. Additionally, while filling in plot holes through individual narrative segments is certainly true for transmedia storytelling, this line of thought ignores the composition of platform transgression which is essential for the plot holes to even be filled. This point is closely intertwined with the interactivity in each experience since it allows for the story to develop according to both user choices and predetermined system control. Such is the case for both preplanned transmedia storytelling productions as well as productions which are carried out in instalments.

Also, while *The Matrix* might be viewed as having a tentpole in terms of the film trilogy, *Quantum Break* does not. It seems that current theory on the subject neglects parts of this complex type of storytelling. In Figure 17, I visualise how the movement from one representational format to another within the same fictional universe is considered essential in this work.

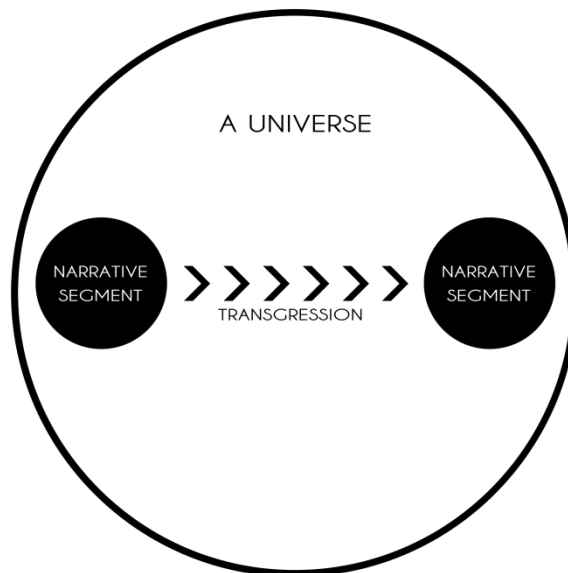


Figure 17 – Platform transgression between representational formats of narrative segments is a unique quality of transmedia storytelling. Copied and revised from (Johansen, 2013, p. 40).

Shifting the focus back to the types of interactivity as defined by Bordewijk and Kaam and nuanced by Jensen, one might consider three levels of interactivity in general storytelling contexts according to the three narrative dimensions of control potential to be distributed: premise, plot and structure. These levels can, however, consist of differing types of interactivity and, in the case of transmedia storytelling, consist of various combinations of these types. Selective types of interactivity (transmission and consultation) might be thought of as mostly appropriate in the context of control of structure since participants are able to choose the order of the narrative segments.

However, it might also be thought of in relation to plot as can be the case in interactive films where users are able to alter the direction of the narrative progression. This argument can be made under the assumption that the interaction in interactive storytelling refers only to the experience of a narrative – and is not determined by the fact that the interaction happens through an inherently interactive delivery channel such as a laptop. With this distinction, I refer to the definition of open and closed interactivity previously presented.

In transmedia storytelling, however, interactivity refers to an entire experience which might not only consist of digitally configured media but also physical media such as books. Considering this, a unique quality of transmedia storytelling might be clarified in the sense that this type of storytelling actually makes physical media interactive in terms

of the choice made by users to progress the story through a certain structure. Neither the premise nor the plot of the story is altered in this case, though.

To support this argument, I argue that, in line with Manovich's points on interactivity, it would be fallible to only consider computer-based media interactive (Manovich, 2001, pp. 55-57). As is additionally pointed out by Jensen, an "inappropriateness of definitions which are based too rigidly on specific historic technologies" exists (Jensen, 1998, p. 200). Ryan also states in her keynote talk on transmedia storytelling that "...I will not take the convergence for granted" referring to how digital delivery channels have greatly facilitated communication between an increasing number of people but might not represent the core to transmedia storytelling.

In relation to Figure 13 of user and system control of form and content, it is possible to create this type of transmedia storytelling experience by choosing to distribute control to users in terms of form while content control is handled by the system. However, a case where the content and form control is distributed differently according to each narrative segment can be imagined. As a result of this, the model as well as Figure 14 of four ideal types of transgression in transmedia storytelling might not encompass the complexity of narrative control distribution in transmedia storytelling.

In order to further develop these thoughts, I explore aspects more closely related to form and content in transmedia storytelling as a means to describing distinct qualities between interactivity and narrativity in this context.

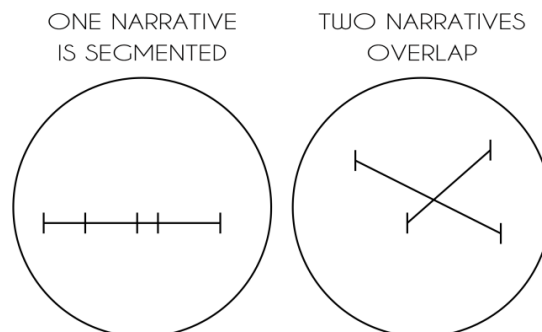


Figure 18 - Two types of top-down transmedia storytelling.

I propose to distinguish between two types of top-down transmedia storytelling – see Figure 18. The first type is related to experiences in which one narrative is delivered through multiple delivery channels. Imagine one storyline which is separated into story segments delivered individually – not necessarily in a predefined order. For the other type, imagine a number of storylines, or narratives, which overlap and together form an understanding of a sequence of events in a fictional universe. This is usually seen in cases of expanding a popular brand; *The Matrix* trilogy being an example of planning the transmedia storytelling components beforehand, though. The reason for categorising transmedia storytelling as such is elaborated below.

Based on previous results and reasons stated above, I argue that the narrative transgression between platforms is essential to transmedia storytelling since one might otherwise consider the concept equal to transfictionality. A third type of top-down transmedia storytelling could otherwise be thought of as two or more separate narratives with no overlap. To expand on this in line with the above distinction, it is possible to follow Ryan's suggestion of viewing transmedia storytelling as a subset of transfictionality in the sense that transfictionality does not necessarily entail the use of two or more delivery channels. In her article, three aspects of transfictionality are examined in relation to transmedia storytelling: *expansion* (extending the scope of an original universe), *modification* (redesigning the structure of an original universe wherein the stories are reinvented) and *transposition* (locating the main story of an original universe in a new spatial and temporal setting) (Ryan, 2013b, p. 366).

While expansion is stated to be the most common case of producing story segments, modification is also argued to be compatible with transmedia storytelling – this compatibility is, however, dependent on larger story events within the presented universe in order to maintain a certain suspension of disbelief. Transposition is considered to be incompatible with transmedia storytelling under the following reasoning that the universe is being given such a focus that a new spatial and temporal setting would not provide the necessary coherence for a transmedia storytelling experience.

Ryan points out that a paradox presents itself from these considerations that no medium, in this work delivery channel and representational format, might represent the fictional universe in the same way. As such, she argues that the concept of storyworld, in this work fictional universe, is fluent since different media cannot project the same universe.

I suggest nuancing this perspective with the following definition of transmediality by Mark J. P. Wolf:

“The notion of transmediality, the state of being represented in multiple media, suggests that we are vicariously experiencing something which lies beyond the media windows through which we see and hear it, since it posits an object that can be seen and heard through different windows, and one that is independent of the windows through which it is seen and heard, even though it exists only in mediated fashion”

(Wolf, 2012, p. 247)

I argue that these opposite optics upon transmedia storytelling is a result of a disconnection between theory and practice. The paradox presented by Ryan is, to a certain degree, agreed upon in this work for the reason also stated by Dena: “a medium is not a hollow channel through which communication occurs unaffected” (Dena, 2009, p. 58). What Wolf suggests, though, can be seen in light of creating transmedia storytelling universes which are, in a situation of creation, independent of the windows through which an audience will eventually experience them. He argues that “transmediality

implies a kind of independence for its object; the more media windows we experience a world through, the less reliant that world is on the peculiarities of any one medium for its existence” (Wolf, 2012, p. 247). Thus, he does not deny the fact that all information of a fictional universe is mediated. Rather, the settings of the fictional universe is thought of as static within the constraints and dynamics of that particular universe.

Wolf’s statement is considered true in this work since the essence of a universe does not change according to the form of the represented fictional content. The same argument, though, cannot be made in terms of each narrative segment delivered to an audience since different forms of representing these narrative segments arguably alter participants’ perception of aspects such as the personal traits and motivations of certain characters or the cause and effect of different relations in the fictional universe.

Returning to the concept of linearity of narrative, Crawford notes that a conflict exists between *interactivity* and *story* since story represents a set of data which is fixed and, thus, cannot be changed. Therefore, *storytelling* is more appropriate in this context since this term infers a process in which a user can intervene. However, the paradox can be further unfolded. In a discussion of free will versus determinism, Crawford states that while an author creates a universe with characters whose actions are predetermined, users are allowed to choose their individual path towards a victorious condition – this is stated in the context of considering interactive storytelling from a game design point of view. He arrives at the conclusion that no conflict exists between process-driven narrative and interactivity. This does not mean that users should only be allowed to change their spatial positions in an environment. They should be given the opportunity to “...make dramatically significant decisions” (Crawford, 2012, p. 54).

In this work, though, I look back upon the previous results and note that distributing control to users in transmedia storytelling cannot just be described in terms of the plot of a narrative. As has previously been unfolded, a narrative quality of transmedia storytelling can be argued to lie in a distribution of not only plot but also premise and structure.

When Crawford considers interactive storytelling, he does so in a general context where focus usually lies upon the plot of a narrative. This can be attributed to his focus upon narrative in gaming contexts where users do not alter the form of the presentation. Providing differing premises in a game context might be imagined. However, this also refers to the content and not the form of the storytelling experience.

The above leads me to arrive at Figure 13 again and the stated point of critique towards it. It can be noted that focus by both Ryan and Crawford is kept upon the content of narratives in interactive storytelling – and specifically transmedia storytelling in Ryan’s article. What, then, can be said about the form of the narrative in transmedia storytelling in the context of interactivity?

Considering the term *storytelling*, a linear progress is still imagined where a beginning, a middle and an end exist in clear terms. The complexity of distributing transmedial

interactive narrative content can be thought of in three categories, though. First, each delivery channel provides narrative content in segments. These segments can be thought of as small parts of a story or as stories themselves in reference to the two types of transmedia storytelling previously defined. Second, the delivery channels provide an impetus for participants to move towards other delivery channels – this motion being characterised as transgression in this work. Third, an overall story which represents the experience which participants have progressed through in its entirety can be imagined. Each of these three categories draw upon narrative control. However, considering what might be the functionality of these categories, the concept of transmedia storytelling becomes very complex to understand and handle.

Imagine temporality in regular linear formats as defined by Brian Richardson (2002). Calling narrative temporality “...the area in which there is still the greatest degree of general agreement among major theorists” (Richardson, 2002, p. 47), this area can still be thought of in six differing strategies such as *circular* and *antinomic* (Richardson, 2002, pp. 48-50). In transmedia storytelling, the temporal dimension of a story is not just fixed in the format chosen for each delivery channel by a practitioner. The temporality is also defined by user actions and user interactions.

In order to understand the mechanics of transmedia storytelling, the next step in this work is to consider the above theoretical discussion in the context of the system with which users interact. The definition of interactivity by Jensen founds a starting point for this discussion as it has become relevant to view the relation between form and content in transmedia storytelling when trying to clarify the relation between interactivity and narrativity, the complexity of which now unfolded.

## 4.4 Functions of Transmedia Storytelling

This section focuses upon the latter work question of this chapter, finalising and narrowing down the theoretical framework in order to be able to clarify distinct qualities. By *functions*, I refer to Figure 19 by Mathiassen et al. in which functions are represented in a space between a model and an interface. Visualised in Figure 19 and further described by Rosenstand (2011) in the context of specific user roles, this interface can be utilised by users but also be accessed by other systems. In this work, the model refers to the narrative of a fictional universe. The concept of functions by Mathiassen et al. is argued to help recognising the specific mechanics of transmedia storytelling since it represents the actions allowed by a system in terms of input and output – in other words, the constraints and possibilities.

With the previous description of the relation between the three subfields of transmedia storytelling, culture, design and narrativity, the functions represent the connection between the subfield of design and the subfield of narrativity. In this sense, it also becomes more clear why the aspect of interactivity is the core of this connection.

Note that Mathiassen et al. present an arguably positivistic point of view which is founded in evidence-based methods for studying an electronic system. This differs from the more holistic optics of this work where the analysis above showed that it might not be possible to describe transmedia storytelling from separate segments of the concept – in this case, interactivity and narrativity. Rather, transmedia storytelling is considered a phenomenon carrying unique characteristics.

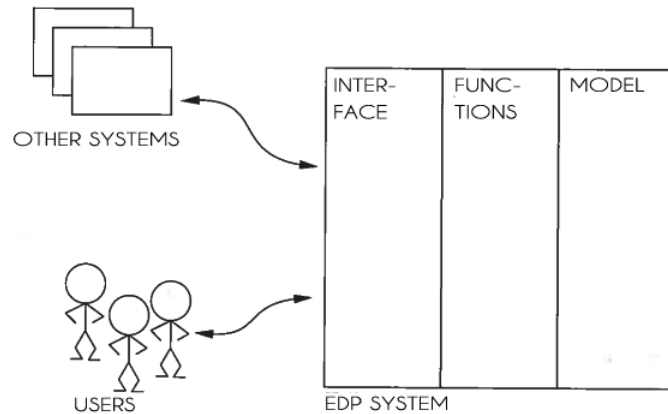


Figure 19 – A system as defined by Mathiassen et al. Figure copied and translated from (Mathiassen et al., 1993, p. 10).

Before clarifying any functions, however, the complexity of this type of storytelling is first explored more in depth. This is done to further validate the statements of the previous sections as well as to provide insight which might help shed light on which functions of transmedia storytelling might be imagined.

Initially, I look at the action role-playing video game *Mass Effect 3* (2012), both for single-player and multiplayer, which, while not as complex in terms of interactivity and storytelling as transmedia storytelling in the sense that one linear narrative can be imagined, provides users with different options in terms of story and action. The game features three modes: an action mode, a story mode and finally, an RPG (role-playing game) mode, see Figure 20.

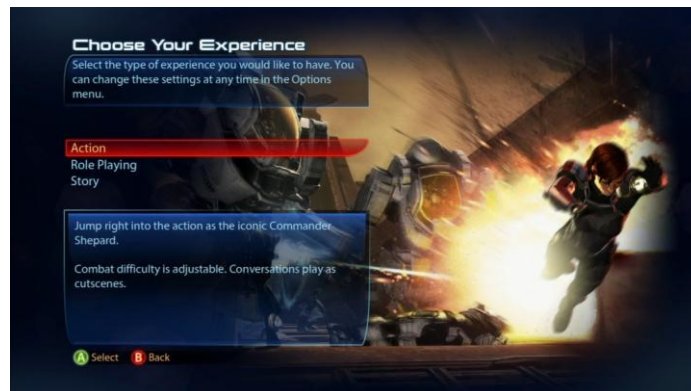


Figure 20 – One of three modes can be selected before playing the video game *Mass Effect 3*. Screenshot from (Kristine, 2012).

In action mode, the level of difficulty in the combats of the game is normal while the conversations throughout the game are automatised, making the time spent on these minimal. Opposite, story mode lowers the difficulty of the combats while making every in-game conversation manual. RPG mode combines the two other modes with a normal level of combat difficulty and manual in-game conversations. This division is interesting to consider since it is assumed that more action entails less story.

Considering the four patterns of communication defined by Bordewijk and Kaam (1986) put into the context of interactivity by Jensen (1998), transmission, consultation, registration and conversation, it seems that different types of conversations entail different narrative focuses. The RPG mode of the video game allows for a player to both experience the narrative in structured conversations within the game as well as the more open exploration of the universe. However, it might be speculated whether or not the format of *Mass Effect 3*, a role-playing video game, differs from a transmedia storytelling production since the differing formats of transmedia storytelling can provide users with different goals throughout the experience rather than providing the possibility to choose before the experience.

It seems plausible to consider the composition of interactivity and narrativity in the transgression between segments of fictional content as characterised by distinct form functionalities and content functionalities. In terms of the content, previous research clarified the transgression as a distribution of control of three narrative aspects, premise, plot and structure. To unfold functions related to form, I return to Mathiassen et al. for the reason that they, in a systematic way, explain and visualise the purpose of different types of functions in EDP systems. Note that this work also encompasses non-configured delivery channels. Nonetheless, defining a function as a resource available to users and making use of the model component of Figure 19, Mathiassen et al. has created a foundation for clarifying what exactly is the point of focus in question here.

In the figure of the general structure of an EDP system, an interface, functions and a model component exist. This model component has previously been compared to the narrative of a particular fictional segment. Following this, transmedia storytelling must consist of a number of model components – similar to crossmedia. In transmedia storytelling, however, the model components relate differently to the fictional universe than is the case with crossmedia.

Also similar to crossmedia, *The Matrix* presents multiple complete systems each with a unique set of functions. *Quantum Break*, on the other hand, presents a system with one interface but with different functions according to certain parts of the model. What can then be said in general from these seemingly different compositions?

Three parameters have been observed in terms of how to characterise the transgression between narrative segments. Figure 14 presented four ideal types from form and content transgression. Also, *The Matrix* showed how the transgression can also be carried out in relation to the fictional universe according to the mood and look of this universe.



To counter this perception of transmedia storytelling, I refer to Henry Jenkins who, in *Convergence Culture*, writes of the fictional segments: “Each franchise entry needs to be self-contained so you don’t need to have seen the film to enjoy the game, and vice versa” (Jenkins, 2006, p. 96). This view might be attributed to the fact that his analysis is based upon *The Matrix*. Jenkins focuses upon the contents of each part of this transmedia storytelling experience, and the search for more content through the online portal is shortly mentioned. However, at no point does he address the functionality of this search. Instead, he argues that the transmedia storytelling value of this production lies in its cultural activation of its participants. This is not disagreed upon in this work. However, it is indicated that the previously presented subfields of transmedia storytelling signifies which values Jenkins can unfold from his analyses.

Of the other types of transmedia storytelling discussed in this work, Jenkins writes upon his blog that some of the more heated discussions on the composition of transmedia storytelling lies within the area of ARGs (Jenkins, 2011). Mentioned at a few points up until this point, I address the discussion shortly. Jenkins notes that ARGs can be thought of as multiple texts each containing unique contributions to a narrative but also as a single multimedia text. Considering the perspective in this report that transmedia storytelling can both be created as narratives overlapping or by segmenting a single narrative, ARGs can be thought of as a subgenre of transmedia storytelling. The fact that the narrative is experienced in a gaming context might affect the progressing narrative – but a narrative still exists.

Through the above considerations, I arrive at the research question: unfolding distinct qualities between interactivity and narrativity in transmedia storytelling. In this chapter, the analysis has reached towards a number of scattered directions, arguably due to the high complexity of transmedia storytelling, which should now be gathered and structured in order to reach a useful result. It is indicated throughout the latter part of the analysis that a core quality might be found in terms of form functionalities in transmedia storytelling.





# Chapter Five

## Qualities of Interactivity and Narrativity

Chapter 4 presented an overview of types of transmedia storytelling which were then discussed according to interactivity and narrativity. Gathering the thoughts from this, I now discuss which qualities might be unfolded in this particular area of transmedia storytelling. Focus is narrowed down towards uncovering the core of transmedia storytelling in relation to interactivity and narrativity with reference to the general discussion of the phenomenon.



## 5.1 Identifying Distinct Qualities

Having created the above theoretical framework, the following step is carried out:

Identifying distinct qualities between interactivity and narrativity in relation to the theoretical framework

This part of the work focuses upon unfolding the work question formulated below primarily framed by the following sources:

1. What are distinct qualities between interactivity and narrativity within the scope of transmedia storytelling?

Primarily framed by: Toward a Transmedial Narratology (Herman, 2004), Konvergens og Nye Medier (Walther, 2005) & Genre Transgression in Interactive Works (Rosenstand, 2011)

The conceptual framework for understanding the structure of transmedia storytelling systems as presented in Chapter 5 is nuanced with Rosenstand's addition to the model of EDP systems by Mathiassen et al. based upon specific user roles in relation to simulative configured experiences (2011). While the essay by David Herman focuses on narrativity in transmedia storytelling, his analysis of narrative dependence on medium is relevant to this work as shall be discussed in the latter section of the chapter.

## 5.2 Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts

When discussing the quality of transmedia storytelling, it can be noted that a recurring phrasing is that in transmedia storytelling, the value of an experience should be higher than the sum of its individual parts – usually this notion is captured through the catchphrase “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” which can often be considered true in many contexts other than transmedia storytelling. (Phillips, 2011) (Pratten, 2011, p. 1) (Nelson, 2012) (Hoguet, 2013)

The fact that different representations provide more nuanced experiences of narrative content is not a unique quality of transmedia storytelling. However, it might be wondered whether or not the catchphrase points towards something unique in this context as it is used very often. I choose to let this thought nuance the point of reference to which I will discuss the qualities in the relation between interactivity and narrativity. An inquiring approach is still maintained as a way of continuously reflecting upon the results.

I begin this analysis by bringing forth a number of previously mentioned discussions of what is unique for transmedia storytelling in the context of interactivity and narrativity with the purpose of clearing the previously argued fog of transmedia storytelling.

The transgression between representational formats of fictional content has, in this and previous work, been argued to be a core to transmedia storytelling. Through the example

of *The Matrix*, it is illustrated that utilising existing properties of a fictional universe within the transgression, practitioners can form a meaningful foundation for participants to operate within and search for meaning. It might be argued that since the universe of *The Matrix* is founded in close proximity with our real universe, the transgression becomes even more meaningful since it allows for practitioners to use delivery channels situated in the real world but as fictional tools.

Christy Dena briefly touches upon this when she states that in the context of transmedia storytelling "... the medium (the distribution technology) itself becomes part of the message" (Dena, p. 59). It can be speculated in philosophical terms what it means when an object of a transmedia storytelling experience such as a laptop functions both as a medium in a conceptual way, bounded to a fictional universe and the real universe, as well as a form in the sense that information is structured such that potential users might interpret this information. From that distinction, discussed in the context of narrative multimedia systems by Claus Rosenstand (2002, pp. 97-99), it is implied that the fictional content delivered through a delivery channel does not stand alone as the form of the representation might additionally have both real and fictional functions.

Beyond the scope of this work, it might be valuable to consider which types of fictional content, both in terms of plot and premise, would be more meaningful to distribute to participants as it would seem that the fictional universe needs to be founded, to a certain extent, in the real universe for the structure of representation to be purposeful.

Through this discussion, however, it can be noted that a distinct quality of transmedia storytelling can be practiced by making delivery channels function as fictional artifacts operational to participants.

In terms of blending real objects and fictional artifacts, a certain episode named the "Zartman Incident" can be mentioned (Bushman, 2010). This incident happened during the campaign *The Beast* which has previously been described (Johansen, 2013). This ARG ran during 2001 and continuously required participants to analyse websites for information on the next clue. The authors of the websites were fictional characters which participants then researched. One website author, however, had left his real identity and, thus, became a suspect in a murder investigation. After a month of participants tracking all accessible information on Doug Zartman, the game designer who authored the website and was interpreted by participants to be a fictional character, Zartman left the production. (Bushman, 2010)

This incident shows that it is very much possible to blend a fictional universe with the real universe. The example also shows, however, the importance of being able to control the cultural impacts of the experience. These impacts lie beyond the scope of this work, and as such will not be further discussed here.

The quality of being able to transform real delivery channels into fictional artifacts is a potential, however, which might not always be realised. In *Quantum Break*, no focus lies upon this as an example. Therefore, the question of how the whole is greater than the sum of its parts in this particular context is still left unanswered.

A second discussion arisen in this work, p. 58, is the topic brought up by Ryan of comparing transmedia storytelling to three core components of transfictionality (Ryan, 2013b). This discussion showed that transmedia storytelling might be thought of as a subset to transfictionality as one main aim for transmedia storytelling is to have each narrative segment expand participants' understanding of a general narrative. Fanfiction was used as an example of expansion both in her ISIS Conference presentation as well as her article of the same year.

However, while Ryan's discussion provides an idea of the aims for transmedia storytelling as well as relevant descriptions of components which could be unfolded when creating such a production, it continuously revolves around subjects, such as fanfiction, which are not essential to understanding transmedia storytelling. As such, it might become increasingly difficult to spot the core of transmedia storytelling since the area surrounding it is solidified through these kinds of discussions.

A third discussion appearing throughout the uncovered literature, briefly presented in Chapter 4, is the discussion of the role of the audience in transmedia storytelling. A common denominator for the literature, which is agreed upon in this work, is that users can be viewed as participants and cocreators in many instances. Exploring the experience from a user's point of view, the distinction by Bo Kampmann Walther of observation being both an including and excluding practice provides a clue to why user choices are important to transmedia storytelling. As a metaphor, he compares the process of choosing to observe specific information to stepping through a door into a room (Walther, 2005, pp. 31-32). While the door, part of the repertoire of possible entrances to information, is what enables the observation in the first place, users are often not aware of the choice made to step through a particular door. (Walther, 2005)

In transmedia storytelling, an aim might be inferred from sources discussing user participation and cocreation in the form of participants making intentional choices to step through a number of doors in order to receive desired information, or narrative segments. It is implied that the choices can be made meaningful by making participants aware of the possible directions of their individual narrative progress. In other words, practitioners can make participants aware of the unobserved as part of what makes the observed meaningful. This further indicates that meaning between narrative segments is founded on a basis that intentional choices are dependent on knowing part of or the whole repertoire of choices.

With the above, it is not presumed that every transmedia storytelling experience should provide participants with a large array of functional representations at the same time, though. In *Quantum Break*, the choice of moving from the game to the television series is made meaningful from the content of the game – and similar in the opposite movement from television series to game. Here, meaning is provided by an array of possible choices according to the content of the experience, more specifically the plot, rather than the structure.

However, other than choices being made meaningful through the transgression between representational formats of content, this is not different than the experience of

consequences in for example video games. As such, the focus on the intentionality of a user role in transmedia storytelling is less relevant than the type of user role. Instead, the progression might be considered from a practitioner's point of view through the choices they make of how to represent fictional content.

When considering the narrative segments individually, whether they are parts of one coherent narrative or overlapping narratives, they each represent fictional content in unique ways. In *Quantum Break*, the game and the television series arguably displays characters in different ways as allowed by each representational format. As such a distinct quality lies in the fact that transmedia storytelling practitioners are able to shape the representation of fictional content according to which characteristics they desire to enhance either at certain points throughout the experience, for example in *Quantum Break*, or at certain fictional events independent of participants' temporal progress into experiencing these events, for example in *The Matrix*.

This does not only apply to the content but also the form. In reference to Chapter 3, p. 38, I consider form and content in the context of the delivery channel and representational format of fictional content rather than just the content itself. Previously described, Ryan notes that the content itself is subject to interpretation both according to the representation as structured by practitioners as well as any individual conception of certain characteristics of delivery channel and representational format as had by each participant. (Ryan, 2013b)

Furthermore, distributing this content as multiple types of representations, I argue that these representations form the interpretation of each other. In *Quantum Break*, unique qualities of the television series such as character development influence participants' perception of the same characters within the game. While this might be argued to be true to crossmedia productions as well, the narrative progress in transmedia storytelling ensures that the altered perceptions by participants are created continuously throughout new parts of the whole experience rather than merely engaging with the same fictional characters at the same points of the narrative.

In "Genre Transgression in Interactive Works" by Claus Rosenstand, four different situated user roles, learner, listener, spectator and participant, are defined from different genres of specific usage situations (Rosenstand, 2011, p. 263). These roles were discussed in previous work where it has been the conception that transmedia storytelling was only related to the simulative genre as users mostly interact with simulative narrative systems (Johansen, 2013). As such, I have referred to users as participants in this work taking into account Rosenstand's point that this distinct user role has continuously been used to frame the situation of usage in interactive works. However, it can be noted that with the above considerations of each individual type of representation contributing to the whole of an experience, the three remaining user roles play an equal part when characterising the quality of the experience of transmedia storytelling. Put in reference to the third discussion mentioned in this chapter, the user role can be argued to be relevant in terms of the type of role rather than just considering users participants and focusing on their choices.



A type of interactivity occurring through multiple channels rather than just an input and output functionality within a confined system can be imagined in transmedia storytelling. This was briefly touched upon in Chapter 4 when I stated that non-configurable delivery channels are made interactive by the entire narrative simulation. Similar to the case of *Quantum Break*, user choices related to the form, or structure, of an experience can be made to affect future progress – this type of transmedia storytelling being represented in Figure 14, Chapter 4, of the ideal types of transmedia storytelling. I visualise this in Figure 21.

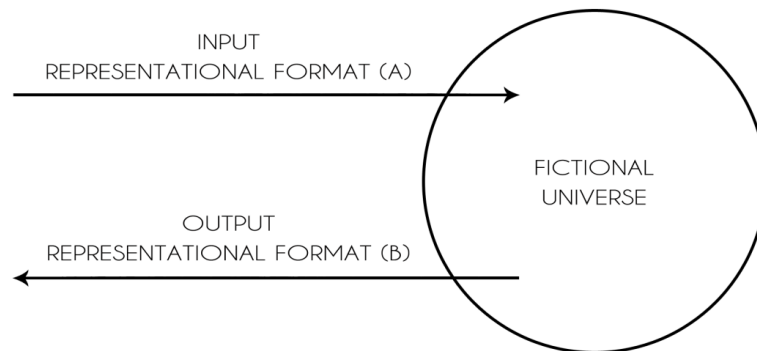


Figure 21 – Input to one representational format of fictional content can result in specific output from another representational format.

Shifting user role does not need to depend upon user choices. However, different levels of meaning characterises the transgression in terms of whether or not users make conscious decisions of being delivered one type of representation of content following another – noting that these representations might overlap in the time period of delivery. A tentative work question might be formulated from these considerations: What is the quality of shifting user roles within a transmedia storytelling experience?

While I have previously stated that each representational format has distinct qualities which are not special in a transmedia storytelling experience, these qualities arguably affect each other. As such, I return to my previous argument that each narrative segment forms participants' interpretations of the next. This can be seen as a clarification to the question asked at the end of the analysis in Chapter 4 of what form functionalities might be imagined. An example of how one narrative segment might shape another can be imagined in how fictional characters are portrayed in different representational formats – and how this portrayal defines the possible relation participants are able to form with these characters. A film might represent the characters of a fictional universe very differently than a video game. The possibility to represent content in different ways has already been stated by Ryan (2013a) and Jenkins (2006), but neither speculate further as to why and how this could be a distinct quality.

Finnemann states of media that: "...every medium and every constellation of media have a set of "distinctive" relatively invariant properties" (Own translation (Ed.)) (Finnemann, 2005, p. 34). In the context of this work, each type of representational format has its own affordances which I will refer to as specific content potential from this point.

Furthermore, each constellation or combination of representational formats of fictional content provides unique content potentials.

To support this result, I seek to unfold the relation between medium and narrative since this relation is what enables the distinct quality presented above.

## 5.3 A Relation between Medium and Narrative

First, I will describe and counter the last point of the previous section with an example. I consider a book, an unconfigured delivery channel, containing both text and images. Arguably, text and images have different affordances in representing fictional content. As such, the formats complement each other and bring value to a user's understanding of the content. However, an illustration in a book can usually be thought of as a remediation of the content already delivered through text. Thus, the whole is not greater than the sum of its parts since one type of representation does not shape the perception of the next following a narrative progress. So what if the illustration represented a narrative segment not incorporated in the text?

In this case, the same delivery channel is used but the types of representation, image and text, signify the potential information to be delivered and furthermore, establish a distinct transmedia storytelling relation characterised by the affordances of each type and the effect of those affordances on the other type.

As a second opposition, previously mentioned in relation to Ryan's analysis of similarities between transfictionality and transmedia storytelling, a relevant discussion is the discussion of whether or not narrative might even be thought of as medium-dependent – and if so, Ryan suggests that no two forms media, delivery channel in this work, can deliver narrative segments of the same fictional universe as the affordances of each delivery channel consequently constrains the distribution of fictional content to such a degree that the same fictional object might seem different in relation to individual representations. (Ryan, 2013b)

Three perspectives have been brought up in this work: Ryan (2013b), Dena (2009) and Wolf (2012). I will consider these perspectives in relation to David Herman's essay on narrative medium-dependence in order to further validate my current result of a distinct quality of transmedia storytelling being that one representational format of content shapes participants' interpretation of the fictional content from another as well as nuancing this theoretical result. The discussion of whether or not narrative is dependent of medium is relevant to this result since the argument that narrative is independent from medium would entail that no quality of presenting its segments through different representational formats exists.

In previous work on the subject of transmedia storytelling, I shortly explored the use of narrative models, mainly the three-act model, in relation to practicing transmedia storytelling. I found that the complexity of these productions did not allow for such

models to stand alone (Johansen, 2013). Herman writes on this subject that the structuralistic approach adopted by several narrative theoreticians such as Barthes, Genette and Greimas has meant that the unfolded linguistic discourses fail, to a large extent, to consider "...the complexities of larger, suprasentential units of language" (Herman, 2004). In other words, the relation between units of language, or of narrative, is left unaccounted for. As a result of his observations on the increasingly dichotomous paths of either literary narrative studies or studies of narratives in everyday settings, mainly in the form of conversations, Herman sets to initiate a synthesis of these seemingly opposing studies in the form of what he terms a transmedial narratology. This is carried out by proposing the thesis that narrative is independent from medium, proposing an antithesis that narrative is much dependent on medium and finally, creating a synthesis of these perspectives. Through this structure, it becomes possible to discuss the relations between narrative and medium which might lead to a common foundation for theoreticians currently opposing each other.

Below, Herman's discussion of the differing perspectives is shortly related to previous analyses and discussions of this work.

Of theoreticians arguing that narrative is not dependent on the medium through which it is delivered, Wolf has been mentioned in this work. This approach to understanding narrative does not presume that all aspects of a narrative can be claimed independent from its medium. Instead, a distinction is made between story and discourse, or *fabula* and *sjuzhet*, where the essential features of a narrative can be delivered through different media without being altered. In other words, when considering the form of a narrative, theoreticians consider the form of the content, what might also be considered the narrative structure, rather than the form of presentation. This can be attributed to their approach as commented on by Herman.

This view on the role of media can be related to the structure of a communication system as defined by Claude E. Shannon where the medium in this context is viewed as a channel subject to a variable degree of noise (Shannon, 1948, p. 7). However, this theory does not explore the differing representations available to produce for digitally configured media today further and, thus, only provides a basis for further discussion.

Since defining the concept of medium is an extensive discussion in itself which is beyond the scope of this work, I rely on the analysis in Chapter 3 on this subject. However, it can be noted that when Herman considers the antithesis of narrative being dependent of medium, this perspective proves to be much reliant on the semiotic distinction of types of media as presented by Ryan (2013a) in that, as an example written text affords other possibilities for delivering a narrative than silent film (Herman, 2004). Not proclaimed to this distinction of media, both Ryan and Dena presented in this work still argue that the mediated form of a narrative is different from the narrative itself.

Herman proposes that both perspectives, the thesis and the antithesis, fall short in certain ways. If a narrative is not dependent on its medium, what are the characteristics of its

telling? And if a narrative is almost to a complete extent shaped by its medium, what then makes stories recognisable across media?

For this reason, Herman proposes a synthesis which suggests that "...stories are shaped but not determined by their presentational formats" (Herman, 2004, p. 54). In this work, I refer to the narrative content as being represented rather than presented for the reason of clarifying a distinction between content as part of a system and content as delivered to users. Also, this distinction furthers the point of view that the narrative segments are shaped by the chosen format of delivery while maintaining essential properties which make the content possible to represent through any format.

Further describing synthesis, Herman states that it "...construes narratives as variably anchored in expressive media characterized by different degrees of intertranslatability" (Herman, 2004, p. 54). Mentioning a number of researchers such as Deborah Tannen and Monika Fludernik already considering spoken and written narrative as part of a continuum or scale rather than separate categories, Herman supports this result. When considering a continuum rather than categories, it might be appropriate, as is suggested by Tannen (Herman, 2004, p. 55), to think of the potential for remediating certain content. In other words, certain properties of a represented narrative easily transferred to a new medium describe the continuum of potential remediation.

As examples of intertranslatability between verbal and written narratives, the specific focus in the essay, Herman mentions the level of detail in environmental descriptions, the effect of the narrator speaking in past or present tense or the direct versus indirect quotation of fictional characters. (Herman, 2004, p. 55)

Herman's thoughts of intertranslatability and the further discussion of specific continuums between types of narrative is an initiation of building a foundation from which productions can be created. However, Henry Jenkins' point of transmedia storytelling still being in an experimental phase which cannot fully be defined from theoretical analyses suggests that such rigid structures cannot yet be made validly with no experiments of how they apply in practical contexts. In order to carry out such experiments, one might consider a set of qualifying criteria based on distinct qualities of transmedia storytelling. For this reason, I find it relevant to explore these criteria in terms of describing qualified approaches to transmedia storytelling in the following chapter.

In conclusion to this chapter, I return to Henry Jenkins' definition of transmedia storytelling in *Convergence Culture*: "A transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 95-96). Jenkins uses the phrasing that each text ideally makes a valuable contribution to the whole which in this chapter has been unfolded as each text shaping the other texts involved in the experience through distinct properties. The particular way one text might shape another is a discussion left open for further research which might be carried out in practical contexts so as to incorporate the remaining subfield of transmedia storytelling since the relation between all subfields is essential to understanding the core of transmedia storytelling.

Furthermore, Jenkins' altered definition on his blog describes how the delivery of fictional elements can be characterised by a systematic dispersal across multiple delivery channels (Jenkins, 2007). The systematic approach can now be further considered as a result of uncovering core aspects of transmedia storytelling.

For now, distinct qualities of transmedia storytelling in the context of interactivity and narrativity have been explored (the research question), making it possible to broaden the perspective by considering how to operationalise the results in a context of creation.





# Chapter Six

## Qualified Approaches to Transmedia Storytelling

A distinct quality of transmedia storytelling has been unfolded in terms of how the whole of such an experience can be considered greater than the sum of its parts. From this, I seek to explore how knowledge of this can be used to consider qualified approaches to transmedia storytelling referring to the methodical part of the presented work structure in Chapter 2. The scope of the work is opened with the purpose of discussing the results in a wider, more practical, context.





## 6.1 Towards Transmedia Storytelling Approaches

In this final part of the work, a broader perspective upon the types and qualities of transmedia storytelling is sought through unfolding the methodical aspects of the work structure:

Discussing qualified approaches towards transmedia storytelling

Through the following work question, a result minded towards a simplified and practical understanding of the theoretical discussions is aimed towards:

### 1. What are qualified approaches to transmedia storytelling?

Primarily framed by: Objektorienteret Analyse (Mathiassen et al, 1993), Kreation af Narrative Multimediesystemer (Rosenstand, 2002) & Transmedia Practice: Theorising the Practice of Expressing a Fictional World across Distinct Media and Environments (Dena, 2009)

This chapter does not seek any final theoretical conclusions for the reason that the approaches towards transmedia storytelling arguably vary much as previously unfolded by Christy Dena (2009) and as a result of the previous proposal of connecting the results to the subfield of culture through experiments in a practical context rather than continuing the theoretical discussion as proposed by Herman. From the previous chapters, a wide range of variations of the presented ideal types of transmedia storytelling can be imagined. Therefore, considerations as to how to operationalise the theoretical results from the previous chapter are made. These considerations will form the foundation for more extensive research.

The reason for incorporating the views of Rosenstand is not only his focus upon narrative multimedia systems which transmedia storytelling certainly can be argued to be a subset of, but also the way this subject is unfolded by Rosenstand according to both humanistic optics as well as computer science, or engineering, optics. This particularly nuanced perspective seeks to converge these optics which I find useful when discussing qualified methods of transmedia storytelling as the previous results in this work arose from such an approach.

## 6.2 Initial Considerations to a Qualified Process

Claus Rosenstand points out that while it is possible to identify a set of ideal types of narrative multimedia systems, these ideal types should not be seen in a hierarchical relation to each other (Rosenstand, 2002, p. 95). For this reason, the qualities discussed in the previous chapter form a foundation from which it is possible to further unfold the premises for which decisions can be made in a situation of creation in the field of transmedia storytelling rather than creating a rigid set of definitive ways of applying the qualities. The discussions until this point of the work have been narrowed down in order

to clarify the research question. For this part, the focus is opened towards a broader and more practical understanding.

It can be assumed that a production cycle within this field would, on a regular basis, consider a certain target group for the intended experience. In this chapter, however, I do not include such considerations since that would entail incorporating the cultural subfield of transmedia storytelling which should be further explored in terms of distinct qualities before such a step can be carried out. As a result of this, the discussion is still founded in theoretical considerations rather than practical experiments. This further means that the discussion should be viewed as initial considerations pointing towards such experiments as they would be necessary to validate the speculations.

Two main qualities have been asserted throughout the previous analyses. The first is the transgression between narrative segments which can either be characterised by a distribution of narrative control to either system or user and, in certain cases, defined from the constraints and possibilities of the fictional world as was the case with *The Matrix*. The second regards the potential for each narrative segment to shape the next as a result of them consisting of different properties. The second result goes beyond what might be termed the content potential of each representation since it is the relation between different types of representation rather than the types themselves. I visualise this in Figure 22.

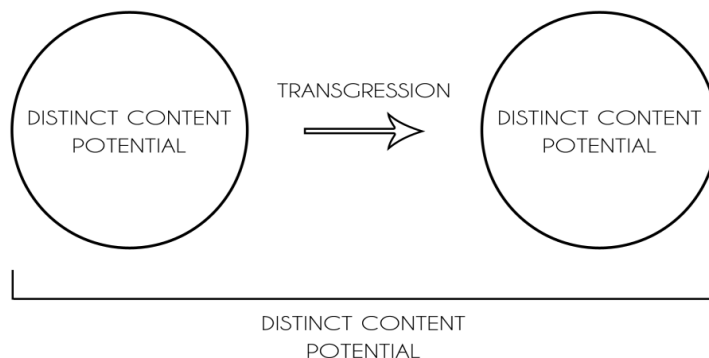


Figure 22 – Two unfolded distinct qualities of transmedia storytelling in the form of transgression and a new content potential in the relation between representational formats.

Regarding the first unfolded quality of transmedia storytelling, four ideal types have previously been described in terms of characterising the transgression through form and content. The transgression between narrative segments can be argued to be the core to what provides the relation between these segments with additional value.

In Herman's essay, a challenge is presented in the context of creation as a result of a number of practitioners attempting to fit different types of narrative segments into the same narrative model (Herman, 2004). This approach might be seen as an attempt to frame an experience in a way so as to fit the narrative segments to each other similar to pieces of a puzzle. As an example, the company Transmedia Storyteller Ltd. visualise their conception of transmedia storytelling as pieces of a puzzle which fit completely, and

they conclude that because of a “...euphoria of collecting the pieces”, the whole is more satisfying than the sum of each individual segment. (Transmedia Storyteller Ltd.)

The conception of transmedia storytelling in this example shows how the relation between narrative segments can be thought of, by practitioners, as defined from the content inside of each segment rather than as a result of the transgression between them. Following this, I draw in the second quality unfolded in the previous chapter as this quality refers to the potential possibility for content inside each segment to form the next. This entails that the unique experience is dependent upon the order of first exposure of each segment.

It seems intuitive to transmedia storytelling practitioners and theoreticians, from the example of Transmedia Storyteller Ltd. and from the sources referenced in the previous chapter, that the combination of narrative segments provides extra value to an experience. However, when reading the reasoning by Transmedia Storyteller Ltd. as to why this is so, the arguments refer to using digital technology already present in the world of the participants as well as the more easily timed delivery of narrative segments. While these points should be noted, they regard the type of delivery more than how a narrative can be supported by its form of representation.

In Chapter 5, a point was made in terms of how it is the affordances of each representation of content shaping the following representation. With this, it might be wondered if a qualified process consists of choosing specific types of representation complementing each other and how they might do so through the transgression between them?

When considering creation of transmedia storytelling a process, however, it is inferred that a set of initial choices for planning a production is inadequate since it mostly functions as a structure to the mental processes of generating ideas while not giving more thought to the following steps. As stated before, it is not the aim of this work to provide such steps since I argue that they might not be practical in all conceivable cases of transmedia storytelling. Instead, I propose to explore the complexity of these productions which can be done theoretically as an initiation.

In previous work, it was noted that the production of transmedia storytelling necessitates different optics within a production team since it encompasses various narrative functional representations. With inspiration from Rosenstand (2002, p. 134), practitioners' positions towards transmedia storytelling was indicated to be strongly defined from aesthetic rationales rather than functional rationales. This is further explored by Christy Dena (2009) who notes that the field of transmedia storytelling is very complex due to a large number of different aesthetic rationales.

The complexity of the functional rationale is not explored as well as the combination of the two. Rosenstand describes that in the situation of usage, a simulative narrative experience traverses both the functional and the aesthetic rationale – he additionally includes a normative rationale which goes beyond the actual product and, for that

reason, is not included in this work. It can be concluded from this that the functional rationale must be equally essential when compared to the aesthetic rationale while not implying an equal amount of work on each.

Furthermore, the visualisation by Mathiassen et al., representing the functional rationale, presented in Figure 19 of the components of an EDP system relates one system to other systems. This particular perspective is relevant to this work since the unfolding of the research question showed that the relation between narrative segments play an integral role to understanding transmedia storytelling. In this context, however, the relation, or transgression, between narrative segments, or separate EDP systems, is characterised by the aesthetic properties of a story or a fictional universe and, additionally, the entire system of narrative segments does not necessarily require any functional implementation.

For the overall system, though, the functional rationale might be of equal value to the aesthetic rationale when designing the architecture of the entire production since the final frame of the experience can be considered a system of narrative segments the order of which being primarily determined by participants similar to a number of interactive films or, from the perspective of this work, games but not similar in the way that each narrative segment is represented differently from the other.

Elaborating this point, the components of a system, interface, functions and model, exist for each narrative segment – with no functions for unconfigurable media. Additionally, each narrative segment is part of the system that is the fictional universe with the potential for participants, and potential artificial intelligence with the system, to make an influence.

This, however, still leaves the cultural subfield of transmedia storytelling untouched. I leave the discussion at this point since the subject might be further explored several different ways. I shortly return to these ways in the final chapter of the work where a particular future path continuously indicated towards, an approach much similar to *research through design* as proposed by Zimmerman, Forlizzi and Evenson (2007), is considered in relation to incorporating the cultural subfield of transmedia storytelling into the research.



# Chapter Seven

## Discussion

In this chapter, I consider the process of reaching the results unfolded previously. This is done in order to clarify potential needs for clarification or further validation. Also, thoughts are given to alternative ways the subject might have explored as opposed to the chosen method. A list of the uncovered results is given.



## 7.1 Reflections on Method and Process

This section seeks to enlighten the process of this work and whether or not the particular approach proved to be fruitful for unfolding the research question. Thus, I take a step back and reflect upon the nature of the conducted study.

When initiating the exploration of the specific focus of this work, I chose to frame the overall field of interest using rather than relying and building upon current theory. This was mainly due to the early information search which clarified the field of transmedia storytelling to be separated into three subfields with specific optics upon the subject; that is, culture, design and narrativity. This direction was formed throughout a process of examining current theory analytically and critically as well as wondering and questioning my own reasoning on the subject. Initially, this lead me to consider transmedia storytelling a wicked problem since the uncovered litterature pointed towards many directions of what might be considered the core to this subject.

In order to describe the directional shift which occurred next, the terms of *theory* and *theoria* as discussed by Finn Thorbjørn Hansen (2014) can be used. Where the theory uncovered during the work founded the initial point of focus, what Hansen terms “the voice of the subject”, a movement towards *theoria*, termed “the personal voice” by Hansen, meant that it was both possible to analyse and discuss relevant theory as well as experiment with subjective impulses and intuitive ideas (Own translation (Ed.)) (Hansen, 2014, p. 39). Consequently, I could conclude that transmedia storytelling is not a wicked problem but rather a subject covered in a thick fog of opposing optics.

As a result of this, the approach towards the research question was to consider it from a basis which took into account current oppositions within transmedia storytelling and initiated the process of moving towards transmedia storytelling as a separate phenomenon rather than a wicked theoretical problem. The process can be viewed as a constant interaction between the two approaches of theory and *theoria* which consequently lead the work towards the specific theoretical contribution.

As a point of critique, the method used for unfolding the research question rendered the unfolded theory in the initial information search superfluous to a large extent since only publications discussing transmedia storytelling in theoretical terms at the core could be usefully incorporated – these include (Jenkins, 2007), (Dena, 2009) and Ryan (2013b).

Additionally, since the personal voice of each theoretician is arguably different, it might be wondered if the work had been lead in another direction given another researcher. To accommodate for such flaws, I established my individual approach towards research in general as a prerequisite for continuing towards formulating a research question. Since it is arguably not possible to remove the researcher from research, especially within humanistic subjects, I find it useful in an academic context to instead clarify my position. Also, the incorporated theories represent fundamental research within the field of

interest to a large extent which is an additional attempt to ascertain the scientific validity of the work.

## 7.2 Reflections on Results

In this section, I discuss the contribution of this work in relation to the aimed field of interest, transmedia storytelling. The contribution is considered both in terms of the methodological approach towards the research as well as the specific theoretical results.

Since the method of the work has been elaborated in the previous section, it will not be examined thoroughly here. Rather, it can be noted that an unfolding of the research question became obtainable as a result of not considering the extensive layers of transmedia storytelling of design methods or rigid guides to specific technological media platforms. Therefore, I consider the method a specific contribution in itself as it is indicated that the approach to the theoretical aspects of transmedia storytelling could be carried out with the purpose of uncovering general facts rather than context-specific suggestions.

Of specific theoretical results, this work has resulted in the unfolding of the relation between the subfields of design and narrativity. In this relation, it was hypothesised that specific mechanics could be clarified in the format of unique qualities of transmedia storytelling.

A number of qualities were discussed throughout the work leading to the final core quality in the relationship between interactivity and narrativity. These qualities were similar in the fact that none could be viewed as applicable to all cases of transmedia storytelling. To sum up the unfolded unique opportunities for transmedia storytelling, three can be mentioned.

- The possibility to make non-configurable media part of an interactive narrative even though they have no inherent interactive properties themselves.
- The possibility to shape content to specific representational formats.
- The potential for delivery channels to function both as fictional artifacts as well as mediators of fictional content.

The second quality is briefly touched upon by Henry Jenkins on his blog (2007) but not in any uncovered peer-reviewed literature while the third was made explicit in the case of *The Matrix* where participants were given the possibility to simulate hacking their way to information – a type of action in line with the fictional universe.

While the listed qualities each represent aspects not necessary to transmedia storytelling, they are listed here since the analysis shedding light on them brought the work in the



direction of the final clarification of the core quality between interactivity and narrativity in transmedia storytelling.

The relation between the representational format and the fictional content characterises the three potential qualities and indicate that the core quality can be found in a similar relation. At the same time, it has been argued that the transgression between delivery channels is essential to transmedia storytelling. With these considerations and with the indication in Chapter 4 that form functionalities might be a core aspect, it could be discussed whether a distinct quality could be found in the relation between representational formats as a consequence of the transgression. This cleared the way for uncovering a unique content potential in transmedia storytelling which I consider a step in the direction of clarifying the mechanics of transmedia storytelling.

Being a theoretical contribution, the result of there being a currently unclarified content potential in transmedia storytelling can be further studied and verified through different paths in order for it to contribute to practical contexts. It might be asked: How is the relation between distribution of a narrative and choice of functional representation of that content characterised?

David Herman presented an approach of uncovering the intertranslatability of narrative properties for different forms of representation, cf. Chapter 6. While such properties are useful to clarify, the amount of them renders such a study difficult to conduct in terms of determining what the core can be defined from. An almost unlimited amount of properties can be imagined and, for that reason, it is proposed in this work that other approaches should be considered.

Of other approaches, it is suggested in the previous two chapters that further research might be carried out as practical experiments. However, where Herman's approach focused on the narrative content to be distributed, the same challenge can be imagined here in the form of the continuously expanding market for delivery channels. Therefore, it can be speculated whether or not it would be valuable to define practical experiments from the four ideal types of transgression in transmedia storytelling, cf. Chapter 4. This way, the results of the experiments are not dependent on the choice of delivery channel, and the narrative properties can be discussed in more general terms.

Of practical considerations, the previous chapter presented current reflections which might also be of value to further research through practical experiments. In line with that, it might be valuable to consider if the quality of transmedia storytelling can be partly determined by unique representational formats complementing each other and thereby create a larger content potential in general.

It can also be wondered whether or not different representations can vary too much and create a gap between narrative segments rather than enhancing the experiential flow of content through transgression. In other words, the following theoretical, methodical and technological questions present themselves, accepting the assumption that the new

uncovered distinct content potential for transmedia storytelling is dependent on certain combinations of representations.

- What is the relation between the content potential and the combination of representational formats?
- In which ways do the combination of representational formats and the content potential correlate?
- Which combinations of representational formats facilitate certain emergences of content potentials?

Finally, an organisational question might be asked as a result of wondering how to operationalise the above.

- How can the creation of transmedia storytelling be organised from the basis of the relation between content potentials and representational formats?

These questions point towards the direction of further research which is further expanded upon in Chapter 9.



# Chapter Eight

## Conclusion

In this chapter, I provide closing remarks to this work. The specific contributions are collected and reflected upon shortly.



## 8.1 At the End of the Line

Initiating any work of art, it is almost never clear which outcome will present itself. Writing a master's thesis can be compared to composing a piece of art such as a symphony – in theory, certain notes fit well together. In order to be innovative, however, it is at times necessary to experiment with parts of an object of interest and put them back together in new ways which did not at first seem logical.

Though I am no longer five years old, I still sought to pick apart what has been considered static knowledge within the field of transmedia storytelling, and I consider the result an initiation of forming invisible wings for further research.

The field of research in this work has been transmedia storytelling with the point of departure being reflections on previously conducted semester projects as well as wondering whether or not the subject of transmedia storytelling might be considered a storytelling phenomenon separate from other types of emergent narrative formats.

Of specific contributions from this work, transmedia storytelling has been examined from the following research question:

What are the distinct qualities between interactivity  
and narrativity in transmedia storytelling?

This question has been examined through a theoretical analysis with specifically assigned work questions leading each stage of the work as a result of an inquiring approach to the subject. The result from the analysis was a clarification of what might be considered a distinct content potential for transmedia storytelling as well as reflections on how to operationalise this.

The contribution has been uncovered, though, by only considering top-down approaches to transmedia storytelling, cf. Ryan's distinction initially presented in Chapter 1 and further discussed in Chapter 2. The complexity of the results might increase if bottom-up approaches were to be included. This could be further explored in future research.

The approach to unfolding the subject of interest has been to theoretically unfold aspects of a subject within the sphere of design rather than researching it within the design practice. This method is also considered a contribution of the work because the initial overview and framing of the field directed the work towards clarifying misconceptions and potentially uncovered areas. However, this also means that some phenomenological aspects of the work could have been more thoroughly explored. I view this as one of a number of possible paths for further research.





# Chapter Nine

## Broadening the View

In this chapter, I put the results into perspective in two regards. The chapter presents considerations beyond the formulated research question. Additionally, the results are explored in a future perspective. Finally, I collect thoughts on how to approach further research in the subject – this includes further validation of current results as well as how to operationalise the results and build upon them.





## 9.1 Expanding the Landscape

In this chapter, I present expanding remarks on the work presented in the previous chapters. These remarks cover the following questions:

2. **What are the consequences of viewing the current results in the context of the future?**
3. **How can the current results be supported and further built upon?**

The first question aims to test the theoretical results by putting them into a context of future technology due to a presumable dependence of content potentials on representational formats. In terms of subjects such as artificial intelligence and immersive displays, the concept of an EDP system and the possibilities for narrative engagement might change. In Gartner's 2013 Hype Cycle, a report evaluating the emergence of a vast number of technologies, focus is held on the relation between humans and machines (Gartner, 2013).

The interest in wearable user interfaces is currently expected to peak in around five to ten years making them a subject relevant to discuss in relation to computer-mediated experiences. Virtual reality, on the other hand, is expected to reach a certain stage where it is no longer overhyped but rather productive in the same period of time. With increasingly better performing artificial intelligence, I find it relevant to explore the thought of how an artificial intelligence, or virtual deity, might contribute to transmedia storytelling and, also, how the results of this work might shed light on such experiences. Following this discussion, the second question addresses a possible path on how to support the current results and expand them. Several paths might be imagined, a number of which already shortly presented in Chapter 7. Due to that presentation, I only seek to further develop the suggestions of that chapter.

To both questions, no conclusive answers are sought. Rather, I seek to challenge current results and explore current considerations on how to proceed.

## 9.2 Results in Future Perspective

In 1992, Marie-Laure Ryan published *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* which, among other contributions, converges perspectives from storytelling with perspectives from artificial intelligence. Additionally, an underlying presumption for the work might be argued to be that the opposing schools of Computer Science and the Humanities complement each other. Another theoretician who provide a similar approach to the subject of storytelling is Janet Murray. Murray describes her anticipation of a new kind of storyteller, "...one who is half hacker, half bard" (Murray, 1998, p. 9). Being a programmer of profession, Murray herself also represents the convergence of the two mentioned schools.

This, as well as the reasons stated in the previous section, is why I find artificial intelligence a relevant subject in relation to this work. In order to elaborate on this, I will shortly account for my individual perspective on the subject based upon a thorough review by Stephen Lucci and Danny Kopec (2013).

Described by Lucci and Kopec, an essential question to artificial intelligence has been proposed and formulated by Alan Turing (1950, p. 433): “Can machines think?”. While it can be noted that the ability to think and being intelligent is different from each other, intelligence can be thought of as efficient thinking – not implying that since computers can calculate faster, they must also be more intelligent. (Lucci & Kopec, 2013)

In order to compensate for the insufficient distinction between thinking and intelligence, Lucci and Kopec lean towards a definition of artificial intelligence stating that it “...is the science of making machines do things that would require intelligence if done by man” (Lucci & Kopec, 2013, p. 6). For the reason that the work by Lucci and Kopec encompasses many different views on the subject, I find it valid to use the perspective presented by them.

With the above, I find the subject of artificial intelligence relevant in terms of broadening the perspective upon transmedia storytelling since a number of consequences related to how configured systems can be conceptualised can be imagined to exist.

Undoubtedly, further development of artificial intelligence will change the conditions of a concept such as interactivity. The definitions of interactivity as incorporated to this work mainly regard a process between a user and a system. However, should intelligent configured systems come to exist, would it also be correct to consider a process between two systems interactive under the same premises?

This particular question lies beyond the scope of this work but presents an abstract aspect of artificial intelligence which might change according to technological standards. I return to the previously discussed results with the purpose of incorporating the concept of further developed artificial intelligence through aspects more directly relatable to transmedia storytelling.

In the case of *The Matrix*, the transgression between narrative segments was characterised as one ideal type of transmedia storytelling where no narrative form or content was embedded. Instead, the transition phase of the experience was created so that participants were allowed to remain in the state of mind of the fictional universe. Of current information available on *Quantum Break*, the transgression between the game and the television series is not created with any purpose of maintaining an immersive state within the audience. Countering this, the transition phase is shorter than is the case with *The Matrix*, making the shift less of a break from the narrative.

Even though I categorise types of transgression into ideal types, it seems that an aim for the transgression might lie in shaping it with the purpose of not creating a break in the narrative experience except as an artistic practice of making participants reflect upon the content potential such as the concept of *verfremdung* by Bertel Brecht (“Verfremdung,” n.d.). This might be why examples of transmedia storytelling can mostly be found in the

form of alternate reality games where participants, as well as the fictional universe, depart from the real universe, thereby more easily creating the illusion of staying within the fictional universe during transgression.

I imagine two paths for shaping the transgression with the above described aim. One path can be explored in relation to artificial intelligence. The other will be returned to later in this section. Examples from video games where a certain choice alters the outcome of fictional events exist. For transmedia storytelling, a core quality lies in the transgression. Artificial intelligence could play a significant role to adapting transgression similar to adapting content represented through different delivery channels according to actions by participants. If *Quantum Break* allowed for the transgression between representational formats of content to adapt according to the choices participants make within the video game, the experience might be less segmented. The user roles of *Quantum Break* might additionally become less of a conscious position that users take if the transgression was made in such a way that made the shift itself meaningful.

While the question of whether or not machines are able to think is not directly relevant to the above thoughts, Alan Turing's way of considering the possibilities for configured simulations can also be related to transmedia storytelling (Turing, 1950). Where I apply the properties of artificial intelligence directly to the above, this line of thought proposes a more abstract use of the subject through the Turing Test.

If the hypothesis of an aim of transmedia storytelling being to simulate a fictional universe to an extent that it seems real is correct, then the idea of a Turing Test can be applied. Considering transmedia storytelling in relation to Mark J. P. Wolf's statement of delivery channels being windows to a fictional universe, the fictional universe must exist separate from the system representing it. Similarly, the Turing Test proposes that a computer mimics human behaviour in order to create the illusion to an interrogator questioning the computer that this human exists.

In two previously mentioned semester projects, the same approach towards computer graphics was taken in the form of creating virtual scenes which simulated reality to the closest extent possible. For those particular projects, Marvin Minsky's definition of telepresence was used – this was described in the initial chapter of this work. In another work, though, Minsky additionally hypothesises that "...an individual's state of mind can be explained as a function of which [a] subset of agents are active at any point in time" (Lucci & Kopec, 2013, p. 546). With Kurzweil's predictions of a mid-century point in time where the brain can be successfully implemented in hardware (given that the interaction between agents in Minsky's explanation can be clarified), I find the way of considering artificial intelligence particularly comparable to transmedia storytelling. In transmedia storytelling, a user or a secondary system can be thought of as agents between which an either system-driven or user-driven interaction can be imagined to occur.

In the case of *The Matrix*, the thought of a system successfully configuring another system, or simulating a fictional universe, is especially interesting because a core basis of the fictional universe lies in the fact that computers simulate a universe.

With transmedia storytelling, it is stated by a number of theoreticians, presented in Chapter 4, that focus for this type of storytelling should lie upon the universe rather than a single story. The usual argument is that expansion in a future production perspective is easier and more meaningful when having established the constraints and possibilities of a universe inhabited by certain characters rather than only having created an insight to the universe from a particular perspective of one story.

Following this trail of thought, the comparison between artificial intelligence and transmedia storytelling can be further unfolded in the sense that a secondary reality, or fictional universe, might be simulated to such a degree that we might understand this added reality as a reality within reality. This fits with the previously mentioned thought that an increase in departing from the real universe means an increase in meaningfulness for participants. Bo Kampmann Walther's perspective of distinguishing between what is observed in a certain situation and what is excluded from observation through that choice can nuance this argument with the analogy of choosing to step through a particular door and forgetting that the experience of the subsequent room was dependent on that door (Walther, 2005, p. 32).

This particular point relevant to transmedia storytelling is unfolded by Ezra Alexander (2013) who discusses the migration of properties of fictional characters between what is referred to as media – in this work representational formats. The point of departure in the work is studying the adaptation of a character by comparing it to a real persona.

With predictions of a future technological singularity (Lucci & Kopec, 2013, p. 547), I find this to be a subject which could be further expanded upon in terms of how the perspectives converge and might contribute to each other.

This leads me to the second path which can be imagined to shape the transgression in a future perspective. While I argue that departing from the real universe makes the transgression more meaningful, a theoretical case of two universes whose dimensions of meaning are in no way related might be imagined in relation to the development of innovative immersive displays. I underline that this case represents a philosophical border which might not be realistic since, presumably, constructed meaning can only stem from the horizon of the person constructing it – inevitably anchoring it in reality.

Assuming that the entire experience is framed through the use of such displays since the transgression would be equally broken if the glasses, as an example, were only required in the time between narrative segments, the possibility for creating a virtual universe not necessarily coupled with reality can be imagined. This case, of course, represents a development which might not exist since every consideration with a practitioner is anchored in reality. However, a narrative break could also be carried out purposely with an aim of providing participants with thoughts similar to the above discussion of reflecting upon the concept of reality, cf. the mentioning of the concept of *verfremdung* previously in this chapter.

Shaping the transgression through immersive displays such as Google Glasses or other head-mounted display systems arguably alters the unique content potential for a transmedia storytelling experience in referral to the results of this work. In order to determine in which way, further research should be carried out.

Of other possibilities when incorporating immersive displays into a transmedia storytelling, the role of physical objects handled by participants as fictional artifacts could be further exploited. Creating an illusion of being able to interact with fictional content at the same level as interacting with real objects poses an interesting philosophical discussion which could be further explored in future research.

This leads to the next section since utilising such aspects of the experience requires the situation of usage to be further explored. As briefly touched upon in Chapter 4, a distinct quality might also be imagined between the subfields of design and culture. A starting point for further research might lie here.

## 9.3 Further Research

In order to further operationalise the results of this work, I propose in Chapter 6 and 7 that practical experiments within the boundaries of the ideal types clarified in Chapter 4 might be carried out for reasons outlined in those chapters respectively. This would entail an initial step of incorporating the third subfield of culture and relating this subfield to current results.

To elaborate, the situation of usage in transmedia storytelling could be analysed with the purpose of linking the subfields and creating a scientifically supported and relevant starting point for research within the field of transmedia storytelling presumably in an elaborated format of the model in this work of the three overlapping subfields.

Pointed out by Claus Rosenstand, a distinction between an *ideal experience* and a particular *user experience* is relevant as to why the situation of usage should be explored to as high a degree as the situation of creation (Rosenstand, 2002). In this work, the situation of creation has been the focus since the subfields of design and narrativity mostly relate in terms of how practitioners operationalise narrative elements. Exploring the boundary between an ideal transmedia storytelling experience and a particular user experience will arguably be useful when determining how to operationalise theoretical results – both of this work and of other relevant literature.

The initial hypothesis presented in the introductory chapter of this work stating that the lack of a common frame of reference in terms of the mechanics of transmedia storytelling has been explored through an information search which has initially supported the statement. In further work, this hypothesis can maintain the work to the core of the research since it focuses on the lack of this core.



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# Appendix 1 – Information Search

The following is a collection of the uncovered literature within the field of transmedia storytelling specifically. The literature, 32 publications, was uncovered throughout a process of searching Google Scholar, ProQuest Research Library, Academic Search Premiere and SCOPUS, cited works by Henry Jenkins and Marie-Laure Ryan as well as online book stores such as Amazon and Ebay. It is not assumed that this list is definitive. However, it is assumed that a broad selection of core literature within the field has been uncovered.

Selecting the specific publications presented below has been carried out from the premises of the publication being either peer-reviewed or written by a transmedia practitioner with at least one executed production.

The sources are divided into four categories: Narrativity, Design, Culture and Hybrids. These categories are created with the purpose of clarifying the optics from which the publications have been written – the reason for this being unfolded in Chapter 1. The relevance of the publications in relation to this work is discussed in Chapter 2.

Note that the works have been organised according to publication year rather than alphabetically in order to clarify possible relations between publications as well as the progress of the field.

I provide a short comment to each subfield after listing the uncovered publications with the aim of establishing boundaries.

## Narrativity – 9 Sources

Herman, D. (2004). Toward a Transmedial Narratology. In: Ryan, M.-L. (ed.), *Narrative across Media: The Languages of Storytelling*. University of Nebraska Press.

Long, G. A. (2007). *Transmedia Storytelling: Business, Aesthetics and Production at the Jim Henson Company*. Kenyon College.

Scolari, C. A. (2009). Transmedia Storytelling: Implicit Consumers, Narrative Worlds, and Branding in Contemporary Media Production. *International Journal of Communication*, 3, 586-606.

Richardson, B. (2010). Transtextual Characters. In Eder, J., Jannidis, F., & Schneider, R. (Eds.), *Characters in Fictional Worlds: Understanding Imaginary Beings in Literature, Film, and Other Media* (pp. 527-541). De Gruyter.

Alexander, B. (2011). *The New Digital Storytelling: Creating Narratives with New Media*. Praeger.

Stackelberg, P. von (2011). *Creating Transmedia Narratives: The Structure and Design of Stories Told across Multiple Media*. State University of New York.

Wolf, M. J. P. (2012). *Building Imaginary Worlds: The Theory and History of Subcreation*. Routledge.

Alexander, E. (2013). *Transmedial Migration: Properties of Fictional Characters Adapted into Actual Behaviour*. Stockholm University.

Ryan, M.-L. (2013b). Transmedial Storytelling and Transfictionality. *Poetics Today*, 34(3), 361-388.

## Comments

The publications within this field can be further subcategorised into four groups studying transmedia storytelling through differing approaches.

The first group concern Herman (2004), Scolari (2009) and Alexander (2013) who discuss the migration or intertranslatability of narrative properties as well as the role of semiotics in the context of transmedia storytelling. Where Herman and Scolari both present general considerations, Scolari does carry out a case analysis on the franchise behind the television series *24* (2001-2010). Alexander presents a new way of considering the migration of properties of fictional characters from a representation of fictional content to reality.

The second group is represented by Richardson (2010), Alexander (2011), Stackelberg (2011) and Wolf (2012). These publications each present structures for either creating a fictional character, a story or a universe for transmedia storytelling – note, though, that Richardson's contribution regard transtextuality rather than just transmedia storytelling. This note is further explored by Ryan (2013b) in the final uncovered article of this subfield in which she compares transmedia storytelling to elements of transfictionality. Long (2007) present ten key concepts to further exploration of transmedia storytelling – presumably from a future practical point of view.

## Design – 9 Sources

Klastrup, L., & Tosca, S. (2004). Transmedial Worlds – Rethinking Cyberworld Design. *Cyberworlds*, 409-416. IEEE.

Miller, C. H. (2008). *Digital Storytelling: A Creator's Guide to Interactive Entertainment*. Focal Press.

Bernado, N. (2011). *The Producer's Guide to Transmedia: How to Develop, Fund, Produce and Distribute Compelling Stories Across Multiple Platforms*. Beactive Books.

Giovagnoli, M. (2011). *Transmedia Storytelling: Imagery, Shapes and Techniques*. lulu.com.

Pratten, R. (2011). *Getting Started in Transmedia Storytelling: A Practical Guide for Beginners*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

Phillips, A. (2012). *A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling: How to Captivate and Engage Audiences Across Multiple Platforms*. McGraw-Hill.

Spaulding, E. (2012). *Transmedia Storytelling: Principles, Practices & Prototypes for Designing Narrative Experiences with the Audience*. Carnegie Mellon University.

Dowd, T., Niederman, M., Fry, M., & Steiff, J. (2013). *Storytelling across Worlds: Transmedia for Creatives and Producers*. Focal Press.

Spaulding, E., & Faste, H. (2013). Design-Driven Narrative: Using Stories to Prototype and Build Immersive Design Worlds. *Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems*, 2843-2852. ACM.

## Comments

Within this subfield, a large number of publications come from transmedia storytelling practitioners. These include Miller (2008), Bernado (2011), Pratten (2011), Phillips (2012) and Dowd, Niederman, Fry and Steiff (2013) – note that the authors of the last publication also include professors at Columbia College Chicago. This type of publication is mostly formed as sets of steps towards producing transmedia storytelling, including economic aspects in some publications.

The two publications by Spaulding and Faste (2012) (2013) include a master's thesis and a publication further developing the results from the thesis. They provide a structure for designing prototypes for case studies on transmedia storytelling from an interaction design point of view.

Klastrup and Tosca (2004) present a design challenge for transmedia storytelling practitioners in terms of designing a fictional universe with which users can meaningfully interact.

Lastly in this subfield, Giovagnoli (2011) provides a large set of guidelines and relevant reviews of theory on transmedia storytelling directed towards designing such an experience. It should be mentioned, however, that the publication differs from the literature provided by practitioners in that the theoretical analyses are more thorough and abstract.

## Culture – 11 Sources

- Jenkins, H. (2006). *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York University Press.
- Bolin, G. (2007). Media Technologies, Transmedia Storytelling and Commodification. In: Storsul, T., & Stuedahl, D (ed.), *Ambivalence towards Convergence*, 237-248. Nordicom.
- Dena, C. (2008). Emerging Participatory Culture Practices Player-Created Tiers in Alternate Reality Games. *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 14(1), 41-57.
- Evans, E. (2008). Character, Audience Agency and Trans-Media Drama. *Media, Culture and Society*, 30(1), 197-213.
- Perryman, N. (2008). Doctor Who and the Convergence of Media. *The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 14(1), 21-39.
- Lemke, J. (2009). Multimodal Genres and Transmedia Traversals: Social Semiotics and the Political Economy of the Sign. *Semiotica*, 173, 283-297.
- Evans, E. (2011). *Transmedia Television: Audiences, New Media, and Daily Life*. Taylor & Francis.
- Beddows, E. (2012). *Consuming Transmedia: How Audiences Engage with Narrative across Multiple Story Modes*. Swinburne University of Technology.
- Jensen, T., & Vistisen, P. (2012). En Opdagelsesrejse ud i De Sociale Medier: I Sporene på Sherlock. *Akademisk Kvarter*, 4, 291–306.
- Konzal, A. W. (2012). Entertainment Architecture: Constructing a Framework for the Creation of an Emerging Transmedia Form. *Cultural Science Journal*, 5(2), 120-152.
- Marwick, A., Gray, L. M., & Ananny, M. (2013). “Dolphins Are Just Gay Sharks”: Glee and the Queer Case of Transmedia As Text and Object. *Television and New Media*, 1-21. doi: 10.1177/1527476413478493

## Comments

The publications within the last subfield, culture, can be divided into two groups. One group dives into the social networks of transmedia storytelling including Henry Jenkins’ perspective focused on convergence (2006). The second group studies audience behaviour from different angles such as participatory culture, engagement and narrow subjects such as homosexuality.

## Hybrids – 3 Sources

Aarseth, E. (2006). The Culture and Business of Crossmedia Productions. *Popular Communication*, 4(3), 203-211.

Dena, C. (2009). *Transmedia Practice: Theorising the Practice of Expressing a Fictional World across Distinct Media and Environments* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Sydney.

Selvadurai, V., & Nielsen, R. N. (2012). *Creating a Transmedia Experience*. Aalborg University.

### Comments

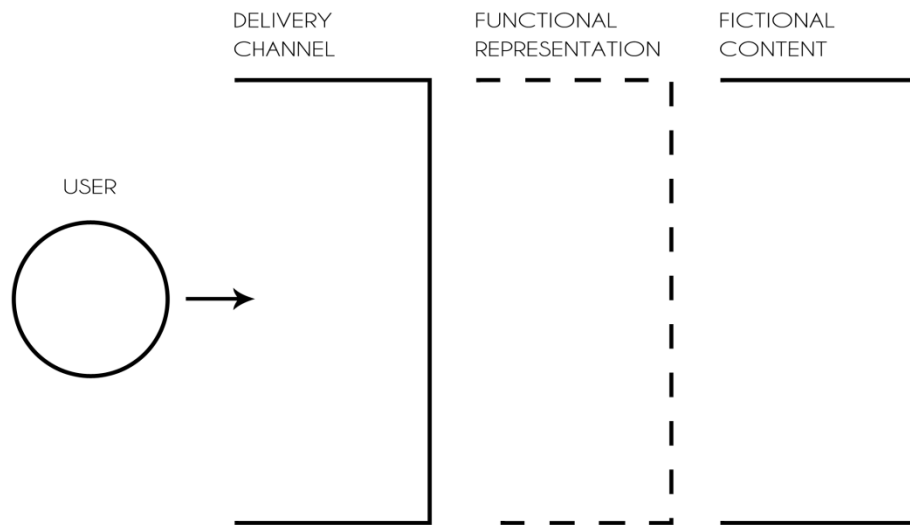
While Aarseth's article (2006) is stated to regard crossmedia, case examples such as The Matrix as well as the discussion on how the same content fit onto different platforms indicates that the work might also be relevant to transmedia storytelling. I consider this article a specific contribution to the relation between the subfields of culture and design.

The comprehensive doctoral dissertation by Christy Dena (2009) can be considered a hybrid of all three subfields. The work is addressed to practitioners and covers aspects of both narrativity, design and culture. The lens through which transmedia storytelling is studied is stated to be transmedia practice.

The final publication in this category is the master's thesis by Selvadurai and Nielsen (2012) which analyses the potential of transmedia storytelling through theory of alternate reality games. The work presents a practical guidemap for creating a transmedia storytelling experience.



## Appendix 2 – Approaching Transmedia Content



In this appendix, I discuss the validity of the above model presented in Chapter 3. This is done through a connotation analysis of five cases which each differ in terms of the structure of how fictional content can be segmented and distributed.

The model shows a simplified case of a user approaching fictional content through a delivery channel. In transmedia storytelling, the action of engaging with narrative segments differs in terms of how the actual architecture of media platforms and fictional content is constructed.

The model does not visualise the relation between narrative segments. Rather, I aim for it to clarify what constitutes as transmedial which is more easy to define when having unfolded the *medium* in itself.

### Case 1: One Delivery Channel – Multiple Representational Formats

In this case, a single configurable delivery channel such as a smartphone or a laptop might be imagined to be configured with a number of functional representations. As an example, the smartphone might be configured to contain a number of applications while also being configured to represent websites. In this case, the delivery channel is the smartphone, the functional representation is the applications as well as the browser. The fictional content is distributed to users through these representational formats and further through the smartphone. The same case can be imagined in relation to a laptop or a tablet.

### Case 2: A Combination of Configurable and Non-Configurable Delivery Channels

An example of combining non-configurable delivery channels with configurable delivery channels can be observed in the case of *The Matrix* (1999) where the story was presented

through film, animated series and a video game – the delivery channels being the screen in the theater, the television through which the series could be broadcasted and the computer on which the game was installed.

The representational formats in this case were the formats of film, television series and video game which shaped the content differently.

### Case 3: Multiple Non-Configurable Delivery Channels

While the concept of transmedia storytelling is primarily perceived as a type of storytelling utilising configurable delivery channels to an extensive degree, it is conceivable that only non-configurable delivery channels could be used for a particular experience.

In this case, the representational format and the delivery channel can be the same. However, it can be noted that, as an example, a film can be watched from a theater screen or through a television. The cases where delivery channel and representational format are the same can be imagined as books, printed photographs and similar.

While a certain amount of overlapping the concepts of delivery channel and representational format can be argued to exist, the format of a film is the same whether presented on a theater screen or a television. Therefore, I argue that this distinction can still be made.

### Case 4: Multiple Configurable Delivery Channels

This case can be imagined in the form of alternate reality games, as an example, where a laptop, a smartphone or a tablet should be used for different purposes throughout an experience. The representational formats on each delivery channel is presumably created with the purpose of utilising particular affordances. An example could be the GPS upon smartphones which are already easy to transport or the camera integrated on tablets which, with a slightly larger screen than the smartphones, could represent content as augmented reality.

### Case 5: Spatial and Temporal Construction of Reality as Delivery Channel

While considering reality a platform itself for delivering narrative segments upon might open to the issue that all mediated narrative experiences are transmedia storytelling examples since reality is a necessary frame for those experience, I propose to only consider cases in which a physical setting is reframed for a specific narrative purpose such as cases as role-playing scenarios. In this case, the representational formats of content is the structure defined by practitioners while the delivery channel is constituted by reality.





This master's thesis is composed as a result of an investigation on the relation between interactivity and narrativity in transmedia storytelling – a field of research characterised by a number of misconceptions, ambiguous phrases and lack of simplicity.

Approaching the subject with an aim of initiating a clarification of the core of transmedia storytelling as a theoretical phenomenon, the work presents a new perspective on how to study transmedia storytelling as well as specific academic results.

While being the final work carried out as a student on the master's degree in Interactive Digital Media at Aalborg University, this work should also be viewed as a stepping stone to continue the research down the proposed path; the first bricks of which have been placed here.

Stine Schmiege Johansen

