



Master Thesis in Experience Design  
Aalborg University

# Story Bridges in Transmedia

## Expanding transmedia stories across platforms in a meaningful way

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# Title Page

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# Abstract

This thesis focuses on the field of transmedia storytelling. Since the field is relatively new, it holds potential for further theoretical investigation and expansion. The theory behind transmedia stories in a structural sense, seems remotely unexplored, hence this thesis sets out to investigate transmedia stories, which criteria they have to meet when expanding from one platform to another platform and how to use these criteria to design concepts as part of a meaningful experience framework. This problem statement is divided into two parts in this thesis. Through a hermeneutic, theoretical approach, the process of answering the first part of the problem statement starts with investigating and defining the core terms associated with transmedia storytelling. Here, the thesis looks further into bridges as part of this meaningful framework, which results in the definition of three story bridges which are story elements that link the platforms together in a transmedia universe and provide the audience with motivation to cross them.

In relation to the characteristics of a tentpole, three basic story elements are also presented, which are necessary components of any story: Characters, timeline (with corresponding events) and story universe. Here, the thesis provides an addition to the existing definition of tentpoles in a transmedia storytelling context.

The story bridges are then arranged into the Story Bridge Model which is used to analyse actual transmedia cases.

Through the use of the story bridges as variables, a design experiment is conducted where the method research through design is used, with the main goal of testing and using the model as well as challenging the knowledge accumulated throughout the thesis. Three videogame concepts become the result of this design experiment, where the story bridges are incorporated as variables.

An insight in regard to this design phase is that each of the story bridges have a different level of complexity. It is also argued that the Story Bridge Model can be used to design concepts as it enables the designer to focus on the relation between the story bridges during the design process.

It is concluded that the criteria for the expansion of the transmedia story are valid, but that the knowledge regarding the design process cannot be generalized. The suggested to use of the model for designing concepts, through the use of the story bridges as variables, would probably need further practical validation.

# Preface

This thesis is the product of an intense half year, during which we have worked on understanding the field of transmedia storytelling. Our shared interest in stories of all formats is what started it all. To be able to work with stories that are engaging and entertaining have always been an interest for both of us, and through our master studies, our interest in transmedia storytelling was sharpened. The possibility of contributing to this field motivated us to keep on writing and challenge ourselves and each other. In the process, many insights were created and our different backgrounds facilitated interesting discussions and helped broaden our horizons. Working on this thesis together has been a valuable experience which we would not have missed for anything.

## Thank You's

First and foremost, we would like to thank our thesis supervisor Peter. It has been a long, exciting and sometimes difficult journey into a special world. Thank you for all the help, guidance and fun provided along the way. You played many roles during our writing of this thesis, as a mentor, skeptic and voice of reason. We could not have slayed this dragon without your help.

Jesper and Rolf, thank you for your patience, constant support and help – also around the house. Writing a thesis sure made us forget about the dishes.

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**WARNING! THIS THESIS MAY CONTAIN SPOILERS!**

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# Introduction

This thesis starts with wondering. We have personally seen entertainment and television change over the past 25 years, from single shows on television to become so much more than that. Whole worlds unfolded before our eyes. Daffy Duck was not only on television, he was in magazines, in Happy Meals, in movies and on the Gameboy. We were entertained in many ways and through many different media platforms. But within the past few years this passive way of being entertained seems to have become outdated to the storytellers and to us, as users. We no longer seem to be satisfied with being told a story through a single platform, we want to explore it and engage in multiple platforms.

This development has been introduced to us, the writers of this thesis, through several outlets such as Experience Design courses at Aalborg University, the changes in how games and movies are being introduced to the market, and through our own experience as consumers.

Spreading the face of a franchise across a number of platforms (e.g. Daffy Duck or Mickey Mouse) is called the “lunch box model” by professor in the School of Literature, Media, and Communication at the Georgia Institute of Technology, Janet H. Murray (Murray, 2012) but she elaborates that current “transmedia” goes beyond this (ibid.). The term “*transmedia*” seems to become unavoidable when dealing with storytelling on different platforms. The focus which this thesis will work with is transmedia storytelling, a subject we personally find interesting and see a potential in. At the same time, the field seems relatively new and only explored to a certain extent.

The field of transmedia, which might not be as new as we know of, is exciting and unknown in many ways. But what does it mean, how is it defined? Who has

investigated it? What is the difference between cross- and transmedia? How can we design concepts which can frame meaningful transmedia experiences? Henry Jenkins, a leading scholar within the field, defines transmedia by connecting the term with the element of storytelling:

*"[...] a transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole"* (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 97-98).

This definition gives us an initial idea about what the term means, but through thorough investigation in this thesis, we strive to answer the previous questions, in order to gain knowledge, which we want to use to contribute to the field. We strive for one of these contributions to be a model which can help frame what we call the meaningful transmedia experience. From our standpoint, the development of meaningful transmedia products is not a simple task where guidelines can be followed in the same way traditional interaction designers have design principles (Preece, Rogers, & Sharp, 2011, pp. 25-30). We seek to make our own (and other designers) transmedia design phase easier by suggesting a model which will be created after thorough research into the field. Furthermore, we want to broaden the understanding of transmedia in the light of storytelling, as the aforementioned definition of transmedia also marks the focus of our work. Jenkins' focus on the story and the story universe is a key point in our understanding of transmedia.

When describing the concept of transmedia terms like storytelling and interactivity, etc. come up as they are essential parts of this phenomenon, since the stories are being told on multiple platforms where some are interactive and engage the user.

In short, transmedia storytelling is about telling a story across different platforms where *"each medium does what it does best"* (Jenkins, 2006, p. 98). The content that is created engages the user and audience to see the story from different angles and in some cases to actively be part of the process of creating content for this universe. According to Jenkins, each piece of this transmedia universe delivers a unique

entrance point for the audience as players and users, and combining these pieces results in a narrative, that goes across this so-called transmedia universe (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 97-98). It is possible that interactivity and user engagement can play an important part in achieving meaningful transmedia experiences, but this something we will look further into in this thesis. Throughout this thesis we will use different terms for the 'audience'. The 'audience' will be used as the broader, general term, whereas terms such as 'player', 'user' or 'reader' will be used depending on the contextual platform.

## Meaningful Experience Frameworks

A term we have to define early in this thesis is experiences and what makes them meaningful. We specifically choose to use the term of meaningfulness, as it is a constant that grants us a theoretically measurable constant to hold our future insights up against, which would have been more difficult with constants such as *successful* or *good*.

According to Jantzen, Vetner and Bouchet, the authors of *'Oplevelsesdesing'*, experiences are psychological processes generated by the individual when interacting with the world (Jantzen, Vetner, & Bouchet, 2011, pp. 37-40). The general definition of something being *meaningful* is that something has meaning, something which is valuable, logic and worthwhile (Oxford Dictionaries (C)). Meaning can also be hermeneutically linked to experiences, and how one experiences meaning. Here, the German philosopher Gadamer links the two. He makes a distinction between experiences (something a person has, *Erlebnis*) and experiencing (something a person goes through, *Erfahrung*) (Gadamer, 2004, p. xiii):

*"What can be called an experience constitutes itself in memory. By calling it such, we are referring to the lasting meaning that an experience has for the person who has it [...] Everything that is experienced is experienced by oneself, and part of its meaning is that it belongs to the unity of this self and thus contains an unmistakable and irreplaceable relation to the whole of this one life. Thus, essential to an experience is*

*that it cannot be exhausted in what can be said of it or grasped as its meaning“*  
(Gadamer, 2004, p. 58)

According to Gadamer, experiencing is thus hermeneutically based on the process a person goes through, where the experience is not just over when the corresponding event is, because reflection is also part of experiences and experiencing (ibid.). We choose to adapt this point of view from Gadamer, as we want to theoretically explore the transmedia in the light of meaningful experiences.

In this thesis we will use ‘meaningful experience’ to define the mental product of an experiencing process, *which is a valuable, logic and worthwhile process to the user who is experiencing it*. Ole Ertløv Hansen, a Danish professor working with experiences, comments on Gadamer’s meaningful experience concept in the following way:

*“Oplevelse er knyttet til den oplevende subjekt. Det er ikke muligt at give subjektet en oplevelse, kun at skabe rammerne for mulige oplevelser”* (Hansen, 2007, p. 168).

This means that it is not possible to give the user a specific experience, but just to create the framework for the possibility of the experience to occur. In order to allow the meaningful experience to occur, we have to create a meaningful framework, since it is not possible to create the psychological process within the user’s mind itself, which is the meaningful experience. The user’s mind is not something we can control in any way, because the user’s wish to engage and immerse himself is entirely his own, and what he receives from doing so is the experience itself. This is the general idea regarding experiences we choose to adapt in this thesis.

Therefore, what we seek to achieve is the design of a *meaningful framework for the meaningful experience* which is *the logically correlative transmedia content which allows the meaningful experience to occur*. When talking about creating a meaningful framework, we mean defining the characteristics and criteria for transmedia content, which allows the user to have a meaningful experience in a transmedia context. The user engages in the framework and what he generates from doing so is the experience itself.

## Autoethnographic Standpoint

We have chosen to explain our own incentive for writing this thesis through an autoethnographic statement, which refers to the self-observation and reflexive investigation of a subject (Baarts, 2010). This means that we will actively take our prior understanding into account.

We have chosen the subject of transmedia storytelling because it is a field we have interest in, and a field which we have discovered as part of the audience of TV series and as players of videogames. This fascination is something we want to pull into our academic work, combining it with our theoretical knowledge and practical work with design. *Our prior understanding is that transmedia storytelling provides a unique experience framework for the audience, compared to single-medium storytelling.* We assume that it creates multiple entrypoints to a story universe, through which unique portions of the whole story can be explored and added to by the audience. The way we see it, the whole story is contained within one medium in single-medium storytelling. A book with a beginning, middle and end for instance. But with transmedia storytelling there are more pieces of the same story scattered onto different media platforms. An example could be a website which might reveal the backstory and mythology, while the accompanying videogame focuses on the characters present story. But the two together would allow the user a self-assigned active role as interpreter and detective whose job it is to link clues together and

figure out the growing list of unsolved mysteries to familiarize with and immerse into the whole story universe.

Letting narratives spread across apps, games, homepages, etc. makes the content accessible to the audience anytime and anywhere in different forms. The story can origin from one medium which the audience may be familiar with and then allow them to become involved as an active part of the narrative as he can share his own point of view of the story through the creation of for example fan fiction or a participating in real-world events.

Then we have the branding and marketing aspect of transmedia, where companies use transmedia as an instrument to attract customers to their main product as a sort of marketing gimmick (Phillips, 2012, pp. 21-25) (such as small games made to promote movies) and then abandon this platform after the movie premieres (Jenkins, 2010, pp. 944-945). This aspect is not something we will elaborate on because the story seems less important in these cases, and we have the idea that the story could play a central role when speaking of meaningful experiences in a transmedia context. Thus, we want to investigate how transmedia products can be designed to incorporate meaningful frameworks with emphasis on the story.

**Fan fiction**, often also referred to as fic, fan fic or simply ff are stories that involve popular fictional characters that are written by fans. They are often posted on the internet (Merriam-Webster).

Henry Jenkins also explains the term in correlation to transmedia storytelling, where he states that fan fiction can be seen as an *"unauthorized expansion of [...] media franchises into new directions which reflect the reader's desire to 'fill in the gaps' they have discovered in the commercially produced material"* (Jenkins, 2007).

**Lost** is an American TV drama show that aired from 2004 to 2010 consisting of six seasons created by J.J. Abrams, Damon Lindeloff and Jeffrey Lieber.

The plot follows 48 plane crash survivors that strand on a mysterious, remote island in the Pacific. While processing the trauma of the crash and simply trying to survive on the island it becomes apparent that it is a strange place that holds mysterious secrets. Creatures stalking the jungle, paranormal happenings and odd coincidences reveal themselves and the survivors realize that something more is going on than what meets the eye. (IMDB (C))

The characters and setting in Lost appeared on several other media platforms, such as an internet-based alternate reality game (Lostpedia (A)), and a number of mini-episodes, 'mobisodes'. (Lostpedia (B)).

We find that this part of transmedia is much more interesting within our field of experience design, and we see a greater possibility for meaningful experiences to occur when speaking of experiencing products that focus on telling stories rather than products that focus on promoting and selling. We find the cases more intriguing when transmedia is used because the creators are just as passionate as the fans and wish to tell great stories. This has for instance been seen in the case of the television series *Lost*, where the success of the program is “(...) partly attributable to the *fannish enthusiasm of its creators*” (Short, 2011, pp. 108-109).

# Problem Statement

Taking the considerations and the hypothesis from the introduction into account, we can form a problem statement that will be attempted answered in this thesis:

**Which criteria does a story have to meet when expanding from one platform to another platform in a transmedia context and how can these criteria be used to design concepts as part of a meaningful framework?**

This problem statement contains two questions, which split this project into two parts: The first part being theoretically constructive and analytic, focusing on the goal of creating a model; while the second part focuses on the design of a concept as part of a transmedia universe. A third part of the thesis will be constructed, but this deals with the metacognitive reflection of the thesis' process, and thus, is not represented in the problem statement.

In the process of answering the problem statement, we will have to look into what a meaningful framework consists of and what kind of meaningful experience it enables the audience to generate in a transmedia context, because the two subjects are interlinked. This is necessary in order to create concepts as part of a meaningful framework later in our thesis.

## Research Questions

In order to answer the problem statement it can be helpful to form a number of research questions (Andrews, 2003) that have to be answered as a part of the problem statement. By creating these relevant questions it enables a work process with hermeneutic iterations (Pahuus, 2005), as each research question is part of the problem, hence contributing to the answering of the problem statement as a whole.

The questions will be divided into sections, reflecting the structure of the problem statement and this entire project: the theoretical analysis and the design section. Each section will have its own subset of questions and the questions are formulated in accordance with the different approaches that the sections require, such as a theoretical and a methodical approach.

In the theoretical analysis we want to form the necessary background knowledge to create the model that will be used in the design of the transmedia concept. Thus we formulated these research questions:

- What is transmedia?
- What is a story, storytelling and a story universe and what is the difference?
- What is transmedia storytelling?

Our goal is then to use the criteria found in the theoretical analysis to create a model which we will first use to analyze transmedia storytelling cases and then use in a design experiment. In order to carry out a design experiment and create concepts with the use of the model, we have to answer these questions:

- How can our model be used to design transmedia concepts?
- How can we test our model in the design process?

These questions will be sought answered throughout the thesis with the goal of answering the problem statement. Our methodology, how we will work towards

answering the problem statement and research questions, for this thesis will now be presented in the following chapter.

# Methodology

The focus of this chapter will be this thesis' methodology, how we will answer the problem statement and research questions and the structure of the thesis. Our goal with this thesis is to understand transmedia storytelling in order to make a contribution to the field through the process of answering our problem statement. We also want to design transmedia concepts with meaningful frameworks which allow for meaningful experiences to occur.

We view these transmedia concepts and the created transmedia universe as meaningful products created by our own human activities, which is why we choose to work with hermeneutics (Pahuus, 2005). The subjects of understanding can be categorized into three: people, their actions and products created by these actions (Føllesdal, Walløe, & Elster, 1992, p. 86). Choosing hermeneutics as a method for this thesis is sensible, since trying to understand meaningful products is one of the three subjects hermeneutics deal with (ibid.).

## Structure

The hermeneutic circle is present in the structure of this thesis, where we continually move from understanding parts of the whole in order to understand the whole field. It is also present within the process itself as we move from understanding to interpretation, creation and evaluation and back to understanding again. This model shows our hermeneutical approach to the problem statement:

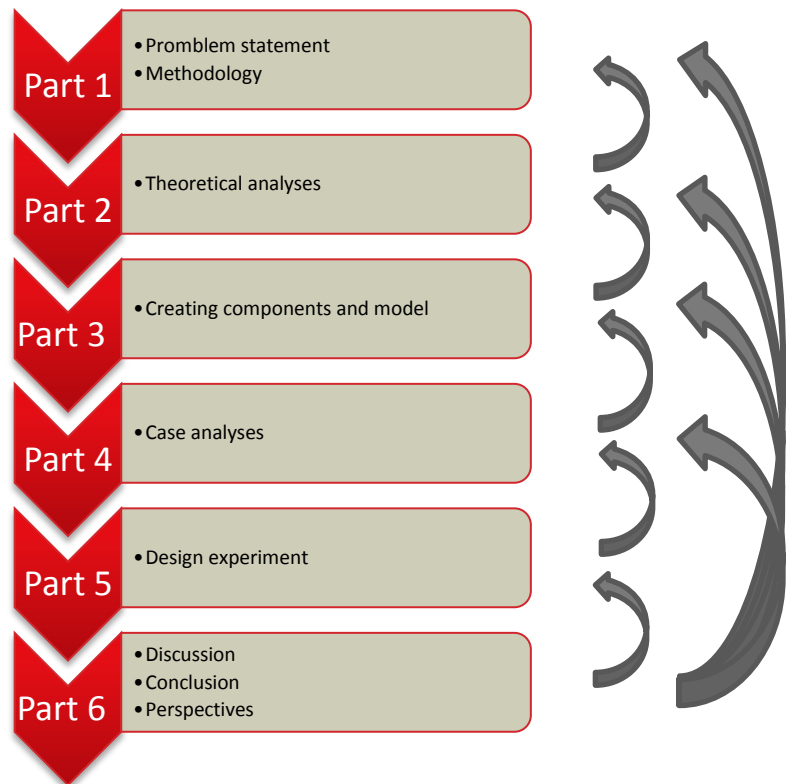


FIGURE 1 - STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

As shown in the model, this thesis will consist of six parts. The **first part** contains the problem statement and the present chapter on methodology.

In the **second**, theoretical, part of this thesis, we want to investigate the core terms associated with transmedia storytelling, such as cross- and transmedia, storytelling, narratives etc. By studying and disassembling the theory behind transmedia storytelling, we want to learn which criteria a story has to meet when expanding from one platform to another. In order for us to be able to find these criteria and design with them subsequently, we have to know what meaningful frameworks and experiences in transmedia consist of. This will also be explored in the second part of the thesis.

This leads to the **third part** of the thesis where we move towards using our theoretical insights to create a model which will outline how to expand a story from one platform to another. The **fourth part** of the thesis focuses on using the model to analyse transmedia case examples (Flyvbjerg, 2012). These case analyses will allow us to test the model. Working with real cases will challenge our theoretical understanding which our model is based on and will give us the contextual knowledge to adjust our model before it will be used as the basis for the **fifth part** of the thesis, the design phase. Here we will conduct a design experiment with the use of our model in order to create transmedia concepts with a meaningful framework. In this part of the thesis we start by introducing our design methodology and explaining the design tools we choose to work with alongside our model while conducting our design experiment. The main goal of the design phase is to use and test the model that we created earlier as well as challenge the knowledge we have accumulated until that point.

The **sixth part** of the thesis will be an evaluation and discussion of the entire process and our approach. A conclusion will follow, wherein we will answer the problem statement. Lastly perspectives on further possibilities will be discussed.

We have chosen not to include a whole chapter on hermeneutics in this thesis, as we will incorporate it into our other chapters continually, and use it actively instead.

## Delimitation

As we have chosen to work this way, certain limitations will arise with regards to what we possibly can find answers to. Since we have a theoretical part, a case-analytical part and a design process where we do not involve the audience directly, our thesis is primarily theoretically constructed. Because we are not going to gather empiric material from the audience, this affects our possibility to find answers to direct questions regarding the experience, i.e. we will not be able to explicitly relate to the audience's experience. This also means that if the topic of the audience experience arises we will only be able to address it from a theoretical standpoint.

# Transmedia

As stated in the methodology section, part of answering the problem statement is to answer the research questions. In order to do this it will be necessary to gain insight into a number of terms and conceptual perspectives connected to the central concept of transmedia. Looking into transmedia will be the first part of the theory section that we choose to discuss in continuation of the research question presented earlier, that asked:

- What is transmedia?

Discussing and defining transmedia, will play an important role in creating the basic knowledge needed to understand and design transmedia storytelling concepts.

Furthermore in the theoretical sections of this thesis we will be basing the theories and discussions on scholars as well as *reflective practitioners*. Donald Schön, an American social scientist working with the theory and practice of reflective professional learning, introduced the term *reflective practice* together with several other scholars. He describes it as "*the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning*", which is "*one of the defining characteristics of professional practice*" (Schön, 1983, pp. 102-104). Reflective practitioners can be said to analyze their own experiences in order to learn from them and engage in the reflection of situations they encounter in their professional worlds. The reason for using reflective practitioners as well as scholars is to create a strong basis for our discussion of the theory. We move within a relatively new field, transmedia, where both types of contributors can provide insight from different angles.

## Transmedia

### – Our hypothesis and Prior Understanding

To our knowledge, ‘transmedia’ describes concepts which utilize multiple media platforms allowing the audience to interact with a certain story from multiple entry points (platforms) granting a personalized experience. The important point is here, that *we hypothesize that the key aspect of transmedia revolves around the content of the platforms, i.e. the story, and the story universe that is scattered across platforms and how the story motivates and engages the audience to move across the platforms.*

The aforementioned hypothetical definition takes its shape from our prior understanding of the concept, and we want to investigate it further in the following chapter of this thesis. Here, an analytic discussion will either validate or disprove it. Also, the key aspect presented in it outlines the direction and focus for the choices made in the theoretical discussion of transmedia, as it delimits our field of interest. The understanding and knowledge used to form this hypothetical definition has been achieved in an educational context through lectures and discussions at the university in relation to the transmedia subject.

### Defining Transmedia Through Cross-media

Several different words have been used in the attempt to define, what we call transmedia, such as: integrated experiences (Davidson, 2010), deep media (Rose, 2011) and multi-platform storytelling, which Danny Bilson, a reflective practitioner also calls it (Jenkins, 2006, p. 330), just to name a few. Still, the term that is mentioned the most in relation to the concept is the one of *cross-media*. By holding the two concepts up against each other we strive to point out the essential characteristics that set the concept of transmedia apart.

Jeff Gomez, who is a leading transmedia practitioner, says that transmedia:

*"[...] falls under the rubric of cross-media, but while cross-media can imply any method, strategy or content that iterates itself over various distribution methods, transmedia implies a design sensibility customized to the message at hand, which also leverages the strengths of each platform and promotes dialogue with the audience"* (Gomez, 2011).

According to Gomez, cross-media implies any content that iterates itself on different platforms, while transmedia is customized to the message and draws on the strengths of each platform. Jenkins agrees with this when mentioning that in transmedia storytelling: *"each medium does what it does best"* (Jenkins, 2006, p. 98). Here, cross-media is the general broader concept while transmedia is a subordinate variation.

The scholar Drew Davidson is another person to work with the concept of cross-media in his book *Cross Media Communication*, 2010. The professor and producer of interactive media treats the terms cross-media and transmedia as synonyms with just one main difference, the emphasis on interactivity (Davidson, 2010, p. 6). He mentions that cross-media requires the audience to pro-actively interact, become engaged in and more involved with the experience:

*"Cross-media refers to integrated experiences across multiple media [...] The new media aspect of the "cross-media experience" typically involves some level of audience interactivity. In other words, it's an experience (often a story of sorts) that we "read" by watching movies, [...] playing a game, [...] etc. And this experience is connected across the various media involved through the story and the audience interactivity"* (Davidson, 2010, p. 6).

As seen in the citation, Davidson defines cross-media as integrated experiences. Furthermore the concepts of interactivity and story are central parts of his definition, as they connect the experience across media platforms.

Davidson's distinction of cross-media is similar to Gomez' notion of dialogue with the audience which he notes as a transmedia trait, meaning that Davidson's description of cross-media fits with Gomez' definition of transmedia. Generally, Davidson's distinction between cross-media and transmedia is vague, as he does not elaborate on the type of audience interactivity or engagement, when defining the key point differentiating the two terms.

Looking critically at both Gomez' and Davidson's definitions, Gomez speaks of the promotion of *"dialogue with the audience"*. He does not specify the type of dialogue used, whether it is the dialogue between the audience and the message, the audience and the ones that send out the message, or the dialogue happening in the audience. Compared to this, Davidson mentions *"the audience's pro-active interaction"*. His lack of clarification in describing this interaction shares the same problem, which makes it hard to determine what specifically sets transmedia apart from cross-media in Davidson's work.

However, the theory presented so far points towards the possible idea that it is not the single platform that is essential to the experience but rather the relation between them, as well as how the producers of the cross-media experience have connected these platforms and their content. In this regard a relevant question is formed; how are the platforms connected and what makes the audience want to move and interact across them?

In relation to this, Gary P. Hayes, who is another reflective practitioner within the field, defines four levels of cross-media:

Cross-media 1.0	The same content, possibly just slightly edited, is 'pushed' across several platforms.
Cross-media 2.0	Extra content, besides the main production, is delivered on different platforms.
Cross-media 3.0	Content is specifically authored to use 'call-to actions' to drive the audience across media devices.
Cross-media 4.0	The experience is cross-platform and non-linear, but also personalized. Also co-creative, collaborative play with the audience. The audience creates their own 'bridges' (elaborated later).

FIGURE 2 – OUR COMPILATION OF HAYES' FOUR TYPES OF CROSS-MEDIA (HAYES, 2006)

Hayes' four types of cross-media highlight the importance of the relation between the platforms.

Also, Hayes' cross-media 1.0 and 2.0 are very similar to the definition of cross-media suggested by Gomez. His terms 'cross-media 3.0 and 4.0' are more similar to Gomez' and Jenkins' definition of transmedia.

As we noted earlier in Gomez' definition of transmedia he pointed out the dialogue with the audience as an important factor. Hayes also focuses on the audience, but points out co-creativity and play with the audience as important factors in his description of cross-media 4.0. This is also consistent with Davidsons focus on audience interactivity. This indicates that investigating the terms *interaction* and *play* further may be of relevance to the design process, as they might be motivators for the audience to move across platforms.

While Gomez and Jenkins use the word ‘transmedia’ it is clear that all the theorists that we have looked at agree that what they are dealing with is more than just the duplication of content onto different platforms. We choose to adapt Gomez’ point of view, by using cross-media to refer to the duplication or iteration of content on different platforms, and transmedia as referring to “*customized content fitted to the platform at hand*”. (Gomez, 2011) Hence, Davidson’s and Hayes’ definitions of cross-media mentioned previously are not referring to *our* definition of cross-media, but rather transmedia.

## The structure of transmedia

As seen in the previous section, transmedia is defined by using terms such as ‘platforms’ and ‘media devices’. When speaking of structure with regards to transmedia, we have chosen to refer to the complete collection of platforms as a *transmedia universe*. In this regard, it becomes inevitable to mention *tent poles*, *platforms* and *bridges* as parts of it. Explaining these components is essential to understanding the structure of transmedia universes.

### Tentpoles

Drew Davidson states that the term tentpole is used to describe “*one big media experience that supports a lot of other related media experiences*” (Davidson, 2010, p. 9). We agree with this statement. The original Star Wars movies and Star Trek series are good examples of tentpoles, as they both have resulted in countless games, toys, comics, etc.

Davidson claims that the tentpole concept works in two ways, which can be seen in the model, which we have created, below. It can either be one large media experience often originated from a movie or television show, like with Star Wars, (left side of the model) or there can be a number of smaller tentpoles that work together (right side of the model). An example for this could be the Pokémon-universe, where the videogame, the card-game and the television show represent their own tentpole within the transmedia universe. Either way, a fan base is created

that follows the experience across platforms to explore the full story (Davidson, 2010, p. 9).

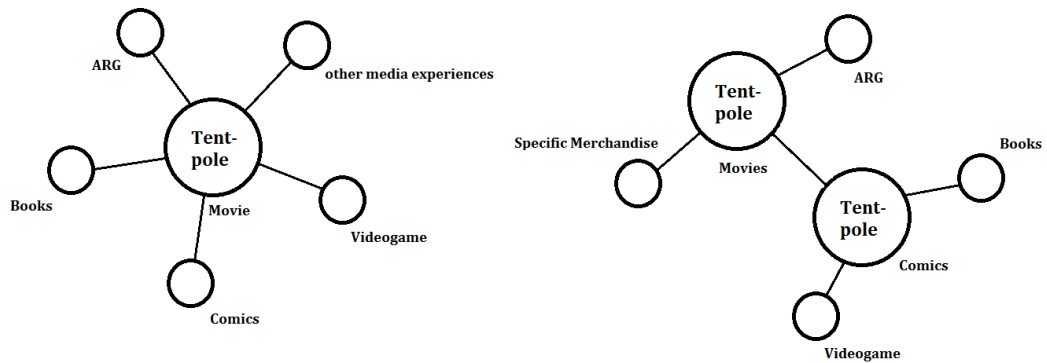


FIGURE 3 – OUR VIEW ON TWO DIFFERENT TENTPOLE EXPERIENCES

**Harry Potter** is a series of seven books written by J. K. Rowling published between 1997 and 2007. When Harry finds out that he is a wizard he begins his journey to Hogwarts – School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. Here he learns that he is destined to fight Lord Voldemort, the evil wizard who killed his parents. The Harry Potter books have been adapted as movies. The first premiered in 2001 and seven more followed until the last one premiered in 2011.

Harry Potter has grown to a large franchise, including an area in the Warner Bros. theme park in Florida, computer games and websites such as Pottermore.com, innumerable fan creations such as fan fiction, art, clothing, conventions, and cook books.

The illustration above shows that each tentpole can have several *secondary platforms* which *tie-in* to the tentpole. These platforms can take shape in books, comics or other merchandise (Davidson, 2010, p. 65). They can be interrelated or directly related to the tentpole by sharing common factors, like the focal point of the transmedia experience.

Returning to the basic tentpole concept, Davidson uses two terms to define the process of creating communication across platforms: *retro-active* and *pro-active*. They describe whether the concept of cross-

media<sup>1</sup> starts *before* or *after* the tent pole in the concept is established and has become successful with the audience (Davidson, 2010, p. 10).

An example of a retro-active concept is the one of Harry Potter, where the books first became popular and later produced games, movies and more, adding to the overall experience of the Harry Potter universe. So a retro-active concept is one that already has an established story and then adds to it by adding new media platforms to support the existing one, which consequently becomes the tentpole.

To exemplify the pro-active concept The Dark Knight is a good example, as Davidson's notion of cross-media communication was already considered up front. Launching the Alternate Reality Game 'Why so serious' before the The Dark Knight-movie resulted in having an already existing cross-media experience to support the tent pole (the movie) when it was launched.

Using these terms in relation to our upcoming design phase will clarify the kind of concept we will create. The plan is to find a potential tentpole and then add references on another platform to create a complete transmedia experience. This would be a retro-active concept, as we add to an existing story and

**The Dark Knight** is a movie by Christopher Nolan. It premiered in 2008 as part of a trilogy which started in 2005 with Batman Begins and ended in 2012 with The Dark Knight Rises.

The movie tells the story of Bruce Wayne, the billionaire who fights crime as Batman at night. Batman finds an enemy in the Joker, a criminal with an appetite for chaos and destruction, while the lawyer Harvey Dent works to remove corruption from Gotham City's police force.

An ARG was carried out to promote the movie. Here, the participants could choose to follow either the Joker or Harvey Dent (Lang, 2011). The Batman franchise started as a comic book.

**Alternate Reality Games (ARG)** are *"immersive, massively multiplayer experiences that unfold in the course of people's real lives for days, weeks, or months. ARG designers, known as "puppet masters," distribute thousands of story pieces, puzzles, and missions via websites, e-mail, mobile messaging, online video, and podcasts. The players who receive these building blocks use wikis, social networking sites, chat rooms, and blogs to analyze clues, debate interpretations, devise mission strategies, predict game events, and ultimately build a common narrative."* (McGonigal, 2008)

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<sup>1</sup> Since we established earlier that Davidson's use of the cross-media term fits our definition of what is transmedia, we will see it as equal terms in connection to the tent pole structure and the design of this structure.

transmedia storytelling had not been considered when the tentpole was created. We will create this kind of concept, because our problem statement deals with expanding from one platform to another, thereby creating a transmedia experience which was not considered when the tentpole was created. This will also allow us to work with expanding the story world for one platform exclusively instead of having to design concepts for both the tentpole the secondary platform.

According to Davidson, this aspect of cross-media has to be taken into account when designing the experience (Davidson, 2010, p. 11). Creating the transmedia universe and the cross-media communication (=structure) after the potential tent pole has been established, sets some boundaries for the content of the new platforms. This design will have to factor into the existing story and story world that has been created in the initial tent pole (ibid.). This means that in order to create a new story in continuation of the story of the existing tent pole, the content of the new platform has to be within the boundaries of the existing story universe. This means that the references to the story universe, such as characters, made on the secondary platforms have to be recognizable (to a certain extent) to the audience of the tent pole.

Finally the media chosen for the tentpole may be of importance. Davidson suggests that movies are the best way to create tentpole experiences that support cross-media campaigns. According to him, they generate a lot of attention and can motivate the audience to look for other platforms which tie-in (Davidson, 2010, p. 65), which is the term used to describe books and games that relate to the tentpole. Davidson does not elaborate on why movies motivate, but names Star Wars among others to support his statement. We partly agree with Davidson's statement at this point, as we see the mass market potential within the movie media, but it should not be excluded that other media could become equally successful as tentpoles as well. Another suggestion could also be that it might not depend on the type of media, but rather the content, such as the story, characters etc.

## Bridges

Earlier, we have highlighted the importance of the relation between the platforms and how they are connected. One way to look at this part of the transmedia structure is to refer to Gary P. Hayes.

Hayes uses a term called “*bridges*” (Hayes, 2006) to describe the movement of the audience across the different media-platforms. As presented earlier, he names four levels of cross-media: cross-media 1.0, 2.0, and cross-media 3.0 and 4.0, which have relevance in our case. In cross-media 3.0 the content is specifically authored to use “call-to actions” to drive the audience across media devices. These narrative bridges, as he calls them, teases and motivates the audience towards the next platform (ibid.).

In ‘*Cross-media 4.0 – experiences*’, the experience is still cross-platform and non-linear, but also personalized. Hayes mentions that cross-media 4.0 is co-creative, collaborative play with the audience. The audience creates their own bridges, even though a lot of it might be authored by producers or writers (ibid.). A good example for this is fan-fiction, where the audience can create their own stories that for instance are connected to the tentpole by using the same characters or the same story world.

If we sum up Hayes’ description of bridges he points towards the idea of certain types of bridges, as he mentions ‘narrative bridges’. Furthermore he points out that there are cases where the audience creates their own bridges. These two statements could suggest that different types of bridges between secondary platforms and/or tentpoles are plausible, where the difference for instance could be dependent on the common factors within the story of the two platforms (characters, story universe, etc.). This idea, would suggest that these bridges vary in frequency, amount, strength etc. To exemplify this we can use The Dark Knight, which also can be seen on the model below. Here the bridge from the ARG ‘Why so serious’ to the subsequent movie are the characters, as two of the main characters, Harvey Dent and the Joker, are the bridge that connect the one media experience (the ARG) to the other media

experience (the movie). They are two rather essential and major references to the content of the movie. On the other hand, in continuation of the movie, multiple Batman videogames were launched as well, the most successful ones being Batman: Arkham Asylum in 2009 and Batman: Arkham City in 2011. Even though the games are not directly connected to the movie there is a common factor, a bridge to the movie, the story world. This bridge is not as clear and strong as the aforementioned use of characters in both the ARG and the movie.

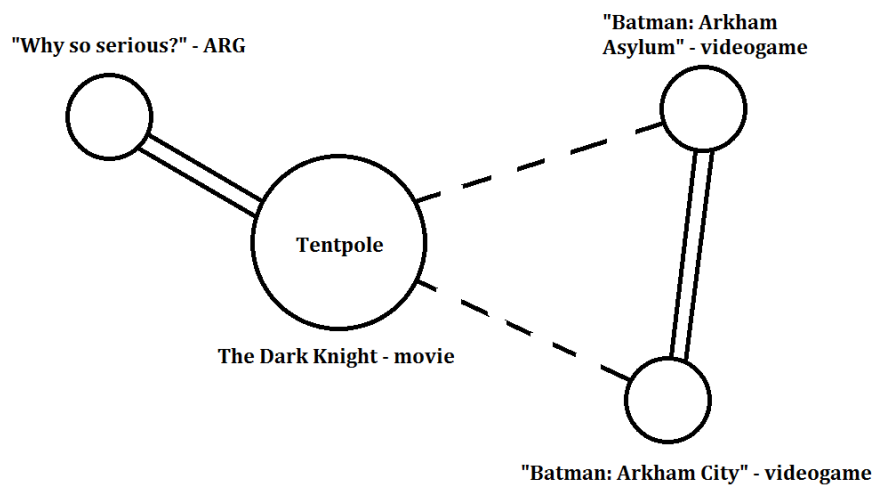


FIGURE 4 – OUR MAP OF THE BATMAN TRANSMEDIA UNIVERSE

This example, which can also be seen in the model above, does not only show that the types of bridges may vary, but that they may vary in shape and number, and even suggests that they vary in strength. In this context, a new and very important question is formed:

*Do the choice, combination and strength of the different types of bridges within the transmedia universe play a role in creating the meaningful framework for the meaningful experience?*

This question is based on a new insight, which appeared while investigating the term transmedia. It points out that we have to look further into bridges at some point.

Finally, to sum up the different transmedia terms in a structural context, as well as to clarify as to how we choose use these terms throughout the rest of this thesis, the following list has been created:

Structural Term	Description
<b>Transmedia Universe</b>	The collection of platforms, including all transmedia elements, such as tentpole, bridges and secondary platforms.
<b>Tentpole</b>	The main platform that carries the transmedia universe. The one media element that supports a lot of other related media elements.
<b>Secondary platforms</b>	The transmedia platforms that are supported by the tentpole and are tied to it by bridges.
<b>Bridges</b>	The links between tentpole and other platforms. Narrative elements the tentpole have in common with other platforms, such as characters.

FIGURE 5 - LIST OF STRUCTURAL TERMS IN TRANSMEDIA

## Transmedia and the Story

The next and final step is to look into the content of the platforms. In the earlier discussion we defined transmedia to refer to customized content fitted to the platform at hand. But as mentioned in our hypothesis section we outlined the direction for the theoretical discussion of transmedia by creating a hypothesis that focuses on the story and the story universe as the key aspect of transmedia. This is why we choose to initiate a second part in the process of defining transmedia that focuses specifically on this.

As a starting point we go back to Davidson's definition of what we see as transmedia, where he points out that interactivity and story are central parts of the concept. In his earlier definition he also mentions integrated experiences. Integration literally means unifying and bringing parts together to form a whole (The Free Dictionary, 2009), so in Davidson's case it suggests that he speaks of the process of creating an experience by unifying separate parts across platforms through audience interaction and the story. In his example, where he uses the transmedia Star Wars franchise (Davidson, 2010, p. 4) the importance of the story comes through, as *"the overarching stories in the Star Wars universe are integrated and threaded together across all of these media in what the franchise calls the Expanded Universe. Star Wars is a well-conceived and implemented cross-media communication experience"* (ibid.).

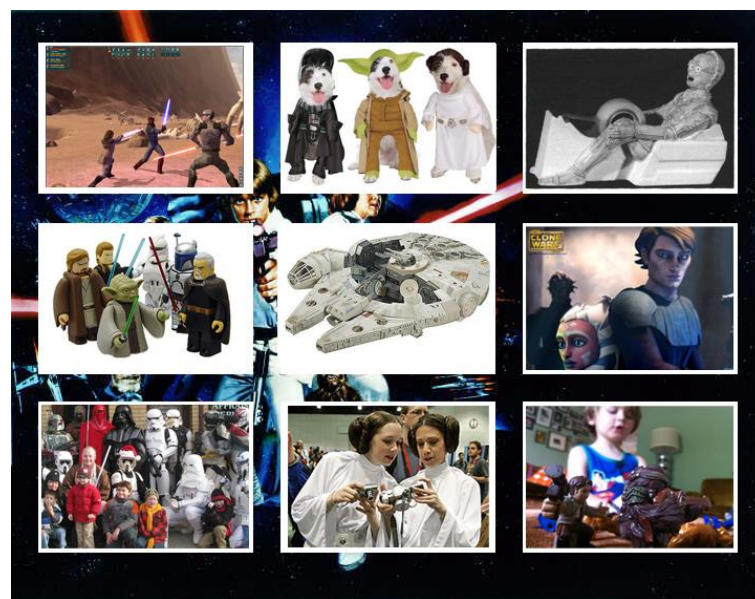


FIGURE 6 - A RANGE OF DIFFERENT PRODUCTS THAT THE STAR WARS FRANCHISE SPANS (Moss, 2011)

Here it is made clear that the story and its role of threading the transmedia universe together across the platforms are essential for the transmedia experience. If we compare this statement to our earlier statement that bridges play an important role when it comes to transmedia, it suggests that it is not the story itself that is the most

important part of the transmedia experience, but rather the use and communication of the story.

This corresponds with Gomez's definition of transmedia (presented earlier) that implies "*a design sensibility customized to the message at hand*" (Gomez, 2011). "*The message*" here refers to the content of the transmedia platform, which in Davidson's case is already specified as "*the story*". In Gomez case, "*the message*" refers to any content and how this content is designed to take advantage of the individual platform's quality to communicate with the audience. Gomez's focus highlights the importance of the way the content is distributed and communicated and supports the idea that creation of bridges related to the content is of importance, rather than the content itself. Hence, the design and focus on bridges to and from the story, is of importance in transmedia, which is why the way the story is told plays an important role in transmedia. This will be further discussed in the next chapters Storytelling and Transmedia Storytelling.

By referring to Jenkins, who initiated the usage of the term 'transmedia' with his Technology Review article '*Transmedia Storytelling*' in 2003 (Jenkins, 2003) we can confirm this important aspect of transmedia. He states that "*[...] a transmedia story unfolds across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole*" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 97).

Jenkins defines transmedia in combination with storytelling, to create the term transmedia storytelling. His focus is on the way the story is told and distributed, and the roles of the platforms in relation to the story. Jenkins mentions that each franchise entry, hereby referring to the different platforms being entries as part of the transmedia experience as a whole, needs to be "*self-contained*" (ibid, p. 98) with each of the entries creating value on its own, but also giving value to the whole. Jenkins also mentions that storytelling has become the art of *world building*: creating realms which cannot be fully explored within one single medium (ibid, p. 116).

It seems that framing transmedia in context with storytelling and world building is a distinction that makes the difference between transmedia and cross-media even clearer. In transmedia the focus seems to revolve around the story universe across the platforms; and even though Davidson in his definition of cross-media mentions the story, he is vague when it comes to its use and role. Jenkins' focus on story worlds and world building is worth looking further into later in this thesis, as it points transmedia in a direction, where the narrative, the story universe and storytelling becomes essential, which is within in our field of interest for this project.

Finally, we can sum up the different findings we have made during the entire transmedia discussion.

Both transmedia and cross-media are cross platform experiences and as Davidson mentions, integrated experiences. Transmedia sets itself apart from the cross-media definition through interaction with the audience and play according to Hayes. Hayes definition of a cross-media 4.0 experience fits with the general idea of what we see as a definition for transmedia, as his definition is almost an elaboration on Gomez's and Davidsons focus on interaction and dialogue with the audience. Consequently, this part of defining transmedia has been vague and at times confusing as it does not clearly mark the difference between the two. It simply highlights the importance of interaction as a part of the audience experience; whether transmedia or cross-media is the right term did not become clear in this discussion. That is why another direction differentiating the terms was sought after. The focus on the story and the way it is told appears in the other definitions, but Jenkins' clear focus on this side of transmedia, marks that it is specifically storytelling in a transmedia context that is of importance. The following table sums up the different scholars' and reflective practitioners' view on important aspects of transmedia:

Focus Scholars, Practitioners	Communication/ Dialogue with audience	Story	Relation between platforms / bridges	Interaction
Hayes	X	0	Important	X
Jenkins	0	Important	X	0
Davidson	X	Important	0	Important
Gomez	X	0	X	X

FIGURE 7 - PRIORITIZED TERMS ACCORDING TO SCHOLARS AND PRACTITIONERS  
(IMPORTANT = ESSENTIAL PART OF THEIR DEFINITION, X = PLAYS A ROLE IN THEIR  
DEFINITION, 0 = DOES NOT PLAY A ROLE IN THEIR DEFINITION)

**To answer our research question, *transmedia refers to customized content fitted to the platform at hand*. The content takes shape in a story that threads the transmedia universe together across the platforms. These platforms, including the tentpole, are connected by bridges that can be different in shape and number. Also, in transmedia the audience is engaged and motivated to interact and communicate with the content.**

Comparing the recapitulation in the previous section to our initial hypothesis, which said that the story universe is a central part of the transmedia experience, the hypothesis can be supported but not completely confirmed. Jenkins' definition of transmedia storytelling, where each text (the content of a platform) makes a distinctive, valuable contribution to the whole fits with our initial hypothesis *that multiple entrypoints to the story grant a personalized experience*. Our understanding is that the content of every platform (the story) contributes and is connected to the audience's experience of the whole transmedia universe. This can be supported by combining it with Hayes' 4.0 definition, where bridges are built by the audience and the experience hereby becomes personalized. This means that for each new platform, the audience gets the opportunity to build a bridge, thereby creating a personalized experience. This could for instance be by creating fan-art that depicts

their favorite characters from the different Star Wars Movies. From this we can finally draw the conclusion that the transmedia story unfolding across platforms is the focal point when it comes to the experience of the audience.

This conclusion makes it necessary to look further into the area of traditional storytelling to create a basic knowledge of the mechanics within stories before we can delve in to the combination that is transmedia storytelling later in the thesis.

# Storytelling

In the previous section we concluded that the story unfolding across platforms and the bridges which connect the different parts of the story are the focal point when it comes to the experience of the audience. We presume that the story, the story universe which is spread across platforms and the bridges which tie it all together are main contributors to the transmedia experience. Therefore, looking into stories and storytelling in general will be beneficial to the thesis' subject – storytelling in a transmedia context. In order to answer the problem statement and delve into the field of transmedia storytelling it is first necessary to answer the following research question:

- What is a story, storytelling and a story universe and what is the difference?

Traditional (or regular) storytelling is important for us to understand before we can fully grasp the different and evolved concept of transmedia storytelling and later use our knowledge to design a model and a concept that will be a meaningful framework to the audience.

We assume that transmedia storytelling uses elements of traditional storytelling that are distinguishable by the audience, which helps make the experience less foreign.

According to Christopher Vogler, president of the literary consulting firm Storytech and writer of *The Writer's Journey*, stories are as old as mankind, where our ancestors told stories through cave paintings (Vogler, 2007, p. 342). The Oxford Dictionary defines a story as an “*account of imaginary or real people and events told for entertainment*” (Oxford Dictionaries (A)), while a narrative is defined in almost the same words: “*a spoken or written account of connected events; a story*” (Oxford

Dictionaries (B)). The French critic and rhetorician Gerard Genette proposes the following choices of terms in his book *'Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method'*:

*"[...] to use the word story for the signified or narrative content [...], to use the word narrative for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself, and to use the word narrating for the producing narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place"* (Genette, 1980, p. 27) .

Genette sees the story as the content, the narrative as the text itself and narrating as the production of the narrative. This view is shared by us, and we have chosen to adapt the suggested terms by Genette. Storytelling and narrating can then be seen as *how* a story is told or in other words: The method and structure for narrating a story, whether oral or through a medium (Kofoed & Lodberg, 2002).

## The Narrator

The definitions in the section above call for a clear separation of narrating and the narrator. While it is implied that the writer is narrating the narrative, the narrator holds an important role within the story as well. Genette makes a distinction between narrating and the narrator: the act of telling a story is narrating, while the person who tells the story is the narrator (Genette, 1980, pp. 185-198). To separate the writer from the narrator seems prudent, as the two hold different functions. The different kinds of narrators are listed by Genette:

	Internal analysis of events	Outside observation of events
<b>Narrator as a character in the story</b>	Main character tells his story	Minor character tells main character's story
<b>Narrator not a character in the story</b>	Analytic or omniscient author tells story	Author tells story as an observer

FIGURE 8- MODEL BY BROOKS AND WARRENS, REPRODUCED BY GENETTE, ILLUSTRATING DIFFERENT TYPES OF NARRATOR PERSPECTIVES (GENETTE, 1980, P. 186).

Genette also introduces the term ‘focalization’ in order to distinguish between *“mood and voice, a confusion between the question who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective? and the very different question who is the narrator?”* (Genette, 1980, p. 186). While narration has generally been associated with terms such as ‘point-of-view’ and ‘third person writing’, this division by Genette does not tackle e.g. the difference in grammar within a narrative. This seems critical to storytelling, but perhaps less important in a transmedia context. Here, the narrator should probably not be unanimous throughout, but rather alter like the audience alters between platforms. Another factor which is not considered by Genette is the possibilities different media provide to the narrating. Many videogames use the first-person perspective, but often these seem more like avatars for the players, than fleshed out focal characters.

A couple of examples of narrators could be the well-known books Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone by J.K. Rowling and Sherlock Holmes by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. In the first example, the narrator is not a character in the story, but is analytic and omniscient while focusing on the character Harry Potter’s internal thoughts and feelings. In the other example, the narrator is a character in the story (Dr. Watson), who narrates the story while focusing on of the main character (Sherlock Holmes). When we compare these classic stories with The Walking Dead, it becomes clear that the TV show use the character Rick Grimes as a narrative focal point, while the game focuses on the character Lee Everett, who does not appear in the TV

**The Walking Dead** is a comic book series created by Robert Kirkman.

It has been adapted to the small screen as a TV show broadcasted by AMC where it first aired in the U.S. on October 31st 2010. The show currently consists of three seasons (IMDB (A)). The show focuses on police officer Rick Grimes, who was shot while at work. When he wakes up from a coma after his injury, he finds out that the world has been taken over by zombies and starts looking for his wife and son (Darabont, 2010). The TV show is based on the comic book series where the focus is on the characters and their development and interactions after a zombie apocalypse (IMDB (B)).

The Walking Dead has expanded its story universe onto a videogame (thereby creating a transmedia story). The computer game has won over 70 ‘Game of the Year’ awards (Telltale Games). Here the characters are different from the TV show and the player makes his own decisions which ultimately change the game play, resulting in a unique experience for each player (ibid.).

show. The Walking Dead show and videogame still seem cohesive, but this is most likely due to the fact that the plots both take place in the same post zombie apocalyptic world. The videogame was very well-received (Telltale Games), so the changes in narrative focal point and plot do not appear to have a negative impact on the transmedia experience as long as the world where the plots take place is the same, regardless of platform. This is an interesting observation, which suggests that we must look further into story worlds to find out how they can be used in transmedia storytelling. Cohesion seems important, so that the audience can recognize the story, is it cohesive enough that the realm is the same, or should bridges such as the same characters and events be present both on the secondary platform and in the tentpole to be meaningful? How can this be done without turning into an adaption?

## Time in Stories

Genette makes distinctive separation between the different ways time is characterized in stories. While it is commonly known that a story can be written in past, present or future tense, Genette expands the term by associating the terms *order*, *duration* and *frequency*.

Order refers to the way events are narrated in the story, such as chronologically, simultaneously, through flashbacks or flash-forwards (Genette, 1980, pp. 33-47). Duration refers to time, hence an event within the story and its narration. On The Walking Dead (and many other TV-shows) the recap in the beginning of an episode takes 30 seconds to watch in real-time (discourse time), but in narrative time the events in the recap might span over days, months and years (Genette, 1980, pp. 86-95). Frequency refers to events within the story, and how often they are narrated (Genette, 1980, pp. 113-117). An example from Harry Potter could be the event where Lord Voldemort kills Harry's parents. This event occurs once (before the beginning of the story in the first book), but is referred to multiple times throughout the book series.

This division of time seems like a relevant tool to consider in connection with transmedia storytelling, where the order and frequency of narrated events might be different according to the order and frequency the audience experiences the different platforms, and which content is presented on the different platforms as well.

## Plot

While the narration is central to the discourse of storytelling, the plot is central to the story itself both. Vogler has created a detailed account of plots in the context of traditional fairytales and myths in the aforementioned '*The Writer's Journey*'. He generalizes the typical story arc of fairytales and myths in this model:

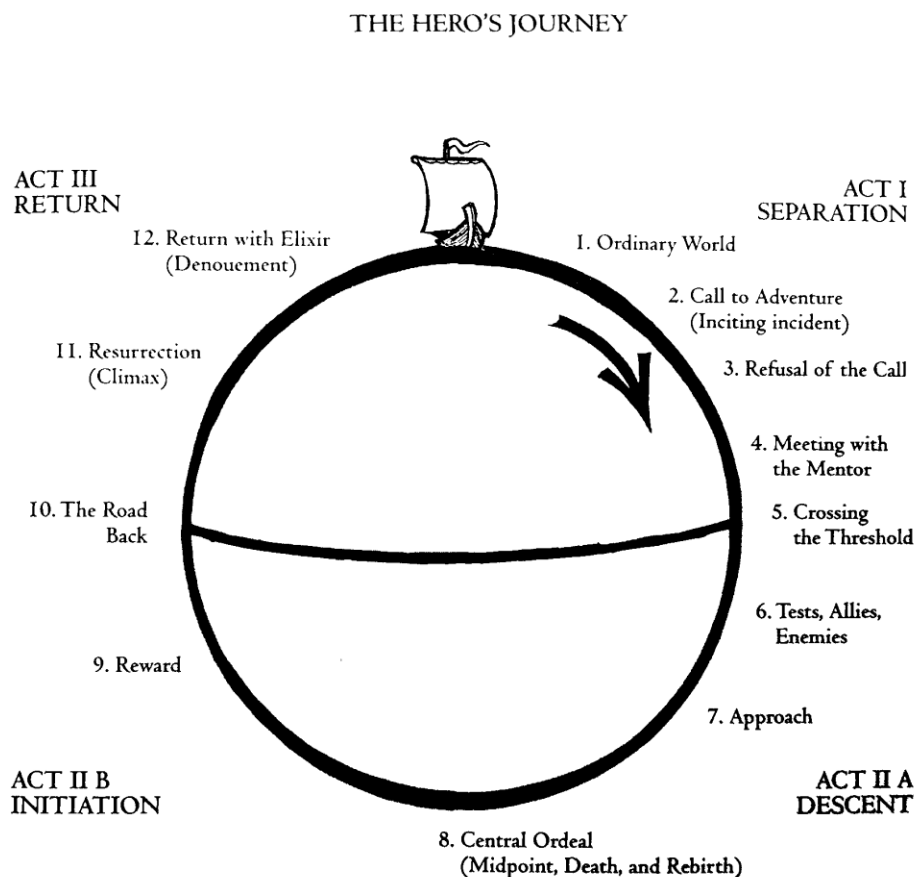


FIGURE 9 - MODEL OF THE HERO'S JOURNEY (VOGLER, 2007, P. 9).

The story begins in the *ordinary world*. Here, the hero is introduced, and he gets a *call to adventure*. At first, the hero is afraid and *refuses the call*. Now, a *mentor* is introduced to the story, and his role is to help prepare the hero for the adventure. The hero accepts the call, and *cross the threshold* to the *Special World*. Here the hero is faced with *tests, allies and enemies*. The adventure makes it necessary for the hero to approach *the inmost cave*, which is often a dangerous place. Here the hero has to endure *the ordeal*. Maybe he has to find a relic or save someone. During the ordeal, the hero encounters a life-or-death moment. After the ordeal is over, the hero receives a *reward* and starts his *road back*. Here, the hero decides to return to the ordinary world, but he has to deal with the costs of what happened during the ordeal, such as villains out for revenge. Then a second life-or-death moment occurs, and the hero is *resurrected* before he can return to the ordinary world, where he *returns with the elixir* (Vogler, 2007, pp. 10-19).

The model portrays the sequences of events in a story, such as the climax, which he calls *the central ordeal*. It could be argued that Vogler's model is too restrictive and does not leave much space for creativity. While the model is a tool created to analyze existing stories, it can also be regarded as a writing tool for creating new stories. Most parts of the model look relevant to transmedia storytelling: For instance, the division of the ordinary world and the special world is interesting when looking at transmedia universes. The Dark Knight and The Walking Dead both have elements of the ordinary and the special world. This division might be useful when switching platforms. The question is how a story can be divided onto different platforms, without influencing the meaningful experience for the audience in a negative way. A transmedia story is naturally divided onto different platforms, but how can the traditional plot with introduction and climax be scattered without hurting the audience's understanding of the whole? One solution might be to narrate multiple plots with each of their own plot points on the different platforms. Different plots would in this case be applied to both platforms which each have their own climax etc.

This way of exploring the story world through multiple platforms, plots and characters may be transmedia storytelling's strong advantage compared to single-medium, traditional storytelling.

## Characters

Another important part of stories is of course the characters. According to Chris Huntley, Vice President of the Write Brothers, Inc. and author of the online book *'Dramatica: The Next Chapter in Story Development'*, the hero from Vogler's Journey is the equivalent of the *main character* combined with the *protagonist* of a story, compared to the broader spectrum of fictional works (Huntley, 1994-2013). He defines the two as the following:

- *"A Main Character is the player through whom the audience experiences the story first hand.*
- *A Protagonist is the prime mover of the plot."* (ibid.).

While the two character functions are often combined in one character, this is not necessarily always the case. An example could be F. Scott Fitzgerald's book *The Great Gatsby*. Here, the main character is Nick Carraway (narrator/main character), who follows the actions of Jay Gatsby (protagonist) in 1920's New York. Huntley sums up the different character roles in fictional works by exemplifying through the characters in the movie Star Wars (1977):

- Protagonist (Luke Skywalker)
- Antagonist (The Empire)
- Guardian (Obi Wan Kenobi)
- Contagonist (Darth Vader)
- Skeptic (Han Solo)
- Sidekicks (R2D2 and C3PO)
- Reason (Princess Leia)
- Emotion (Chewbacca). (Huntley, 1994-2013).

Transmedia stories need interesting characters just as much as regular stories in order to keep the audience invested and interested, and it seems reasonable to use the same character roles as mentioned above for transmedia stories, because the audience is familiar with this pattern. In *The Dark Knight*, Batman/Bruce Wayne is the hero, a combination of protagonist and main character, and the one the audience roots for. While Batman holds these functions in the movie, this is not the case in the ARG. Here, Harvey Dent (hero/protagonist) and The Joker (anti-hero/antagonist) are the main characters (and bridges to the movie), who the audience can choose to side with. This is an interesting possibility in the ARG that leaves the audience with a different choice than the movie: Do I follow the good guy or the bad guy? The possibility to create more than one character's narrative focal point seems to be an interesting way to explore the different transmedia narratives, while remaining true to the world within the story. One thing is certain every story needs a hero/protagonist and villain/contagonist to create tension which drives the plot forward.

## World and Universe

The characters in a story exist within the story world or story universe. Jenkins uses the words "*world*" and "*world building*" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 116), but also "*universe*" (Jenkins, 2006, p. 128). However, he does not differentiate between traditional story worlds and those within a transmedia context. Seeing as both terms are used in relation to both traditional and transmedia storytelling, we have chosen to divide them into categories. While the word 'universe' generally refers to something larger than the word 'world', we identify the two words as referring to the same concept: The realm/place/universe/world. In traditional storytelling this is simply the realm within the story which is told on a platform such as a book or movie. But in transmedia storytelling we see a need for a division between the collection of platforms as a universe and the story universe where the characters exist. Our view on the difference and similarity of the terms can be summarized in the following table:

	'World'	'Universe'	'Story world'	'Story universe'
Traditional (storytelling)	The realm within the story	The realm within the story	The realm within the story	The realm within the story
Transmedia (storytelling)	Collection of platforms (=narrative)	Collection of platforms (=narrative)	One realm entered through multiple platforms	One realm entered through multiple platforms

FIGURE 10 – OUR VIEW ON THE DIFFERENCE AND SIMILARITY OF TERMS

As seen in the table above, the realm within the story is the same whether the word 'universe' or 'story world' is used when speaking of traditional storytelling. Here, the medium is not considered a universe in itself. With transmedia storytelling there is a difference. The transmedia universe is the collection of platforms which the user interacts with. We have created the new terms 'transmedia story world' and 'transmedia story universe' which are used to index the one realm where characters exist which is entered through multiple platforms (transmedia universe) by the audience.

In the example of the Dark Knight, the transmedia universe is the collection of platforms (movie, website, ARG, ect.) while Gotham City can be considered the transmedia story universe. An interesting spin on this is that the fictional city is being told as though it is a part of our real world. This sets restrictions for the plots within the transmedia story universe, when expanding it to other platforms, as supernatural creatures such as dragons or aliens cannot exist here.

This way of extending our natural world to include a strange new place is also an important part of the traditional Harry Potter story world/universe, where the wizard world is a part of our real world, but not noticed by the "regular" people (muggles) who populate it. This example follows Voglers notion of the ordinary world and the special world.



FIGURE 11 – A PHONE BOOTH IS A PORTAL BETWEEN THE REGULAR WORLD AND THE WIZARD WORLD (HARRY POTTER WIKI).

Harry starts out in the ordinary world as we know it, and enters the special (wizard) world. Another possibility is to create a different story universe altogether, such as Middle-earth in the books Lord of the Rings. Here, fantastical creatures can exist: There are fewer restrictions and more hobbits.

While this chapter has dealt mainly with traditional storytelling, many of the components have obviously been adapted by transmedia concepts as we have seen throughout the examples in the chapter. Stories and storytelling could be said to be a pillar of human culture. The idea that the patterns of traditional storytelling are imperishable no matter how or where the story is told therefore seems eligible. The concept of heroes is for instance seen both in ancient cave paintings hunting wild game, in the Bible as Jesus, Moses or Noah, but also in modern storytelling, in movies and videogames such as Batman and Harry Potter.

In this chapter we were able to answer the research question that dealt with the difference and definitions of the terms story, storytelling and story universe. The answers to this have been presented in the corresponding sections, where we have exemplified traditional storytelling concepts through transmedia cases. A short list of the definitions of these terms can be seen below.

- The story is the content of a text. An account of imaginary or real people and events
- Storytelling is the method for narrating a story whether oral or through a medium
- The story universe is the realm within the story. In transmedia storytelling the transmedia story universe is one realm entered through multiple platforms. The transmedia universe is the collection of platforms.

# New Insights

At this point in the thesis we find it prudent to make a short status of what our knowledge is so far, how it was acquired and what of it we want to look further into. By doing this, we move away from the theoretical analyses and towards interpretation and evaluation. Later in this chapter we will move back to the theoretical analysis again.

Through the work with the last two chapters we have come to know a great deal and answered our first two research questions in the process. Most of what we have learned so far could of course be subjected to further validation, but a pragmatic way of viewing our findings is that we find them to be useful in our future work in the design phase.

Through our work in the chapter Transmedia we created a conceptual clarification of the term. We pointed out that it may not be the single platforms but rather the relation between platforms that is essential to the transmedia experience. We know that there has to be a certain degree of continuity and coherence within the transmedia story universe for the audience to be able to recognize the secondary platforms as part of a transmedia universe extended from the tentpole. We suspected that the bridges between platforms may vary in strength, and that this might play a role in creating the meaningful framework for the meaningful experience. At the same time we found that the story, the use and communication of the story and its role of threading the transmedia universe together across the platforms are essential for the transmedia experience. This supports the idea that the creation of bridges is important in transmedia. We saw that framing transmedia in context with storytelling and world building marks the difference between cross- and transmedia. Jenkins' focus on story worlds and world building was deemed

worth looking further into later in this thesis, as it points transmedia in a direction, where the story, the story universe and storytelling are essential.

In the chapter Storytelling we learned to see the story as the content, the narrative as the text itself and storytelling/narrating as the methodic and structural production of the narrative. We suggested that the narrator could probably alter on different platforms, but cohesion in relation to the world where the plots take place seemed to be crucial. We found that we needed to know more about story worlds to find out how they can be used in transmedia storytelling. The level of cohesion between the secondary platform and the tentpole was questioned: is it cohesive enough that the realm is the same, or should bridges such as the same characters and events be present both on the secondary platform and in the tentpole to be meaningful? How can this be done without turning into an adaption? This is something we will look further into in the next chapters.

The knowledge of the division of time into order, frequency and duration was deemed relevant in connection with transmedia storytelling. At the same time, the division of the ordinary world and the special world seemed interesting when looking at transmedia universes, and multiple examples of this division were at hand, which suggested that it might be a valuable tool, not only in traditional storytelling but also in transmedia storytelling. When we looked at different character roles and functions, we saw that characters can be bridges and it became clear that every story needs a hero/protagonist and villain/contagonist to create tension which drives the plot forward. The possibility to create more than one character's narrative focal point was mentioned to be an interesting way to explore the different transmedia narratives, while remaining true to the world within the story.

The extent to which all of this can be validated can be questioned, but we expect to compare this possible knowledge with reality to see how it corresponds (through real transmedia storytelling cases analyzed later in the thesis).

To summarize the points above, we will look further into these ideas in the following chapters:

- Is the relation between platforms essential to the transmedia experience?
- Do the choice, combination and strength of the different types of bridges within the transmedia universe play a role in creating the meaningful framework for the meaningful experience?
- Is it cohesive enough that the realm is the same, or should bridges such as the same characters and events be present both on the secondary platform and in the tentpole to be meaningful? How can this be done without turning into an adaption?
- Which role do story worlds and world building play in transmedia storytelling?

# Transmedia Storytelling

Now that we have summed up our new insights from the previous theory chapters, we are able to use this knowledge to point out how we see traditional storytelling and transmedia are connected in the concept of transmedia storytelling, which was also addressed as one of the research questions:

- What is transmedia storytelling?

Besides defining transmedia storytelling with focus on the story, we strive to gain more insight into bridges and their function in a transmedia storytelling context. This again should bring us closer to answering the first part of the problem statement which asked which criteria a story has to meet in order to expand from one platform to another in a transmedia context.

Earlier, we mentioned that we want to look into whether the choice, combination and strength of the different types of bridges within the transmedia universe play a role in creating the meaningful framework for the meaningful experience. They might bring us closer to answering the first part of the problem statement, but in order to understand them in a transmedia storytelling context, we first need to discuss the term in order to define it.

## Discussing Transmedia Storytelling

Earlier in this thesis the concept of transmedia was defined, where transmedia storytelling helped differentiate transmedia from cross-media. The question is here what characteristics and nuances the concept of transmedia storytelling offers. What are the specific traits of transmedia storytelling?

When looking at transmedia in connection with storytelling it is inevitable to mention Jenkins, who we also cited in the transmedia chapter. One of his definitions of transmedia storytelling is:

*“Transmedia storytelling represents 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. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story”* (Jenkins, 2011).

In this definition it is made clear that transmedia storytelling is a complex matter where systematical coordination and unification are essential to the transmedia experience. In this regard, the way the story will unfold, hence the use of bridges in relation to the story, is central. Jenkins mentions in another context that transmedia storytelling is a multilayered approach to storytelling, and it enables a more complex and more rewarding mode of narrative to emerge (Jenkins, 2003).

This suggests that by offering new levels of insight and experience through different entry points and delivery channels, the audience is motivated to move across platforms as it sustains the depth of this experience (ibid.). Jenkins argues that the reason for this is the fact that consumers usually choose to invest more deeply in a limited number of franchises rather shallowly into a larger number. The redundancy of the many media options burns up the audience’s interest (ibid.). Transmedia storytelling offers a refreshing and different way for the consumer to delve deeper into a story and its story world which is created with complexity enough to explore

through multiple platforms (Jenkins, 2003). This suggests that it allows for a much more immersive experience than a single-media experience contains.

New Media-writer, -designer and -consultant, Carolyn Handler Miller, also highlights this trait of transmedia storytelling. She claims that:

*“One reason that the transmedia approach is such a powerful storytelling technique is because it enables the user to become involved in the material in an extremely deep way [...]. It also offers the story creators an exceptional opportunity to develop extremely deep stories [...]. And because these narratives can utilize virtually any communications medium in existence, they offer a tantalizing variety of ways to play out the story [...].”* (Miller C. H., 2008, p. 152).

Miller points out that transmedia storytelling is about deep stories and deep involvement of the audience, which is connected to the way these stories can play out, as the multiplicity of the platform offers many different possibilities of interactivity. Deep involvement into a vast story might be considered immersion. It is interesting that immersion is strongly associated with the term of transmedia storytelling, because we saw in the Transmedia chapter that transmedia in general also incorporates elements of interactivity. This suggests that the combination of interactivity and immersion is connected to transmedia storytelling. Both of these concepts are connected to the audience's experience in transmedia, which means that it will be necessary to look into the audience experience, including immersion among other things, with regards to transmedia storytelling later; in this regard discussing interactivity may also be relevant. The aspect of the audience experience will be of importance if we want to design a meaningful framework for the audience.

By including Robert Pratten, a transmedia storytelling practitioner, we have a starting point when it comes to the audience's experience with regards to transmedia storytelling. He states in his own definition of transmedia storytelling:

*“In transmedia storytelling, engagement with each successive media heightens the audience’ understanding, enjoyment and affection for the story. To do this successfully, the embodiment of the story in each media needs to be satisfying in its own right while enjoyment from all the media should be greater than the sum of the parts” (Pratten, 2011, pp. 1-2).*

As an extension to Jenkins’ definition, Pratten adds a heightening of the audience’ enjoyment and affection with each platform consumed. According to his definition *the entire enjoyment of a transmedia story is greater than the sum of its parts*. In our understanding this also indicates that the whole experience is more meaningful than the parts by themselves. This is also depicted in the model below:

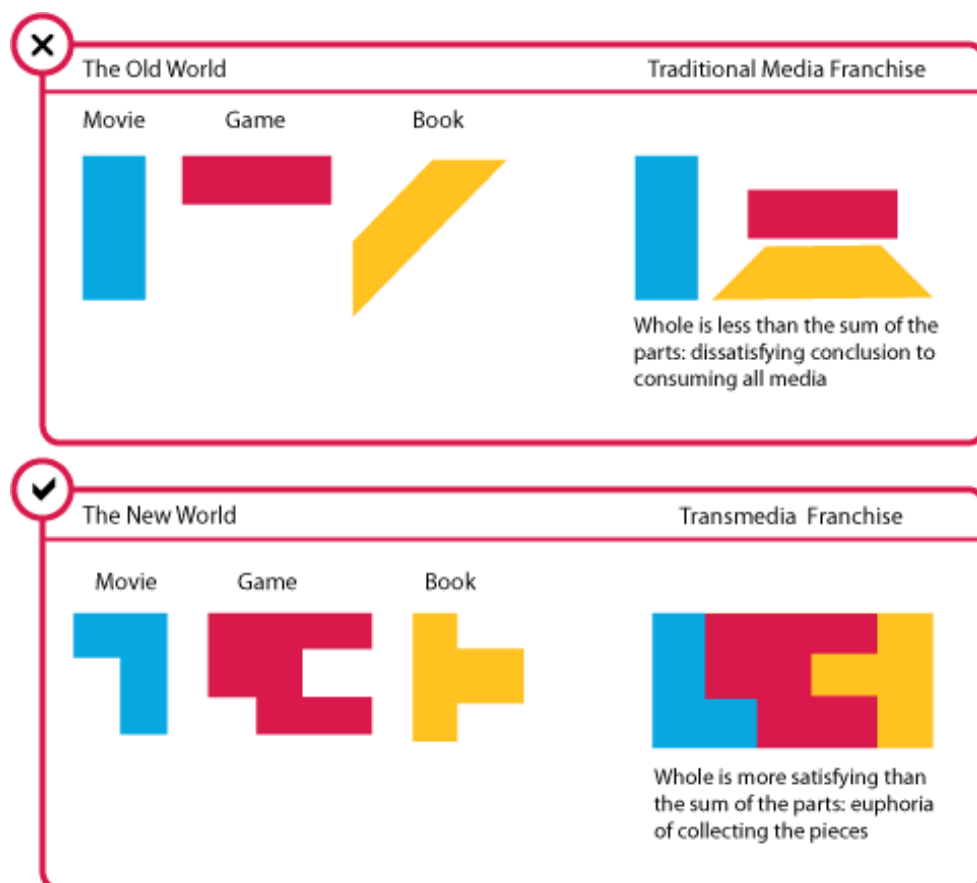


FIGURE 12 – TRADITIONAL MEDIA FRANCHISE VS. TRANSMEDIA FRANCHISE (PRATTEN, 2011, P. 2).

This illustration points out the importance of how the parts of the transmedia universe also have to fit together to create a whole that is more satisfying to the audience than the sum of its parts. Aristotle's philosophy (and Pratten's usage hereof) "*the whole is greater than the sum of its parts*" (Aristotle) becomes relevant in transmedia storytelling because the story is split in pieces onto different platforms. Jenkins also comments on this important feature of transmedia storytelling: "[...] *chunks of meaningful and engaging story information have been dispersed not simply across multiple segments within the same medium, but rather across multiple media systems*" (Jenkins (B), 2009).

This act of dividing a story into smaller pieces or adding pieces to an existing story is referred to as *fragmentation* by Andrea Phillips, the author of '*A Creator's Guide to Transmedia Storytelling*' (Phillips, 2012, pp. 15-16). She also mentions Aristotle's phrase "*greater than the sum of its parts*" (ibid.).

While Pratten, Jenkins and Phillips use different words such as 'pieces', 'chunks', 'parts' and 'puzzle pieces' they all denote the same meaning: The parts of the story which can be put together to form a greater, meaningful whole. These parts do not need to be presented in a chronological order, but the important part is rather that *the pieces have to fit together*, so the audience can get a meaningful experience by assembling them.

Through discussing the different aspects behind transmedia storytelling we were able to tie certain concepts to the word, like interactivity, immersion and the assembly of 'puzzle pieces'. It was also indicated that the experience of the whole transmedia universe is more meaningful than the experience of the platforms by themselves. It became clear that transmedia storytelling is not simply about the way the content of the transmedia universe is spread to the audience in a complex manner highlighting yet again the importance of bridges, but just as much about how the audience experiences this and how they respond to the transmedia storytelling. This is why the next step is to look into this aspect of transmedia storytelling, where the focus is on the audience, their motivation and engagement.

## The Audience Experience in Transmedia

First, we see a need to differentiate between user experience and audience experience.

While user experience deals with the users' satisfaction with using a product (Preece, Rogers, & Sharp, 2011, p. 13) we see audience experience in relation to transmedia as being more than this. A user is different from a member of an audience. While audience normally refers to a large crowd who passively watches a play or a movie, the audience of transmedia products is not equally passive. Here, they not only watch a story, they interact with different platforms, but also with the story and each other. The audience is participatory in the creation of the transmedia universe. They write fan fiction, make fan art, discuss the story, clues and theories with other fans, play games and participate in ARGs and much more. Audience experience is different from user experience because it deals with switching platforms: What satisfies the audience when it comes to bridges, the coherence of the transmedia story universe and secondary platforms?

To us, audience experience in transmedia storytelling also deals with these questions: Why does the audience want to interact and immerse themselves in a transmedia concept? What motivates them to cross platforms?

In the following sections we will look into some of the different aspects connected to the audience experience as well as immersion, and the concepts connected to it. We will address this from a theoretical standpoint, as we are not able to explicitly relate to the audience's experience (cf. Delimitation).

### **Puzzles, Mysteries & Other Motivators**

In the previous section, we tried to discuss transmedia storytelling and made the statement that the audience can generate a meaningful experience by assembling puzzle pieces. The question is then, what is the audience's role in this and why are they motivated to do so? Are there other motivators as well?

In general, the act of collecting and putting the pieces together almost becomes the audience's job. Pratten mentions *"euphoria of collecting the pieces"* in the model depicted in the previous section (Pratten, 2011, p. 2). This may give us a clue in terms of what motivates the audience to collect and put pieces of the story together, to participate by moving across platforms and immerse themselves. Pratten points to affection, enjoyment and understanding of the story as an answer (Pratten, 2011, pp. 1-2).

This can generally also be seen as *puzzlesolving*. Marcel Danesi, Professor of Semiotics and Linguistic Anthropology and author of *Puzzle Instinct: The Meaning of Puzzles in Human Life* notes that puzzles are a part of human life:

*"Puzzles and mysteries [...] appeal to people for the very same reason— they generate a feeling of suspense that calls out for relief. The word catharsis was used by Aristotle (384– 322 B.C.) to describe the sense of emotional relief that results from watching a tragic drama on stage. Unraveling the solution to a mystery story or to a puzzle seems to produce a kind of "mental catharsis," since people typically feel a sense of relief from suspense when they find the answer to the mystery or puzzle"* (Danesi, 2002, p. 2).

This creation of suspense, which calls out for relief, might be a contributing factor which motivates the audience to move across platforms in order to achieve the relief. The same is very common in dramatic TV shows, such as *Lost*, where an episode often ends with a 'cliffhanger'. This creates a suspense, which can only be relieved by watching the next episode.

Another aspect of mysteries is of course guessing the answer. Who is the killer? Professor of cultural studies at the University of Maryland, R. Gordon Kelly suggests that:

*"Solving the puzzle before the author resolves the mystery in the denouement is held to be pleasurable in itself. Other commentators locate the pleasure of mystery reading in*

*the enhanced self-esteem said to attend successful puzzle solving, or in the temporary escape it provides from the problems of the real world” (Kelly, 1998, p. 163).*

Kelly suggests that solving a puzzle is pleasurable, but also mentions the idea that it might enhance self-esteem and let the audience escape the real world and immerse in the puzzle (or in our case, story world). The motive here then becomes escapism. This point also highlights the idea that the story and the story world might be motivational factors of their own in a transmedia storytelling context. Here, the exploration of transmedia story universes is not necessarily the same thing as puzzlesolving. Dr. Pamela Rutledge, Director of the Media Psychology Research Center, supports this idea in her definition of transmedia storytelling:

*“The unfolding story design creates the motivation to engage with other participants, seek out other parts of the story, and contribute to the narrative by adding content” (Rutledge, 2013).*

Rutledge suggests that the story itself can be the motivating factor for crossing platforms, here the audience’s reason for doing so might be curiosity or simply the pleasure of gathering information and knowledge on a subject.

As we have pointed out in the previous section as well as in this one, being immersed in the transmedia experience or in the story world plays an important role in motivating the audience to move around in the transmedia universe. By looking into the concept of immersion we strive to see what role it plays in a transmedia context to assess what the audience wants and expects, especially with regards to achieving a meaningful experience.

## **Immersion**

Henry Jenkins created a list of principles to elaborate which aspects play a part in creating a transmedia narrative. He calls them the ‘*Seven principles of transmedia storytelling*’ and one of these concepts is immersion (Jenkins (A), 2009). According

to Jenkins, “the concept of immersion is about letting the audience enter the fictional transmedia story universe and become persuaded to believe in it” (Jenkins (B), 2009). So immersion has to do with the entering of a story universe which becomes believable to the audience. This makes the concept a relevant factor when it comes to understanding what the audience wants, especially when looking into world building and the elements of transmedia story universes.

To clarify the meaning of immersion, we can include some of literary scholar Marie-Laure Ryan’s work which is based on a metaphor created by psychologist Richard Gerrig. He works with transportation theory, which is regarded as “‘folk theory’ of immersion” (Ryan, 2001, p. 93), i.e. the predecessor of immersion theory. Gerrig’s metaphor from his book ‘*Experiencing Narrative Worlds*’ describes what takes place in the mind of the reader when he is “transported” (immersed) into the story (Gerrig, 1996, s. 10-11).

The following metaphor is divided into pieces, in the same way that Ryan does (left side of the table), as it clarifies the meaning of each part separately (Ryan, 2001, p. 93). With our knowledge of transmedia and storytelling we can translate and describe each part of the metaphor in a transmedia storytelling context (right side of the table):

	<b>Gerrig’s metaphor</b>	<b>Our interpretation</b>
1	<i>“Someone is transported,</i>	The audience immerses themselves into the transmedia story world
2	<i>by some means of transportation,</i>	through some media platform
3	<i>as a result of performing certain actions.</i>	as a result of interacting with the platform.
4	<i>The traveler goes some distance from his or her world of origin</i>	The audience adapts to the rules and laws of this transmedia story universe

5	<i>which makes some aspects of the world of origin inaccessible</i>	resulting in a deep absorption into the construction/contemplation of the story universe causing the disappearance of the immediate surroundings and everyday concerns
6	<i>The traveler returns to the world of origin, somewhat changed by the journey"</i>	The audience returns having gained value by having generated a meaningful experience

FIGURE 13 - OUR INTERPRETATION OF GERRIG'S METAPHOR (GERRIG, 1996, s. 10-11).

Gerrig's metaphor does not only help seeing immersion in regards to story worlds and storytelling, but by applying Ryan's analysis to our own knowledge of transmedia, the power of the concept as a part of designing a meaningful framework becomes clear. Each part of the metaphor describes a step on the way to creating this experience framework. **Step 1** and **step 2** are self-explanatory in the sense of the definition of transmedia. **Step 3** describes the act of getting involved with the media in some way. Ryan describes it from a reader's point of view, so this would be reading a book (Ryan, 2001, p. 93). In our case, it could also be a book which is a platform in the transmedia universe, but it could also be an ARG, a movie, a game, etc. But since transmedia in general is considered to have interactive characteristic (as we found out in the Transmedia chapter), those "*certain actions*" can here be described as "*interacting with the platform*". In this regard it would make sense to define interactivity to understand this statement.

Jens F. Jensen, professor in Experience Design at Aalborg University, provides a general definition of interactivity in relation to all media technologies and defines it in terms of media communication:

*"...et mål for mediets potentielle muligheder for at lade brugeren øve indflydelse på den medieformidlede kommunikations indhold og/eller form"* (Jensen, 1998, p. 41)

This means that Jensen defines interactivity as a measurement for a media's potential possibility to let the user have influence on the media communications content and shape. He states that interactivity is a way to characterize a media, whether the media is more or less interactive.

Jensen follows up by stating that interactive media do not only output from media system to user (audience), but also have the possibility to receive some degree and different kinds of input from user (audience) to system (Jensen, 1998, p. 41). We choose to follow Jensens' general definition of interactivity for now, as it fits with our idea of interactivity, which means that we agree with the idea of interactivity as two-way communication between media system and audience. Later in the design chapter interactivity might be brought up again, as some aspects of the concept might become relevant as part of the design.

Going back to step 3 of Gerrig's metaphor "interacting with the platform" would then refer to the communication between audience and platform, which means allowing the audience to give input to the platform in some way.

In **step 4** we find that Gerrig mentions a crucial part of immersion, where the audience steps away from and forgets the real world for a while to enter the fictional world. We choose to describe this as adapting to the rules and laws of the transmedia story universe. The audience has to do this in order to believe in the story universe as they are willing to suspend their disbelief. According to literary critic and philosopher, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Suspension of disbelief* is a concept that suggests that a writer can infuse a "*human interest and a semblance of truth*" into a fantastic tale, which results in the reader suspending judgment when it comes to the implausibility of the narrative (Coleridge, 2009, p. 239). This concept actually points out the necessity of looking further into world building in the context of creating a meaningful framework. The designers of the transmedia universe and story universe have to invest into the believability of each story across the platforms, since the audience has to suspend their disbelief and be able to adapt to the rules in order to be immersed and have a meaningful experience. The

willingness of the audience to overlook the limitations of a medium is necessary so that these do not interfere with the acceptance of those premises (Welkos, 1993). This points out the importance of coherence across platforms, since the concept of the audience willingly suspending their disbelief across media suggests even less room for implausibility of the story, when it spreads across multiple platforms. Hence, the meaningfulness of a transmedia experience is highlighted, because the value of gathering pieces of the transmedia universe is to assemble a coherent, believable transmedia story universe that the audience can immerse into.

In continuation of this, in **step 5** in Gerrig's metaphor is touched upon as well. The audience's suspension of disbelief concerning the fictional world suggests a shift in focus from the real world to the fictional world. The audience's intense mental activity used to believe in the construction of the textual world this world causes their immediate surroundings and everyday concerns to disappear (Ryan, 2001, p. 94). In this context *flow* becomes relevant. Flow was introduced by the professor of psychology Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, who described the state of flow as the following:

*"People enter a flow state when they are fully absorbed in activity during which they lose their sense of time and have feelings of great satisfaction"* (Csikszentmihalyi M. , 1975, p. 10).

In general *flow* is a state in which a person forgets time and place and is completely absorbed in a given activity, almost like Ryan mentions in her analysis of Gerrig's work. This means flow can be reached when one is active. In transmedia, where audience activity, in the form of interactivity, plays a role, we assess that the concept of flow applies. With regards to transmedia experiences, one can suggest that flow is directly connected to the meaningful experience. The activity of constantly piecing together parts of the story universe, investing in the believability of it and moving across platforms to gain a meaningful whole, may result in another version of what we in theory would consider flow. As the content of each platform in the transmedia universe might result in flow, so could the gathering of a meaningful whole

(*fragmentation* as suggested by Phillips), which could create value for the audience. This is also what Gerrig refers to in his final **step 6** of his metaphor, the value of journey. The flow obtained through gathering a meaningful whole would however be more complex, since the audience would have to move across platforms, which means that they have to be aware of the platforms' existence and have access to them. This could also break the state of flow since the experience is divided across platforms.

Earlier in this thesis we have established that there is a certain satisfaction in collecting fitting pieces to form a whole, which could be considered meaningful to the audience because it could provide mental catharsis and answers to mysteries. This statement also applies in terms of immersion and flow, as a coherent and fitting story world seems to be of importance when framing the meaningful experience. In continuation of this and the knowledge we have collected up until now, the value of bridges is highlighted, as they are the links that make the story pieces on the different platforms fit together. This means that we need to suggest what types of bridges there may be and what their roles are in the creation of a meaningful framework, as bridges are the main element that can help us expand a story universe from one platform to another.

To sum up, in the beginning of this chapter we cited the research question, that lead us to define what transmedia storytelling is. We are now able to create our definition which is:

**Transmedia storytelling is the narrating of a story across multiple media platforms, which are systematically coordinated and unified through bridges. The separate parts of the story should fit together, so the audience can generate a meaningful experience by assembling them. The meaningful experience is generated through immersion, engagement and interaction with the meaningful framework.**

With this definition of transmedia storytelling in place, the parts which we now need more insight into are the meaningful framework, bridges and their function in a transmedia storytelling context.

# Three Types of Story Bridges

Throughout the previous chapters we established the importance of bridges in a transmedia and transmedia storytelling context and were able to point out that there were different types of bridges with different characteristics, though at that point we could not specify the meaning of this. We mentioned that we wanted to look into how the choice, combination and strength of these different types of bridges play a role in creating the meaningful framework. In order to do this we first need to specify these types.

Since we now have looked into traditional and transmedia storytelling we can make qualified suggestions using our knowledge from this subject to present three different types of *story bridges*. Afterwards we will go into depth with each type of bridge in a transmedia storytelling context. We chose the term story bridges, as our main focus are the bridges that are connected to elements of the story and its universe and how these aspects are narrated in the transmedia universe. In our definition, story bridges connect platforms through story elements. Also, this allows us to differ between bridges as an overall term for all types, and story bridges for the ones related to only this topic specifically.

Our three types of story bridges:

- The story universe
- Timeline and events
- The characters

These three bridges are able to act as a common denominator over platforms. They can be used as recognizable key references for the audience, as they connect the elements of the transmedia universe.

After introducing the three types, we can now look into how they play a role in creating the meaningful framework, as we suggest that they are essential contributors to it.

The model below shows how we suggest that the three story bridges connect the secondary platform to the tentpole and how they represent the common factors as they lead across platforms to create a meaningful framework.

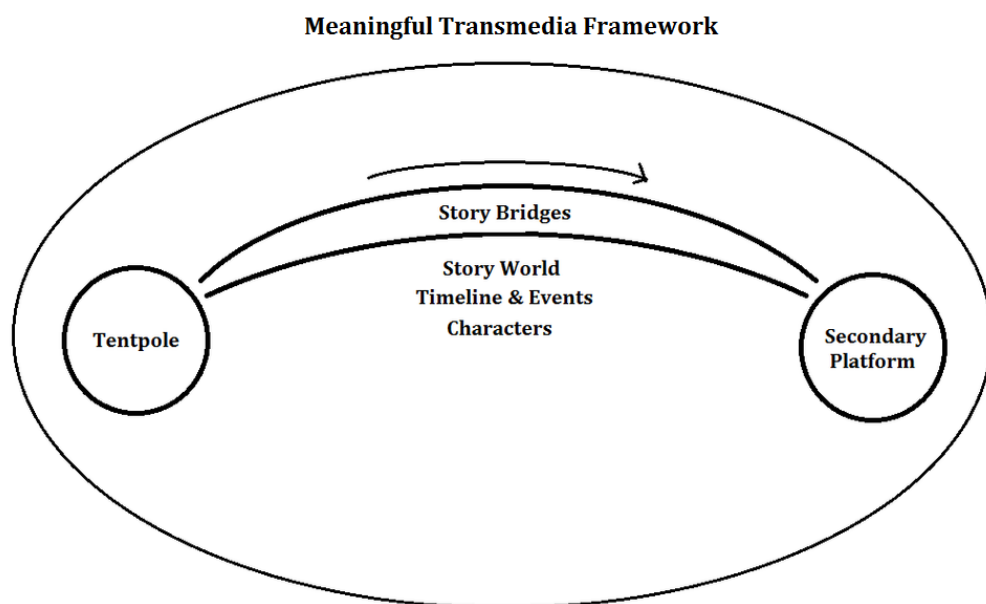


FIGURE 14 – OUR THREE STORY BRIDGES

In the following sections we will look into each of the three story bridges to gather the knowledge needed to be able to understand their general role as bridges in a transmedia universe and how they relate to the meaningful experience. In each of the sections we will try to show that these three types in particular are the essential

keys to creating a meaningful framework for the meaningful experience. Also, we will try to show specifically how the framework can become meaningful and in which way the experience that is generated by the audience is meaningful.

The theory to support this will for the most part be by Jenkins, who created the “*Seven Core Concepts of Transmedia Storytelling*” (Jenkins (A), 2009) to elaborate which aspects play a part in creating a transmedia narrative. These seven concepts will be referred to throughout when they are deemed important to the discussed subject.

## Story Bridge – Story Universe

We suggest that this type of story bridge occurs when the story of a platform shares rules, norms, realm, places and/or buildings with the tentpole. The Walking Dead could be an example of this. The videogame shares the same post-apocalyptic zombie infested realm with the TV show and the rules on how zombies are created and how they act are the same in both the tentpole and on the secondary platform. This ensures that the story world is recognizable throughout, which makes the experience framework more meaningful. In this sense, one of Jenkins seven concepts becomes relevant: *Continuity*. It can be connected to the terms “coherence” and “plausibility”. The continuity of a single fictional realm on multiple different media platforms is important for fans when trying to assemble the puzzle pieces from the different platforms into a meaningful whole (Jenkins (A), 2009). *Continuity* is about communicating the story world to the user in a believable and meaningful manner (ibid.) and in order for the audience to suspend their disbelief it seems reasonable for the story world to stay coherent, otherwise the audience might not become easily immersed.

As mentioned earlier Jenkins states that immersion lets the audience enter the fictional transmedia story universe and become persuaded to believe in it (Jenkins (B), 2009). When building a transmedia story world it is important that it allows the audience to become immersed. The concept of *world building* has already been

mentioned earlier in this thesis. It is specifically connected to the creation of story universes and therefore a highly relevant subject when it comes to understanding the story universe as a story bridge. Jenkins defines world-making, which is the term he used for world building in his early work, as:

*“the process of designing a fictional universe that will sustain franchise development, one that is sufficiently detailed to enable many different stories to emerge but coherent enough so that each story feels like it fits with the others”* (Jenkins, 2006, p. 294).

According to Jenkins world building in a transmedia context is about the balance of complexity and coherence of the transmedia story universe. It is the base of the transmedia story as it sustains not only individual characters or specific plots, but multiple interrelated characters and their stories (Jenkins, 2007). According to Jenkins, the coherence of the story universe is especially important because it makes the audience feel that each story fits together. In other words, this contributes to the meaningful framework, as it makes the content logically correlative.

Compared to Jenkins, Phillips provides an approach to world building which is connected to the real world where the audience gets to play with parts of the fictional story universe (Phillips, 2012, pp. 43-46). Phillips suggests that this initiates audience engagement. An example of this could be the ARG that was carried out to promote the The Dark Knight movie. The real-world event included the incorporation of small pieces from the fictional story universe, as props that the audience could interact with.



FIGURE 15 - A 'JOKER DOLLAR', A PROP FROM THE THE DARK KNIGHT ARG (TANNER, 2008)

Here, a parallel to Vogler's idea of the ordinary world and the special world can be drawn, where the transmedia story universe seeps into reality and the audience become the ones to cross the barrier between the ordinary (real) and the special world (transmedia story universe) and immerse themselves. Here, the motivation could be escapism, where the audience gets a break from their everyday lives. Murray also calls this the "*delicious otherness*" of this fictional world (Murray, 2000, p. 101), as she points out the fact that this fictional world has to differ in some way from our own real world, as this makes it interesting ("delicious") for the audience. For example, the story world of Harry Potter may seem more interesting and engaging for the audience than the one of the TV show Sherlock. Sherlock is placed in modern London, whereas Harry Potter presents aspects that are real, such as London, the train station Kings Cross, etc., but also new and exciting aspects, like magic, the fictional school for wizards Hogwarts, etc., which motivates the audience to explore this world across platforms. In this relation, one could wonder if the balance between the "delicious otherness" of the story world and the real world, as well as the coherence across platforms, is directly related to the strength of the bridge.

**Sherlock** is a TV show from 2010. It is a modernized version of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's famous books. The show focuses on Sherlock Holmes and his companion Dr. John Watson, who solve murders and mysteries as private detectives in modern-day London.

To sum up, the first story bridge we have identified is the story universe. It is an essential part of the meaningful framework, as it serves the function of making the extension, which is the secondary platform, recognizable to the audience and also has a motivating factor which drives the audience across platforms, because they enjoy exploring the “delicious otherness” of the story universe. In order to be meaningful the story universe has to be coherent on the different platforms.

## Story Bridge – Timeline & Events

The second type of story bridge we have identified is the timeline and the events in a story universe. By this we mean the events that take place in a story and how they correspond with the greater overall timeline, encompassing all the stories and events presented to the audience throughout the whole transmedia universe. The way we see it, an event referred to in the main story of the tentpole appears on the secondary platform, which makes it the bridge that connects the two. For example, the event on the secondary platform could be a sub-story that explains a character’s past before he appeared in the tentpole’s main story. It could also be the account of an event from the tentpole seen through another character’s perspective on the secondary platform. To exemplify this, we can mention the TV show *Lost*, which can be seen in the illustration below.

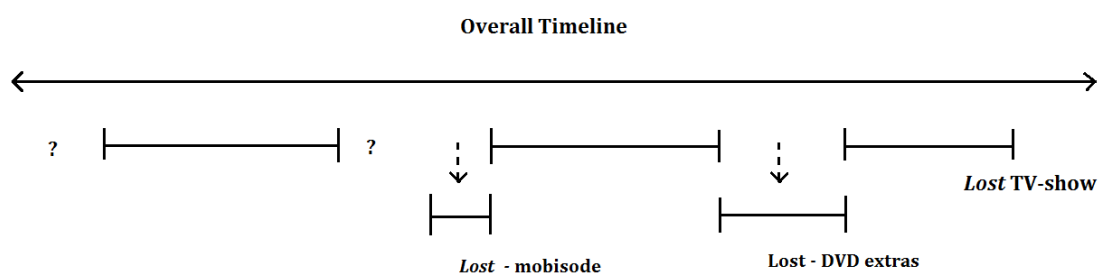


FIGURE 16 - TIMELINE AND EVENTS FOR THE TV SHOW LOST

During the events in the *Lost* TV show certain ‘holes’ are left open for the audience to explore. Not all holes may be able to be filled by the audience, others may not be

interesting to fill out, but they are all part of the overall timeline *which includes everything that ever happened in the story universe*. In order to find the answers to some of the mysteries that may occur during or between the events initially presented in the Lost TV show, the audience is motivated to move across platforms to look into the mobisodes or get the DVD boxes, to gather information needed to satisfy the need for answers to the mysteries. The story bridge in this case is therefore about structuring events so they correspond to the timeline and each other, otherwise they will not represent a meaningful whole, once the audience tries to gather and put the pieces together. This type of story bridge motivates the audience in terms of puzzle solving but also in finding answers to the mystery, which in turn provides mental catharsis and relief of suspense, as we found out in the section Puzzles, Mysteries & Other Motivators.

It is also possible to include Murray's concept of "delicious otherness" to events on the overall timeline. It seems reasonable to think that in order for the story to be interesting to the audience there has to be elements which are foreign to them. Watching a character in a mysterious situation or in an action-packed car chase might be more entertaining than watching a character shop for groceries in a supermarket, which is not an event that stands out at all.

Another way of looking at this type of story bridge can be found by looking into Jenkins' concept of *seriality* which is connected to the form and the structure of the story universe that unfolds across platforms. According to Jenkins, seriality refers to a full story that is dispersed across multiple installments (Jenkins (B), 2009). He explains seriality by referring to basic elements story and plot:

*"The story refers to our mental construction of what happened which can be formed only after we have absorbed all of the available chunks of information. The plot refers to the sequence through which those bits of information have been made available to us. A serial, then, creates meaningful and compelling story chunks and then disperses the full story across multiple installments"* (ibid.).

Here, Jenkins idea of 'story chunks' fits with our idea of events within a larger story and Prattens' and Phillips' notion of puzzle pieces. It also fits with our overall idea that the timeline and events have to correspond to give a meaningful whole to the audience. Events may be spread across platforms, but the timeline should create order and provide an overview to the audience.

If we look back to the chapter on storytelling, we discussed the division of time in stories suggested by Genette: Order, frequency and duration (Genette, 1980, pp. 33-47; 86-95;113-117). The order of events might be scattered across platforms, as suggested by Jenkins. This would mean that the overall timeline of the story universe is unclear to the audience, who in turn tries to collect the pieces to understand the timeline chronologically. Another way could be to create flashbacks or flash-forwards which allow the audience a deeper insight into a character's history and motive.

Duration might be useful when making sub stories on secondary platforms. An example could be to narrate to the audience how the main character's childhood was like. The narrated time could be from birth until the character left his home to discover the world, but the discourse time would be the time it takes the audience to watch this montage.

The last division of time by Genette is frequency (how often an event within the story is narrated) (Genette, 1980, pp. 113-117). One event might be useful to repeat on more than one platform. It could be the compass which provides the audience with a bearing on where they are on the timeline, if it is a vast transmedia story with many platforms and events related to each other. Maybe the same event could benefit from being told on two different platforms with different levels of audience interactions. The same event which was seen in a TV show might be beneficial to recreate as part of a videogame where the player can move around the location of the event and find clues, which would allow for puzzlesolving.

One of Jenkins seven core concepts, *subjectivity* also deals with this. It is connected to the way of extending the transmedia experience through different objectives in the transmedia story universe, like for instance a sub-story told from a secondary character's point of view. Jenkins states that "*it expands upon what is depicted*" and allows the audience to compare and contrast subjective experiences of the same events within the fictional story (Jenkins (B), 2009).

The concept of subjectivity can add depth and allows the audience to gain insight by delving further into the content from different angles, which would provide a deeper understanding of the story universe as a whole. This can create another layer of immersion and strengthen the engagement of the audience.

To sum up, the second story bridge we have defined is the timeline and events within a story universe. It is another essential part of the meaningful framework, as it allows the audience to gather and piece the events together in order to try to solve mysteries, obtain relief of suspense and mental catharsis. This can be a motivating factor which drives the audience across platforms. In order for it to be meaningful the timeline has to be structured properly so the events are able to fit and align into the order of the timeline of the whole story universe.

## Story Bridge – Characters

In the previous section we described subjectivity. We mentioned that the extension of the transmedia experience through sub-stories told from a secondary character's point of view can add depth and allow the audience to delve into the content from a different angle, furthering the engagement of the audience. In this regard the role of the characters is highlighted. Not only does the concept, as Jenkins describes it, fortify the significance of the relation between the audience and the characters, it also points out the audience's need to engage with different characters within the story. This is one of the reasons why the characters are an important story bridge, which contributes to the meaningful framework, which we will try to clarify in the following.

First, we will establish the general sense of how we see the characters play an important role in the audience experience of a transmedia story. For this we can begin by including Michael J. Porter et. al, who argue that the two central characteristics of a TV show narrative are *“a heavy emphasis on character development and continuous storyline that flow between episodes of a series”* (Porter, Larson, Harthcock, & Nellis, 2002, p. 1). Comparing this statement, which is based on the seriality of a TV show, with Jenkins’ concept of seriality in transmedia products, it is likely that both the TV serial and the transmedia serial share the same qualities. While the story on the individual platforms may change, the characters are entities which can remain the same within stories that span across platforms. Hence, the characters seem to be strong anchors in a transmedia story world which encompasses several platforms, as they are a relatable constant that can provide different views on the scape of changing stories in the transmedia story world.

This leads to the question: Does the transmedia story universe in some cases comprise of the presence of the characters and does it completely change the comprehension of a product as part of a transmedia universe if the characters are not part of it?

We can exemplify this question through the examples The Walking Dead and the TV show Sherlock. In TWD the character story bridge is weakly represented on the different platforms within the transmedia universe, opposite the story universe story bridge, which is the strongest story bridge on TWD’s secondary platform, the videogame. In Sherlock, the whole show depends on the characters as anchors, the story world in itself is not unique in any way, and does not present a “special world”. So the removal of the characters as a story bridge on a secondary platform would have larger consequences for the audience experience in the case of Sherlock than the TWD.

It could be interesting to look at this from a perspective that takes the different types of characters into account as well. Earlier in the chapter ‘Storytelling’ different characters types such as the protagonist and the antagonist were introduced

(Huntley, 1994-2013). Taking different movies into account, it is clear though that the size and importance of these roles change depending on the story and the plot. In this regard it might not be the type of character, which makes the audience choose to move across platforms, but rather the size and importance of this character's role and whether he is interesting to the audience or not. Is it a main character or a secondary character, and also, is the secondary character interesting enough for the audience to follow? It comes together in the question, what is the audience's relationship to these characters, how do they relate to them?

To elaborate on this we can include several sources, such as Murray Smith, Professor and Head of Film Studies at the University of Kent, who has worked with the audiences' engagement with fictional characters (Smith, 1995). In contrast to many other approaches Smith rejects that the audience vicariously experiences the thoughts and feelings of the protagonist (ibid., p. 77). In his work, Smith writes:

*"When the spectator Charles sees a fictional character faced by the Green Slime [...] he does not experience an emotion identical to that of the character. Rather than experiencing fear of the Slime, Charles experiences anxiety for the character as she faces the slime"* (ibid., p. 78).

Smith points out that the engagement with fictional characters is strong in the way that the audience can relate to their feelings in the given situation. This highlights Jenkins' concept of subjectivity as stories told from other angles and perspectives expand the experience of the story universe from the way it is presented initially. In this regard we can also add Murray's statement that when *"we enter the enchanted world [of a fictional narrative] as our actual selves, we risk draining it of its delicious otherness"* (Murray, 2000, p. 101). Here, Smith's suggested way of relating to characters would prevent the risk of draining the enchanted world. For instance, if the characters are "fish out of water" who cross Vogler's threshold to the special world and are thus unfamiliar with this special world, it could provide the audience with a relatable entry point to the story universe, which means that the audience

does not enter the enchanted world themselves, which minimizes the risk of draining it.

The appeal of several shows lies within the ability to introduce the audience to a world that differs from their own, as mentioned earlier with TWD. In TWD, the characters start out as normal people who are suddenly faced with zombies, which makes them “fish out of water”. Characters can in this sense be seen as a portal through which the audience can access this “delicious otherness”, as they relate to the characters without breaking the illusion by inserting themselves into this world, which they originally are not part of. On a general level this deals with the emotional relationship between the characters and the audience.

In this regard we can introduce Ien Ang, Professor of Cultural Studies, whose concept of *emotional realism*, points out the reason why the audience watching *Dallas* experiences pleasure when watching the show, “[It] is situated at the emotional level: what is recognized as real is not the knowledge of the world, but a subjective experience of the world: a ‘structure of feeling’” (Ang, 1985, p. 45). Combining this with our knowledge of characters, we might claim that the audience feels that the characters are important, because they relate to them on an emotional level, through for instance empathy or admiration. The stronger they empathize or the more they admire the characters, the greater the chance that they will follow them across platforms, which also means that the character’s likability and emotional tie to the audience is proportional to the strength of the bridge.

Finally to sum up, characters, as a story bridge in the transmedia universe, provide an emotional tie-in that motivates the audience to move across the platforms. This bridge is another part of the meaningful framework, because it contributes to the meaningful experience which is the emotional value the audience receives by watching or following their favorite character. The framework itself is meaningful, because the characters appear as anchors and constants within the story that is spread across platforms. The audience’s engagement with the characters on an emotional level is also of importance though. This means, that the answer to the

question whether or not the audience finds it worth pursuing the main or secondary character onto another platform, is dependent on how they feel about this character.

# New Insights

## Part 2

Here, we again choose to sum up the knowledge and new insights gathered in the previous chapters, Transmedia Storytelling and Three Types of Story Bridges. We will also sum up what we now know about meaningful experiences and frameworks in transmedia.

This will be done by gathering and reconstructing our new insights from the previous chapters into a table which shows the different story bridges, their characteristics and how they contribute to the meaningful framework and allow for the meaningful experience to occur.

Throughout the chapter it became clear that transmedia storytelling is a complex matter, where systematical coordination and unification are essential to the experience. The use of bridges is central to this coordination. It also became clear that the separate parts of a transmedia story create a whole that is more satisfying to the audience than the sum of its parts. While these parts do not need to be presented in a chronological order, the important thing is that *the pieces have to fit together*, so the audience can generate a meaningful experience by assembling them.

It became clear that the reasons for immersing, engaging and interacting with a transmedia story, are many and diverse. We found motivators such as puzzlesolving, which creates mental catharsis or a relief of suspense, and simply the joy of guessing the answer to a mystery. We saw that the story itself could be the motivation and so could the pleasure of gathering information and knowledge on a subject.

We looked into immersion and found that it is a way of escaping the real world, where the audience adapts to the rules and laws of the transmedia story universe thus suspending their disbelief. The importance of fitting pieces also applied in terms of immersion and flow, because a coherent and fitting story world is of importance to the meaningful framework.

Our new knowledge enabled us to create our definition of transmedia storytelling:

**Transmedia storytelling is the narrating of a story across multiple media platforms, which are systematically coordinated and unified through bridges. The separate parts of the story should fit together, so the audience can generate a meaningful experience by assembling them. The meaningful experience is generated through immersion, engagement and interaction with the meaningful framework.**

The value of bridges became even clearer through this definition, as they link the story pieces on the different platforms together. Thus, we defined three types of story bridges, which are bridges that connect platforms through story elements. To give a better overview of the three story bridges we defined, the insights are summarized in bullet points below:

#### **Story Bridge – The Story Universe**

- Occurs when the story of the secondary platform shares rules, norms, realm, places and/or buildings with the tentpole.
- In order for this story bridge to be part of the meaningful framework, the story universe has to be coherent and continuous on different platforms. This is important for the audience when trying to assemble the puzzle pieces from the different platforms into a meaningful whole.
- This story bridge provides the audience with the element of recognition by presenting a coherent story universe across platforms.

- The story itself can be said to be the motivator for the audience to move across platforms because of exploring the “delicious otherness” of the story.
- The story bridge enables immersion and suspension of disbelief which are parts of the meaningful experience.

#### **Story Bridge – Timeline and events**

- Occurs when the story of the secondary platform shares events and timeline with the tentpole.
- In order for this story bridge to be part of the meaningful framework, the events have to correspond to the overall timeline. The timeline should create order and provide structure for the audience which allows for puzzlesolving.
- This story bridge provides the audience with an overview by presenting the events and the timeline in a structured order across platforms.
- Motivates the audience in terms of puzzlesolving and finding answers to mysteries.
- The story bridge enables mental catharsis and relief of suspense which are parts of the meaningful experience.

#### **Story Bridge – Characters**

- Occurs when the story of the secondary platform shares one or more characters with the tentpole.
- In order for this story bridge to be part of the meaningful framework, the story on the secondary platform should contain characters that are anchors and constants within the story.
- This story bridge provides the audience with relations by presenting relatable characters that appear as constants across platforms.
- Emotional engagement and empathy with the characters motivate the audience to move across platforms.
- The story bridge enables empathy, admiration and other feelings towards the characters. These feelings are parts of the meaningful experience.

The bullet points above have been arranged into the table below, which shows the relation between the content of the story bridges and the experiences they enable the audience to generate.

		Story Bridge 1 Story Universe	Story Bridge 2 Timeline & Events	Story Bridge 3 Characters	
Content	Characteristics, that provide	Continuity/Coherence	Order, Structure	Anchors, Constants	<div>From Meaningful Framework</div> <div>To Meaningful Experiences</div>
Audience	Audience Motives,	Recognition	Overview	Relation	
	that result in	Exploration	Puzzlesolving	Emotional Engagement	
		Immersion	Relief of Suspense Mental Catharsis	Empathy, Admiration, etc.	

FIGURE 17 - OVERVIEW OF STORY BRIDGES

The table clarifies how each bridge, with its significant characteristic and by giving the audience a motive to move across platforms, plays its part in providing a meaningful framework. The table shows characteristics of each story bridge, which is needed in order to provide the audience with either recognition, overview or relations (the row ‘Content’). The story bridges need to have these characteristics, as they are also the criteria which need to be met in order for the framework to be meaningful.

The story bridges provide motives for the audience when moving across platforms which enables the audience to generate meaningful experiences, such as immersion, relief of suspense or empathy (the row ‘Audience’).

We now know that story bridges, their characteristics and experience they enable, are part of the meaningful framework and experience. We expect to learn more about these concepts later in the thesis, after having used our story bridges in case analyses, which should provide more new insights.

In relation to our problem statement, we see the story bridges as necessity when expanding a story from one platform to another. They are the links that connect the parts of the transmedia universe and they provide the motivation for the audience when it comes to the story. Even though this is not a complete answer to the first part of the problem statement, this is the first step on the way to be able to answer it.

With the content of the table in mind, we will now attempt to present a hypothesis and construct a model which can be used to analyze existing transmedia cases.

# The Model

In the last chapter we were able to determine the characteristics of each story bridge, which were also criteria that had to be met in order for the framework to be meaningful. We also determined that the story bridges played a role in the expansion of the story across platforms. We will now use the three story bridges and their characteristics to construct a model. This model, which we choose to call the Story Bridge Model, is inspired by radar charts or so-called spider charts (FusionCharts). We choose this type of model, because we see its potential in depicting the degree of representation a story bridge has on a secondary platform.

In the last section of the previous chapter we indicated the creation of a hypothesis. This hypothesis is based on our table and is created as part of the answer to our problem statement:

**The more all three story bridges are represented on the secondary platform, the more meaningful the framework for the meaningful experience will be.**

The representation mentioned in the hypothesis refers to the content of the secondary platform compared to the tentpole's content. This comes from the idea that each of the three story bridges have to be highly present on the secondary platform to create a meaningful whole, as we see the phrase "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (Aristotle), also applying to the bridges. The model we constructed can be seen in the illustration below:

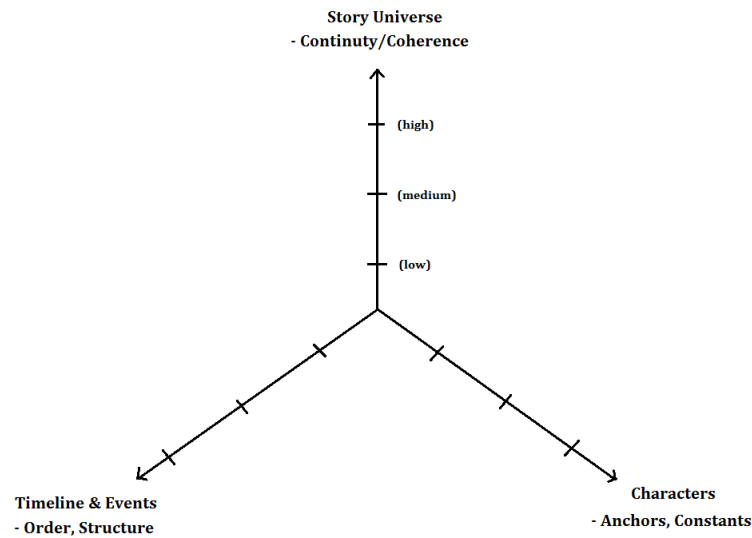


FIGURE 18 – THE STORY BRIDGE MODEL

The model encompasses the three story bridges and the main characteristic of each bridge has been assigned to an axis in the model.

The Story Bridge Model needs input and can be used to analyze the level of representation a story bridge has on a secondary platform. The idea is to assess how highly these bridges are represented on the secondary platform related to the tentpole and then assign scores to each of them to be able to plot them into the model. These scores can either be zero, low, medium or high.

If for instance the story bridge “timeline and events” is highly represented on the secondary platform, it indicates that the framework for puzzlesolving is strongly present. This means that the audience has the possibility to achieve mental catharsis through puzzlesolving. Our model is based on a theoretic perspective on how meaningful transmedia experiences occur through meaningful transmedia frameworks (cf. New Insights Part 2). The specific functions of each score and axis will become clearer once we look into them separately in the following. First the scores in general:

<b>A score of zero</b>	A story bridge would receive a score of zero, if the story bridge is not present on the secondary platform at all
<b>A low score</b>	A low score indicates a weak representation, of the story bridge in question, on the secondary platform
<b>A medium score</b>	A medium score indicates a representation that is neither weak nor strong
<b>A high score</b>	A high score would indicate that the story bridge in question is strongly represented on the secondary platform.

With regards to this we can look at each story bridge separately and come with some suggestions as to how these scores apply to them.

### **The “Story Universe” Axis**

The score of the story universe depends on how the continuity is represented on the secondary platform. A zero score would mean that the characters for instance have been put into a completely different world, and that rules from the world of the tentpole do not apply any longer. This would result in the audience not recognizing rules and norms from the tentpole anymore, which can harm the immersion into the content as part of transmedia universe. A low score with regards to the story universe could for instance be the case if is only hinted that the story takes place in the same story universe, but no “evidence” is ever made available to the audience. A medium score could be recognizable rules, norms and places, and a high one could be the representation of the completely same world on both platforms.

### **The “Timeline & Events” Axis**

When it comes to this story bridge, we look at the structure of the timeline and whether the events that happen in the story of the secondary platform fit with the overall timeline presented in the tentpole as well as the references made to events that happen in the tentpole. It is about providing order and structure. A zero score would create confusion and leave the audience with no overview and they would not be able to fit the pieces of the puzzle properly together any longer, for it to give a meaningful whole. Another example could be in the case of a medium score if the

event on the secondary platform fits with the timeline of the tentpole, but does not offer a great amount of puzzlesolving. An epilogue is for instance an easy and large puzzle piece to place on the timeline, and would not score more than medium on the story bridge 'timeline and events'. A high score would offer for a great amount of puzzlesolving and structure.

### **The "Characters" Axis**

When it comes to the third and final story bridge, the score that is plotted into the model depends on the characters representation on the secondary platform. If we look at the previous example of an epilogue, a high score could be given if characters from the tentpole are in said epilogue and the focus of the epilogue is to tell the characters' story. If the focus is only partly on the characters from the tentpole or only a few of the secondary characters are represented it would be a medium score. When it comes to the low score it could be if only one out of many characters from the tentpole is on the secondary platform and this character is not focused on; and if none of the characters are present or in focus the score would be zero.

Finally, we can show an example of a setup in the model:

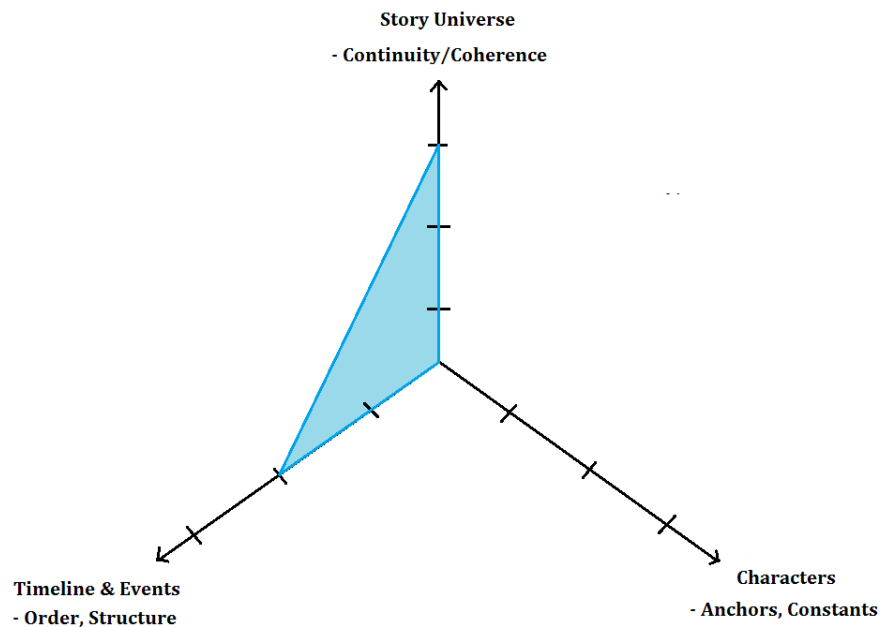


FIGURE 19 – A SETUP IN THE STORY BRIDGE MODEL

In this example (above) the story universe is strongly represented on both the tentpole and the secondary platform. The timeline and the events play a secondary role and the platforms have no characters in common. In continuation of our hypothesis this would not represent a meaningful framework.

As we see it, the model can be put into use when analyzing the story bridges between two platforms. It has to be made clear that a low score does not mean that the story universe, the timeline or the characters are bad on these platforms; it means that the transmedia framework is not very meaningful, because it is not a logically correlative framework, which means that the possibility for the meaningful experience to occur is low.

Our motive in the next chapter is to analyze the story bridges between a tentpole and a secondary platform, where we analyze cases by applying the model to existing transmedia storytelling examples.

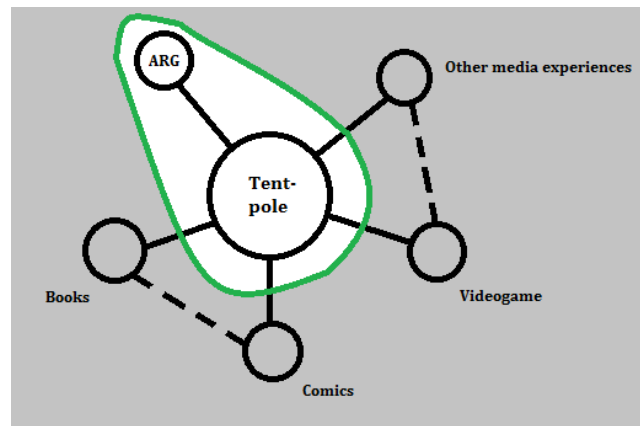


FIGURE 20 – AN EXAMPLE OF OUR FOCUS

We realize that transmedia storytelling often has multiple platforms. We think it is possible to use our model to analyze an entire transmedia universe by looking at the bridges between all the platforms, as it is necessary to look at all the parts to understand the whole. However, our focus in this thesis is on the tentpole and its connection to one secondary platform, because we, as indicated in the problem statement, work towards being able to expand a story from an already existing platform (which becomes the tentpole) to a secondary platform, thereby creating a transmedia story.

# Case Analyses

In this chapter we will focus on analyzing three cases that we have chosen. They were chosen with regards to the variety that they might display when plotted into the model. Each case will be described in their respective sections. They are:

- The movie The Dark Knight and ARG
- The TV show Lost and mobisodes
- The TV show The Walking Dead and videogame

As part of our method the goal of the case analyses is to test our hypothesis in connection with our model. Through this, we will also be able to analytically explore the potential framework to see how this can be meaningful. In the introduction of this thesis we stated that we seek to achieve the design of a *meaningful experience framework* which is *a logically correlative framework that allows for the meaningful experience to occur*.

Also, we want to determine standards, which might help in the design of our own transmedia concepts. Working with real cases that use transmedia storytelling will challenge our theoretical understanding that lead to the creation of our model.

By looking into the three cases we also expect to determine standards regarding the tentpole and how to choose one in a transmedia storytelling context. Our hypothesis suggested, the more all three story bridges are present on the secondary platform, the more meaningful the framework. This indirectly indicates that the tentpole should contain some *basic story elements*, which are the three elements our story bridges consist of. By this we mean that there has to be a sense of causality in the tentpole: *There is a world, then a timeline to this world and lastly characters who*

*inhabit this world and affect the timeline.* If these basic story elements are not in the tentpole, then they cannot become story bridges on the secondary platform.

We also have an idea that a concept like Murray's "delicious otherness" may play a role when it comes to establishing and finding an appropriate tentpole for a transmedia universe, but this will become clearer through the analyses.

## **Case Analysis 1 - The Dark Knight**

The first case that we choose to analyze and have already introduced earlier is connected to the movie *The Dark Knight* by Christopher Nolan. We chose to look at the movie as a tentpole and the alternate reality game and campaign, "*Why so serious?*", which was launched before the premiere of the movie, as a secondary platform.

The comprehensive ARG, which was meant to supplement the regular promotional campaign for *The Dark Knight*, ended up stealing all the attention as it became famous across the U.S. and even won a Grand Prix award at the Cannes Film Festival (Anderson, 2009).

### **The Tentpole – Movie**

Christopher Nolan's *The Dark Knight* has its roots in the Batman franchise and is a reboot of the series, which started with a comic book. As mentioned earlier, it focuses on the life of Bruce Wayne, who spends his nights fighting crime and protecting Gotham City as the Bat-man (Beatty, 2008, s. 40-44). Additionally to the character of Batman, the Joker and Harvey Dent play the largest roles in the movie; Harvey Dent being the newly elected district attorney for Gotham City, also called "the White Knight" of Gotham, and the Joker being the main villain and counterpart to Batman himself. The movie in general is very character centered, and it revolves around the three characters (seen in the image below) and their actions.



FIGURE 21 – MOVIE POSTER FEATURING THE MAIN CHARACTERS  
(TRYLOBYTE'S CORNER, 2008)

The timeline presented in the movie is characteristic for the ones that are usually presented in movies. It reflects the general structure of the plot, presented earlier by Vogler. The movie is the second part of a trilogy which started with *Batman Begins* in 2005 and ended in 2012 with *The Dark Knight Rises*. This means that the events correspond in an overall timeline, but the second movie also has its own timeline that extends to include for instance the ARG.

In the story universe presented in the movie, one of the main themes is order vs. chaos which takes place in the Gotham City. The Joker's main motive is to create chaos and anarchy; Batman, as well as Harvey Dent on the other hand represent the order in Gotham City (Chen, 2008). In the movie this plays out through various actions that the Joker performs in an insane manner. This finally takes its toll on Harvey Dent who becomes victim of the chaos, and changes from 'White Knight' to a two-faced' villain.

The tentpole contains all three basic story elements to a high degree which means that all three story bridges could be present on the secondary platform. At the same time the tentpole holds elements of Murray's "delicious otherness" both it its

characters, where the Joker in particular represents the otherness, and in the events, where Batman has to save the city from the Joker's evil plans, which include bombing two ferries. The story world itself contains less "delicious otherness". There are no monsters or superpowers, and Gotham is depicted as any other modern American metropolis, maybe with the exception of the dramatically high crime rate, the impending gloom and the strange villains populating it.

### **The Secondary Platform – Alternate Reality Game**

When looking at the ARG in comparison to the movie, it is a good idea to start with the characters as they are the focal point of both the ARG and the movie. If we start with the ARG, we can see that Batman is not the main character of the campaign, Harvey Dent and the Joker are.

Both of them play the central roles in the ARG, similar to their lead roles in the movie. The audience, as part of the ARG, can choose to follow a line of clues attached to either the Joker or Harvey Dent. For example, in the ARG Harvey Dent is still a candidate running for election as district attorney. The audience can choose to support his campaign by travelling the country in a van, the Dentmobile, to hold rallies as part of the ARG (Sci Fi Wire, 2008). The followers would then have to solve puzzles to help him on his way, meaning that they would have to engage with the character to be part of something on a larger scale. The value for the audience could here be several things, including to be part of establishing the role of one of their favorite characters.



FIGURE 22 - FANS RALLYING FOR HARVEY DENT'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN  
(BILLINGTON, 2008) (MILLER N., 2008)

In continuation of the ARG both Harvey Dent and the Joker as part of the movie assume the roles that the audience seemingly was part of creating. For example, in the movie Harvey Dent is the 'White Knight' of Gotham City, which is a role that was established and strengthened through the ARG and the audience who participated in it. It seems that the role of the ARG with regards to the movie is to do exactly this: establish and portray the characters' personalities and roles with the help of the audience.

The continuity of the characters' personalities and roles across the platforms, and the impression that the audience played a part in influencing these, seem to strengthen the emotional engagement the audience feels towards the characters. This again, would suggest a motivation for the audience to watch the movie after participating in the ARG.

Also, the emotional engagement that the audience has as followers and believers of these characters seems to be strong; on their own rally posters they even state "I believe in Harvey Dent!" (see images above). The fact that a fictional event is taken to the real world, allowing for the audience to engage with it physically through a "hands-on" experience, might also play a part in the level of engagement which seems to be high in this case.

In general, the characters in this case can be considered strong anchors and constants for the audience through the journey from ARG to movie as they seem to be essential and central parts of the transmedia experience. Even though the secondary platform and the tentpole might share some events and the same story universe, without the characters as focal point the main motivator to cross platforms would disappear. This is why the score that we can plot into our model on the “Characters” axis is high.

With regards to the examples made above, we find that the events correspond with the overall timeline of the movie. This can for example be seen through Harvey Dent’s election in the ARG, which is shown in the movie through his new status as district attorney. The role of Batman and how Gotham City cannot decide whether he is “savior or menace” also shows in both the movie and the ARG, where the happenings in Gotham are updated in online newspaper articles accessible to the audience (see image below). The ARG has created a range of realistic events and references leading up to the movie, through for instance Gotham Cable News and The Gotham Times (see image below).



FIGURE 23 - GOTHAM CABLE NEWS AND THE GOTHAM TIMES  
(GOTHAM CABLE NEWS, 2008), (THE GOTHAM TIMES, 2008)

In general, the ARG and the movie only make up two single pieces, where the ARG is broken into some smaller pieces as well, for the audience to ‘collect’”. This means that puzzlesolving is possible, but not to a great extent. Comparing this to the characters central role on both platforms, one could say the events mostly have a

supporting role with regards to the characters. Without the characters the events would lose their importance and effect. The motivation lies within searching for events in relation to these characters, which is why the events only have a secondary role compared to the characters, as the events are simply explained through them. This is why we choose to assign a medium score on the axis Timeline and Events.

Finally we can look at the story universe as a whole. The theme of order vs. chaos in the movie is also present in the ARG. An example of this can be seen in the Gotham Times, Gotham's daily newspaper, where the Joker has defaced the front page and shared it online as 'The Gotham Lies'. Its original version and the Joker's "version" can be seen in comparison in the image below.



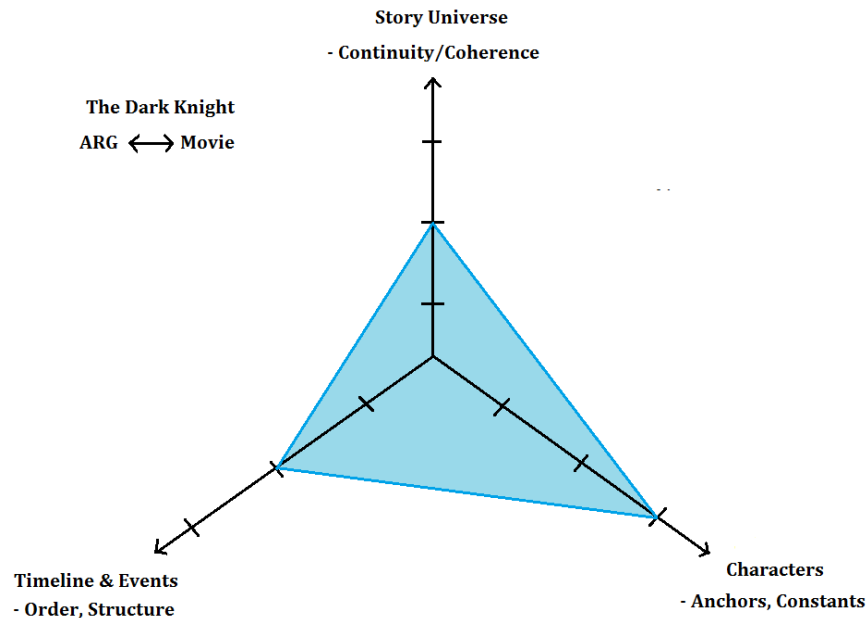
FIGURE 24 - THE JOKER'S DEFACING OF THE GOTHAM TIMES (DOUGLES, 2008)

The representation of this theme that is part of the story world in the tentpole seems to be well represented in the ARG. Gotham City as part of the ARG is shown through various media channels, as for instance through the Gotham Cable News or the

Gotham Times. The continuity of the story universe and its theme seems to be present; if we would only regard this we could assign a high score to the story universe. But looking at the role of the story universe in comparison to the other two story bridges, it seems that its role is to frame the characters and support their portrayal. This means that the story universe only has a secondary role with regards to the characters, similar to the Timeline & Event story bridge. The motivation to search for more about the happenings in Gotham City and explore the story universe seems directly connected to the characters' events, and it becomes recognizable through them.

In connection with this, we can assign a medium score to the story universe, because the two platforms share the same city and norms and are coherent and recognizable, but the reason the audience may immerse seems to be because of ARG's role of framing the two main characters Harvey Dent and the Joker.

In conclusion, we are able to map the case into the model:



To sum up, one of the three scores has been assessed to be high in this case. According to our hypothesis this would mean the tentpole and the secondary platform would not be a meaningful framework. Through the case analysis it still seemed as though the ARG was a meaningful secondary platform to the tentpole, because it provided the audience with strong anchors, which was the focus of the audience's attention. This seemed to allow the audience to become emotionally engaged with the characters and both of the other story bridges supported this by either framing or focusing the audiences' attention. Even though the character story bridge affects both how the story universe as well as the events come across, this is also what holds the two transmedia platforms together and possibly makes them meaningful.

It seems that the idea of one story bridge in focus with a high score makes sense, as it helps highlighting one certain aspect in the secondary platform. This way, the audience of the secondary platform is able to focus their attention on only one type of experience.

Plotting in the scores of the movie and the ARG into the model functioned well, with regards to discussing and showing the focus of the secondary platform. Also, this analysis indicates that the relation between two platforms may be part of a meaningful framework even though just one of the story bridges has a high score in the model, but it might become clearer in the following two case analyses, if this might be true for them as well.

## Case Analysis 2 - Lost

When looking at the case Lost, we find that the tentpole is the TV show which consists of six seasons. During the break between season three and four, ABC released 13 *mobisodes* called Lost: Missing Pieces (Dennis, 2008). These short videos were released on ABC.com and they filled in gaps in the story of the first three seasons. In 2008 the mobisodes were nominated for an Emmy Award in the category '*Outstanding Special Class – Short-format Live-action Entertainment Programs*' (The Emmys, 2008).

### The Tentpole – TV Show

On the TV show Lost all three basic story elements are represented. The story universe is an island, where a passenger plane crashes and the main characters are left stranded. At first glance it seems like any other tropical island, but this is not the case. The island becomes more and more mysterious throughout the TV show and the survivors soon realize that there were people on the island before them, *The Others*.



FIGURE 25- THE PLANE CRASH (SERIABLE, 2011)

The island is Vogler's special world and this story universe also holds elements of Murray's 'delicious otherness', because it is a tropical island where the characters are stranded after surviving a plane crash, and because the island holds so many mysteries, both of which are unfamiliar to the audience. This also grants the audience an escape from the real world and the possibility to immerse themselves in the story world.

Lost was used as an example in the previous chapter where we first presented the second timeline and events story bridge. Lost as a tentpole has a very long and detailed timeline with many events. While the plane crashes in 2004 and the TV show narrates this chronologic for some time, there are also flashbacks, flash forwards and time travel to the past involved. All of these scenes represent events which fit together on a timeline, which has to be put together by the audience. The events in Lost also contain a level of "delicious otherness" because they are extraordinary to what the audience experience in real life.

The TV show deals with an ensemble cast, a large number of main characters, ranging from around 10 to 30 throughout the six seasons. The characters vary in age, race and gender, and are all multi-dimensional and relatable in their own ways. All the survivors of the plane crash are "fish out of water" on the island. They do not know anything about the island and slowly discover it along with the audience. This

helps retain the sense of mystery of the show and helps the audience empathize with the characters, but at the same time, some of the characters hold “delicious otherness” because their backgrounds are different, such as rock star, con man, millionaire and outlaw, while other characters are ordinary people.

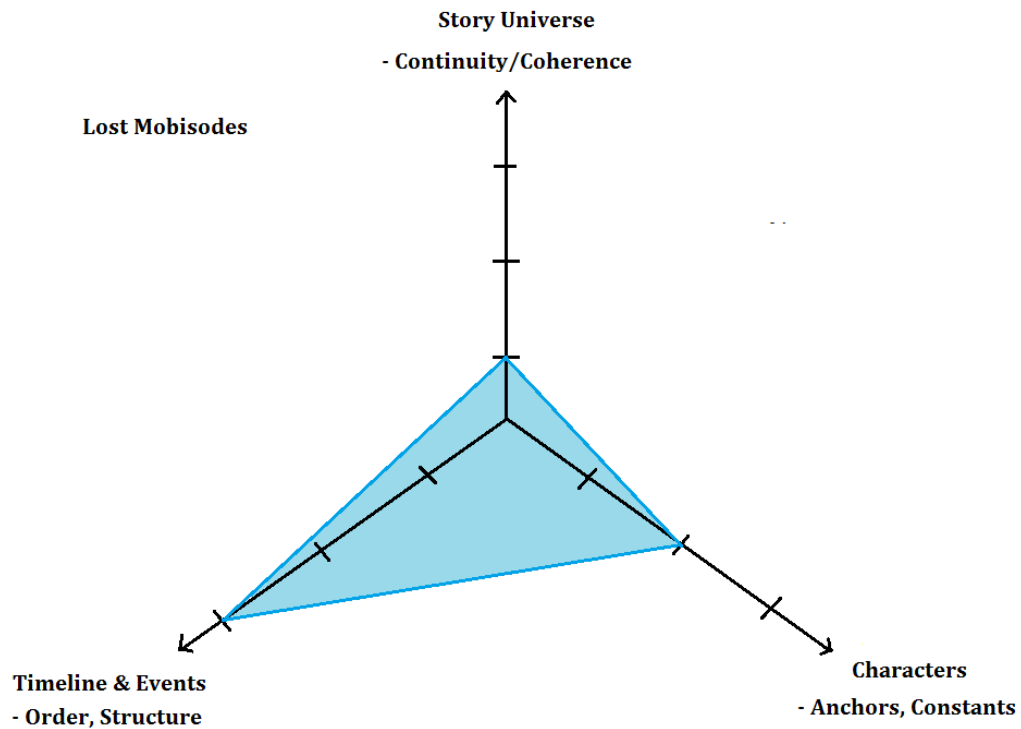
It is interesting that all three basic story elements are represented in the tentpole of *Lost*. This was also the case for *The Dark Knight*. It may support an emerging pattern that all three have to be present in the tentpole, in order for the tentpole to be a good basis for transmedia storytelling. This should be remembered for the upcoming design phase.

### **The Secondary Platform - Mobisodes**

In the mobisodes there is the same sense of causality as in the tentpole: There is a world, then a timeline to this world and lastly characters who inhabit this world and affect the timeline. While all three story bridges are present in the mobisodes, the corresponding basic story elements are not as equally prominent as in the tentpole. Some of the characters from the tentpole are in the mobisodes, but far from all. They are placed on the island, but the island is not prominent, it is not the main focus of the mobisodes to explore the story universe. What becomes the most important story bridge in the mobisodes is the timeline and events. All the events presented in the different mobisodes fit in with the order of the overall timeline of the tentpole. The structure and order of events is kept and added to, and the mobisodes allow the audience to puzzlesolve in order to figure out the whole. This seems to be the factor which provides motivation for the audience. The characters are used to explain the events through, but most of the mobisodes are not character portraits as we saw with *The Dark Knight ARG*. This setup seems to work in favor of the mobisodes, since the TV show narrates character portraits on every episode. Because the mobisodes were released after the third season, the audience presumably had a good understanding of who the characters are, and the emotional relation to them might already be thoroughly established. This means even though all three story bridges are present on the secondary platform, it probably would not have made the

transmedia experience more meaningful to the audience if all three story bridges had been highly represented, because the characters and the story universe have already been established quite well through the tentpole. The mobisodes still seem like a part of a meaningful framework, even though they do not receive a high score on all axes of the model. This might be due to the fact that the three bridges are all there, even if they are not all highly present.

The only axis which receives a high score is the timeline and events because this is the main focus of the mobisodes to reveal missing pieces of the timeline to the audience. The character axis receives a medium score because not all characters from the tentpole are present in the mobisodes. The characters are a bit more prominent than the story universe, because the timeline and events are explained through the characters. The story universe axis receives a low score because, the mobisodes take place on the island, but it is not focused on at all, and it is merely a setting in the short videos. This setup seems to work well with the mobisode-narrative, and if the other two axes had been made equally high, the mobisode format (short online videos) would not have fitted the story which would have had to be expanded to a high degree. The model looks like this when plotting in the three bridges:



The mobisodes can still be considered part of a meaningful framework, because they provided the audience with the possibility to puzzlesolve because the structure and order of events from the tentpole was kept and added to. We assumed that the fact that the characters were not focused on more on the secondary platform does not affect the meaningfulness of the experience, because the audience already has established a relationship beforehand, which makes it unnecessary to focus on them in the mobisodes as well. However, the characters played an important role in supporting and explaining the events.

This might suggest that the framework can still be meaningful if the three story bridges are balanced, rather than equally prominent. As mentioned in the previous section, the Lost tentpole has a high presence of all three story bridge elements, but only the timeline is prominent on the secondary platform. This suggests that the meaningful framework may rely more on the relation between the three platforms, and less on the equally high representation of all three. This might be an important realization and something we will have to look further into in the last case analysis.

## Case Analysis 3 - The Walking Dead

When looking at the case The Walking Dead we find that the tentpole is the TV show which consists of three seasons. TWD first aired in the U.S. on October 31st 2010 and the fourth season will premiere in the fall of 2013. The Walking Dead is based on a comic book series by the same name, where the focus is on the characters and their development and interactions after a zombie apocalypse. In 2012 a videogame, created by Telltale Games, was released in five episodes. This game will be the secondary platform in this analysis. The game is a point-and-click, adventure game with puzzle elements (Adams, 2009), where the player interacts with the story through the character Lee Everett, a university professor and convicted murderer. The player must decide what Lee says and which choices he makes throughout the episodes, and the choices affect the future events in the game.

### The Tentpole – TV Show

As we saw with *Lost*, all three basic story elements are represented on the TV show TWD. The story universe is the world as we know it, but it is in a post-apocalyptic setting, where people are turning into zombies, also called Walkers, and have left the world in a chaotic state where everyone must fight for themselves. The story universe and events both hold a large degree of Murray's "delicious otherness" or what Vogler refers to as the "special world", because the world is similar to ours but still very different because of the zombies. TWD as a tentpole has a long and detailed timeline with many events, which are mostly revealed chronologic, though there are also a couple of flashbacks to before the zombie outbreak. These events also contain "delicious otherness" because killing zombies in a chaotic world is very different from reality.

Like *Lost*, TWD deals with an ensemble cast, though a bit smaller. Here, the characters also vary in age, race and gender, are multi-dimensional and relatable. Throughout the TV show the characters are faced with many difficult decisions, such as whether to kill a person who has been bitten by a Walker (otherwise said person will turn into one himself). The conflicts that the characters go through and the

choices they make influence their personalities within the group, and one of the themes presented in the show is the idea that every action holds consequences, whether positive or negative. The characters do not contain “delicious otherness” in the beginning, because they are regular people faced with extraordinary events. They become less ordinary as the TV show progresses because they adapt to the new world.

As we saw with *Lost* and *The Dark Knight* all three basic story elements are present in the tentpole, which again suggests that they might all have to be present in the tentpole, in order for the tentpole to be a good basis for transmedia storytelling.

### **The Secondary Platform - Videogame**

In the videogame there is the same sense of causality as in the tentpole: There is a world, then a timeline to this world and lastly characters who inhabit this world and affect the timeline. The largest difference is that the characters in the videogame are not the same as in the tentpole. There are two minor characters, which both platforms have in common: The young man Glenn (see image below) and an old farmer Hershel. But the main characters from the tentpole are replaced with Lee and Clementine, a convict and a little girl who meet in the beginning of the game when Lee reaches her house after a car crash.



FIGURE 26 - THE CHARACTER GLENN (VIDEOGAME AND TV SHOW VERSIONS)  
(DAILY DEAD, 2012) (AFFICHES ET POSTERS, 2011)

The events in the videogame match the initial zombie outbreak in the beginning of the TV show, the same chaos is present, the military is losing, and the character Glenn, who is only featured in the first episode of the videogame, leaves the group to go look for his friends in Atlanta, where he is first introduced in the TV show. In this sense, the first episode of the game tells some of Glenn's backstory before we meet him in the TV show for the first time, which establishes a timeline for the game in relation to the TV show.

It is clear that both the TV show and the videogame take place in the same story universe. We are in the vicinity of Atlanta, US, and the zombies are the same "kind" – they are dumb, hungry and if they bite you, you become one. This story world becomes the most important story bridge between the tentpole and the secondary platform. The world is explored on both platforms, where the characters travel through the world, trying to survive. The way the audience/player explores the story world is through the characters, and even though they are different on the two

platforms, the difficult decisions remain the same. Who do you save first? Do you kill a bitten friend? Can you handle the responsibility of making decisions on behalf of the group?

An example of this can be seen the TV show, where the main group stays at Hershel's farm for safety, and then exposes the dangerous secret that he keeps Walkers in his barn (see image below, left). A similar event occurs in episode 2 of the videogame, where the group also stays at a farm with a barn, because it feels safe initially. After a little spying and suspicious behavior from the family living there, the player exposes their secret and finds out that they have a human slaughterhouse in the back of the barn and that they eat people (image below, right). In this sense there are recognizable events that occur in both the game and the show, and they address the same problem – is this place safe?



FIGURE 27 - HERSHEL'S BARN IN THE TV SHOW (LEFT)  
AND ST' JOHN'S DAIRY FARM IN THE GAME (RIGHT) (GAMEPRESSURE, 2012)

It becomes clear that the purpose of the videogame is not to let the audience puzzlesolve and connect pieces of a timeline, but rather to explore the story universe and connect to characters by relating to the difficult choices they have to make. The characters in the videogame seem to be very relatable. For example, as the guardian of Clemetine, you get the responsibility to take care of her, because she does not have a chance without you. As a player you are required to make up your mind about her, because your actions might have consequences for her wellbeing. It is similar in the TV show, where certain characters become more relatable and

likeable because of the way they act in difficult situations. Still, the audience's relationship to the characters in the game might be on a different level than in the TV show. This can be due to the fact that in case of the game you, as the player, are the one to make the difficult choices and face the consequences. This suggests that one might relate more to the characters in the game, because one is not just emotionally engaged, but also given the sense of control, that the interactivity of a game provides. This may also be a motivator to move from the tentpole to the secondary platform, in order to see how you would handle the situation if you, as part of a passive audience so far, were part of the post-apocalyptic setting and the previously mentioned questions were presented to you directly. The idea of using a game to convey the drama of the show seems to work in this case, as it allows the audience to make up their minds about a question that may have already occurred during the show – what would I do in this situation?

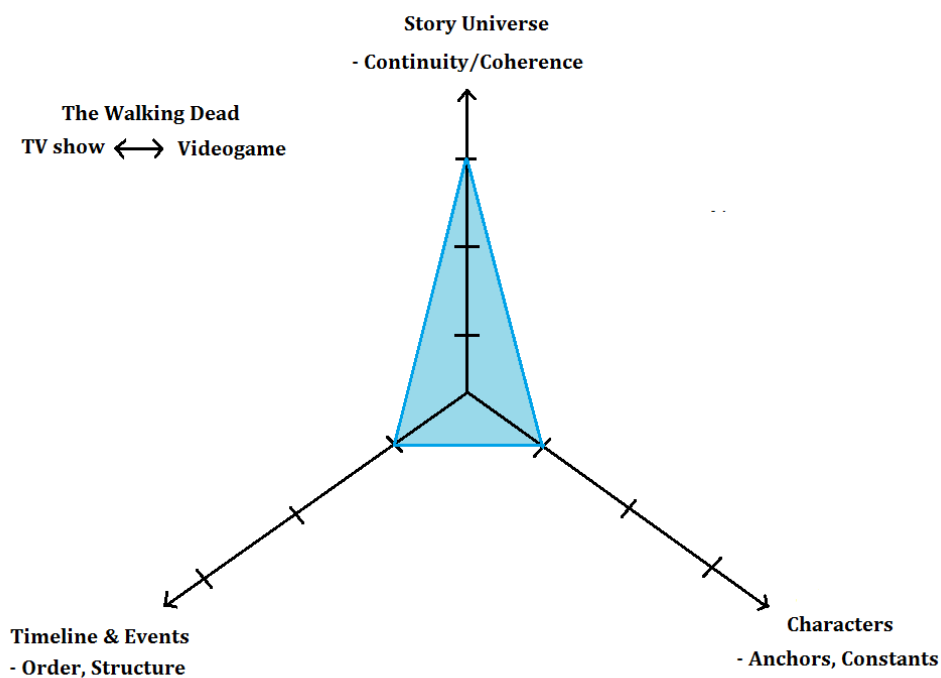
So, while the character axis can only score a 'low' because the characters are not the same on both platforms, the new characters who have been introduced as replacements seem very likely to succeed in evoking empathy in the players, which might be because the difficult decisions they have to make are the same on both platforms. This again shows that it might not be the high degree of all story bridges, but rather the relation between the three story bridges that is important. Our division into "high" and "low" does not seem to be a qualitative range by itself. Only in a complete setup does it makes sense to assess the qualitative dimension of every platform.

The framework still seems meaningful, because both products in this case seem to support each other and supplement each other in the sense of allowing the audience to form their opinion and engage emotionally as a viewer first and then participate actively to try it for oneself. In this sense the use of new characters in the game might actually have a greater effect on the audience than it would if they would have been reused from the show. New characters have no pre-established emotions attached to them, which means the audience can start playing with a clean slate

when it comes to forming your own opinion with regards to which actions you should take as a player.

All three story bridges are present on the secondary platform but the timeline and characters are only present to a small degree. The character axis cannot receive a high score because only two minor characters from the tentpole are present in the videogame, neither can the timeline axis. The only axis which receives a high score is the story universe because this is a large part of the focus in the game.

The model looks like this when plotting in the three bridges:



Looking at most of the arguments made previously, it is possible to assess that the videogame in relation to the TV show is part of a meaningful framework, even though it does not receive a high score on all axes of the model. The main reason is that the videogame and the TV show seem to be equally contributing parts to a meaningful transmedia whole. This is because the analysis indicates that the videogame seems to succeed in introducing new characters and especially in

allowing the audience to make up their mind about the same difficult situations and decisions that the characters of the show have to go through. The fact that the story universe on the secondary platform was coherent in relation to the tentpole provided the audience with a recognizable setting. Having a new set of characters and a range of similar, but still different, events enabled the player to solely focus on exploring the possibilities of the story universe, which makes it meaningful.

Finally, this again highlights that the three story bridges do not have to be equally high, as we saw it suggested in the other two cases. The three story bridges should probably rather be balanced by focusing on one while the other two are present but out of focus, to present a meaningful framework. In this case, where only the story universe scores a high, it underlines the suggestion that it is the relation which is important. This insight means that we will have to change the hypothesis from the model chapter, which will be done in the next chapter.

# New Insights

## Part 3

At this point we again choose to sum up the knowledge and new insights gathered throughout the previous chapters, The Model and Case Analyses. The purpose of this chapter is to answer the first part of our problem statement, which is:

**Which criteria does a story universe have to meet when expanding from one platform to another platform in a transmedia context?**

The answer to this first half of the problem statement is in two parts. The first part is to look into the story bridges that describe the movement from the tentpole to the secondary platform as well as the content of the secondary platform with regards to the tentpole. The second part is then to look into the content of the tentpole.

In the chapter The Model, we hypothesized that *the more all three story bridges are represented on the secondary platform, the more meaningful the framework for the meaningful experience will be*. Throughout the analyses of the three cases it became clear that the meaningfulness of the secondary platform in relation to the tentpole relied more on the relation between the story bridges rather than all of them being equally prominent. Thus our *hypothesis does not apply*.

This table shows a summary of which story bridges were in focus in the different cases, which story bridges were used to explain the focus through and which story bridges were kept in mind:

	Focus	Explained through	Kept in mind
<b>The Dark Knight</b>	Characters	Events	Story Universe
<b>Lost</b>	Events	Characters	Story Universe
<b>The Walking Dead</b>	Story World (difficult choices)	(new) Characters	Events

In the *Lost* mobisodes for instance, the timeline was the focus, it was explained through the characters and the story universe was only a background setting which was kept in mind. This shows that to create a meaningful framework on a secondary platform, just one of the story bridges needs to be in focus, while the other two have supporting roles. Based on the findings in the three case analyses, we can therefore declare our earlier hypothesis false. Even though it may benefit from further validation, we still have evidence to create a synthesis based on our new insights:

**To create a meaningful framework the relation between the story bridges is of importance: the focus has to remain on one story bridge while the other two hold supporting roles on the secondary platform. In the tentpole, all three basic story elements have to be highly present.**

This statement is valid when looking at the three cases. None of them had a high score on all three axes, and their tentpoles had high representations of all three basic story elements. In this regard, a transmedia tentpole should have a complex and coherent story universe, a structured timeline, which can be added to and elaborated on, and interesting and relatable characters, which the audience can empathize with.

Here we make a contribution to the existing definition of tentpoles by Davidson who states that the term tentpole is used to describe *“one big media experience that*

*supports a lot of other related media experiences*" (Davidson, 2010, p. 9) by adding the more semantic definition in a transmedia storytelling context:

A tentpole is the media experience where all three basic story elements are highly represented.

This synthesis contributes to the clarification of the existing term in a transmedia storytelling context.

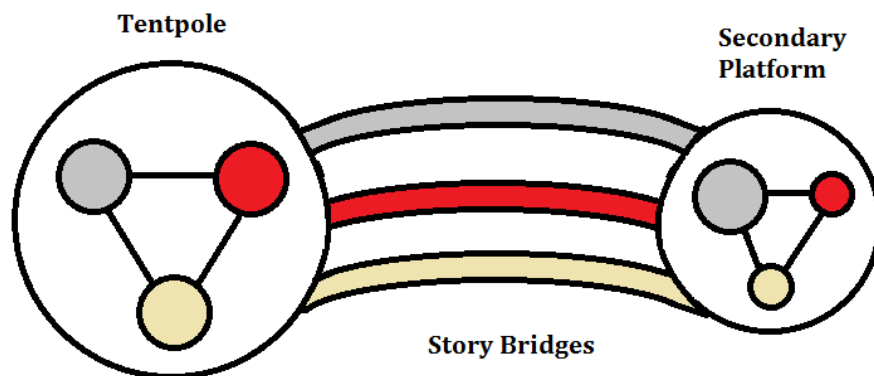
We also had a new insight in relation to the "delicious otherness" of the basic story elements. In all three cases we saw that there was a certain degree of "delicious otherness" present in the tentpole. In *The Dark Knight* it could be seen in the characters and the events, while the universe held in in a smaller degree. In *Lost* and *TWD* the "delicious otherness" was in the universe and the events. It seems that in all cases there was one element that was normal in the sense of being relatable to the audience, which suggests that in order for the tentpole to make sense for the audience, not all three basic story elements can contain a high degree of "delicious otherness". This would result in a tentpole that might be less relatable, which could be a problem when expanding it to the secondary platform.

If we compare two cases like *The Dark Knight* and *TWD* we can see that *The Dark Knight* has a balanced degree of "delicious otherness" throughout the three basic story elements, while *TWD* has a high degree in the story universe and the other two elements are fairly normal and only become special because of the story universe. *This suggests that a transmedia tentpole would benefit from having a balanced degree of "delicious otherness" in its three basic story elements.*

Finally we can sum up the answer to the first part of our problem statement, which was

**Which criteria does a story have to meet when expanding from one platform to another platform in a transmedia context?**

We suggest that when expanding a transmedia universe with a secondary platform, the relation of the story bridges must be emphasized. This means that a criterion when expanding onto another platform is to have one of the story bridges in focus on the secondary platform and the other two in supporting roles, as shown in the illustration below.



The other criterion with regards to the tentpole is that it has to incorporate a high presence of the three basic story elements as well as a balanced degree of “delicious otherness”, as it strengthens its role as a tentpole in a transmedia context. These two criteria are also part of the meaningful framework in transmedia.

Until now, we have carried out theoretical studies and case analyses in order to describe a phenomenon which had not been clearly described by others in the past. This was constructed into a model which we challenged in practice by using it in case analyses. Now, as we possess new insights, we have adjusted our hypothesis and added to the definition of tentpoles in transmedia storytelling. The next step will be to validate our findings further: What do these story bridges do as variables when constructing transmedia? And how does this influence design concepts? These

are questions which we will now address in the design phase where we will conduct a design experiment to use and test our model.

# Design

In this Design chapter, we will be able to put our knowledge into a more practical use through the creation of a design experiment which focuses on various concepts based on our model. The goal is to answer the second part of our problem statement, which states:

**How can these criteria [that a story has to meet when expanding from one platform to another] be used to design concepts as part of a meaningful transmedia experience framework?**

In the beginning of this thesis, we formed research questions which should help answer this second part of the problem statement. These questions were the following:

- How can our model be used to design transmedia concepts?
- How can we test our model in the design process?

We expect to be able to answer these questions by creating concepts based on the knowledge we have gained of the meaningful frameworks, which encompasses the story bridges and our knowledge of tentpoles. This includes the two criteria stated in the previous chapter. In accordance with these criteria the answer to the second part of the problem statement will encompass the choice of a tentpole as well as the design of secondary platform concepts, which will be transmedia extensions to this tentpole.

First we have to choose the type of secondary platform which will be the foundation of our concepts.

The case analyses indicated that the active involvement and having a feeling of control through an interactive platform might provide additional motivation to move from one platform to another. In the case of TWD, the ability to make decisions of your own in a videogame after seeing the TV show suggested a motivation for the audience to move across platforms in addition to the motivation provided by each of the story bridges. In this sense we see a potential in interactive videogames as the secondary platform as part of the transmedia universe. We choose a videogame because our interest in this platform is high and we see the potential of a subsequent videogame extension in its ability to allow the audience to explore through interaction and seek answers to the questions they formed while experiencing the tentpole.

With the choice of a videogame as the secondary platform, a range of concepts become relevant in the design process, such as game design in general, game mechanics, play and the concepts of interactivity and flow (Adams, 2009) (Csikszentmihalyi M. , 1975) (Koster, 2004). We will list these design concepts shortly, before starting the actual design process, where we will use them directly.

Finally, as a general remark we choose to follow Jenkins proposition as to how the platforms have to be “self-contained” as part of a transmedia universe (Jenkins, 2006, p. 98). We strive to design videogame concepts which will be able to create value on their own, but also make a valuable contribution to the whole transmedia universe.

## **Design Methodology**

The following design phase will not be a standard iterative design process which begins with requirements and ends in user testing, but rather a conceptual design experiment, where we approach research through design, in order to use and test our model. This means that we are not aiming to create one complete video game concept, but rather to construct conceptual videogame experiments, where we can

experiment with our story bridges as variables. We have a theoretical research interest, which is our guideline for the design process. The goal is to find out, how we can create concepts that in the best possible way will help us test and illustrate the meaning of our story bridges as variables in a meaningful framework.

To do this, we have chosen to adapt the method *research through design* as described by Zimmermann et al. (Zimmermann, Forlizzi, & Evenson, 2007). While they describe the method in a Human Computer Interaction context, we still find the fundamental methodology relevant in the design of a videogame in a transmedia storytelling context. The authors comment that their process is about the following:

*“[...]design researchers continually reframe the problem as they attempt to make the right thing. The final output of this activity is a concrete problem framing and articulation of the preferred state, and a series of artifacts—models, prototypes, products, and documentation of the design process” (ibid.).*

Zimmermann et al. suggest that this approach should focus on designing the *right thing*, and deemphasize perspectives such as economics, marketing etc. which are more associated with making *commercially successful* things (ibid.). We choose to adapt this focus, where we see the *right thing* as being concepts that have a logically correlative framework that allows for meaningful experiences to occur.

We aim to use the design process the way Zimmermann et al. suggest by creating varying stories with the same core game design for the same tentpole and then adjusting the framing that will be the story bridges presented through our model. This will result in three videogame concepts (or artifacts) with the same game design and with the story bridges as variables. The videogame concepts will not be completely finished products, because a basic concept will be enough to evaluate how the story bridges affect the meaningful framework and how they act in their respective setups in general and with regards to the videogame platform.

This design method sets limits to what we can find out in the upcoming process. We cannot know which kind of secondary platform best supports a certain story bridge setup for instance. What we can find out is rather which consequences it has to apply the story bridges as variables in the context of game design.

The videogame framing we have chosen for this design process would benefit from being visualized throughout the chapter. We choose to work with visualization techniques such as storyboards and sketching (Buxton, 2007) because it is an efficient way for us to depict our ideas for the concepts.

The creation of a game design constant will consist of choosing a genre, design mechanics and creating a core, which we can build the three different concepts around. The gameplay will play a secondary role, as the focus will remain on our general interest regarding the relation between the secondary platform and the tentpole.

In the design experiments we choose to delimit ourselves from incorporating storytelling elements unless they are relevant in the explanation of the function of the story bridges. This means that we will not create complete stories for each of the design concepts, but only introduce pieces of the story.

## List of Design Terms

In the design chapter we will be using several design-related concepts and terms. These terms and how we are going to use them in the context of this thesis will be shortly introduced in this section.

### Game Design and Mechanics

In game designer Raph Koster's book *A theory of Fun - for Game Design* a number of elements are listed that should be incorporated to create a successful game. One of them is about the incorporation of solid core mechanics (Koster, 2004, p. 120).

In general, a game mechanic is a rule within a game that consists of a number of rules. For example, in Tetris the rules are that you can rotate the pieces to the right and left, there is a constant gravity, which pulls the pieces towards the bottom in an increasing speed and there are only a certain number of pieces that can be controlled. These game mechanics are the basis for the creation of the game content by the player in relation to the choices made by him. A core mechanic is thus in many cases a very simple rule. Many or few mechanics that are chosen carefully in relation to each other can define the complexity of the game (Koster, 2004, p. 120).

In the context of our design process we will use the game mechanics as rules that the player has to follow. We will try to incorporate the concept of flow when designing these game mechanics.

## **Flow**

The concept of flow was introduced earlier in the chapter Transmedia Storytelling in the section Immersion. In general people entering a state of flow can be described as being *“fully absorbed in activity during which they lose their sense of time and have feelings of great satisfaction”* (Csikszentmihalyi M. , 1975, p. 10). There are a number of flow conditions which define the experience of flow, and we will attempt to use them directly in the design process.

In general, we will use flow in the context of interactivity and aim to create videogame concepts that will enable flow as part of a meaningful framework, where the audience can immerse fully and forget time and place, as it is aimed to become a natural extension of the tentpole.

## **Meaningful Play and Interactivity**

The concept of meaningful play is of importance because we want to successfully create a game design concept, and because meaning, play, and games are closely related concepts. Playing a game usually involves making choices and taking actions. Meaningful play in a game then means that the player takes an action within a

designed system of a game and the system responds to it. The player can perceive the immediate outcome of an action, which is then woven into the game system as a whole (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004, p. 6; ch. 3). The term is also closely related to the definition of interactivity as interactivity describes as two-way communication between media system and audience.

Meaningful play and interactivity will be part of our game concept as we will consider the actions of the players and the outcome both in relation to the game as a self-contained platform but also as part of a whole transmedia universe.

## Choosing a Tentpole

In the introduction to this chapter, we chose that the secondary platform will be a videogame. This section will deal with choosing the tentpole which we can design this videogame for.

In the previous chapter New Insights Part 3 we created the synthesis that a tentpole should incorporate a great presence of the three basic story elements as well as a balanced degree of “delicious otherness”. We have found a potential tentpole which we will now look into in order to see if it fits the above criteria and hence can be used in our design phase. The potential tentpole is The Hunger Games book trilogy (the first book was adapted to a movie in 2012).

In the Hunger Games (also HG) trilogy we find that all three basic story elements are present. The story universe is set in the post-apocalyptic nation Panem placed primarily in the western part of North America. The history of Panem tells that, 74 years before Katniss Everdeen’s story is told (the protagonist of the trilogy), the 13 districts of Panem revolted against the Capitol. During the rebellion District 13 was obliterated by the Capitol, rendering the resistance impossible, as District 13 was the force behind the rebellion. So the 12 remaining districts submitted to the rich and technologically advanced Capitol. Every year since the rebellion the Hunger Games have been held, forcing 24 ‘tributes’, one girl and one boy, from the 12

districts into an arena to fight for their lives, televising the event and naming the last person standing as the winner of the Hunger Games. This is done as a reminder to the 12 districts that they are completely at the mercy of the Capitol (The Hunger Games Wiki, 2012).



FIGURE 28 - SCREENSHOT FROM THE HUNGER GAMES MOVIE (KATNISS, TOP RIGHT)  
(CINEMABLEND, 2011)

The story has a long timeline, where the history of Panem is long and partly untold. The events, which are focused on in the three books, occur within approximately three years. The events, which include the Hunger Games and an uprising among the twelve districts, are far from normal. The story universe and events in particular hold “delicious otherness”. The main characters are Katniss, a young girl who volunteers to be in the Hunger Games in the place of her sister along with Peeta, another contestant. These characters are very relatable and do not possess the same degree of “delicious otherness”, which makes it more balanced. The Hunger Games also contain Vogler’s notion of ‘the special world’, where Katniss travels from her home district to the Capitol and the arena of the Games.

This means that the Hunger Games Trilogy will most likely fit as a tentpole, which we will be able to create a secondary platform for, which focuses on one of the story bridges, while the other two are present, but not prominently featured.

## Creating the Core Game Design

As explained in the design methodology section, the goal of creating a core game design is to have a constant that we can build and design the three videogame concepts around, so we can direct our focus on presenting their function as variables in our Story Bridge Model instead.

Based on the story universe, the characters and the events in the HG trilogy, as well as the mood and the themes, we will be able to suggest which genre and which kinds of mechanics would fit well as a core when it comes to building three concepts around them that focus on the characters, the timeline, events and the story universe.

Even though the game design may be a matter of secondary importance we will still aim to create a core game design that is comprehensive and makes sense with regards to its relation to the tentpole. We will aim to create a gameplay that can generate flow and that gives meaningful play. We will do this with the purpose to create a solid foundation for the three concepts.

### Genre and Themes

Looking at the Hunger Games, our guideline to defining the genre for the game comes from the themes and mood set in the story. As the story and setting indicate the mood is quite serious, as it is about struggling to survive and fighting for your ideals and freedom. Generally, it is a fast paced, but also suspenseful narrative and especially during the HG, themes of violence and

#### The adventure game

*"An adventure game is an interactive story about a protagonist character who is played by the player. Storytelling and exploration are essential elements of the game. Puzzle solving and conceptual challenges make up the majority of the gameplay. Combat, economic management, and action challenges are reduced or nonexistent" (Adams, 2009, p. 547).*

#### The action- adventure game

*"The action-adventure is faster paced than a pure adventure game and includes physical as well as conceptual challenges. [...] Exactly when a game stops being an adventure game and becomes an action game is a matter of interpretation. Some might consider the Tomb Raider games to be action-adventures because they include puzzles, but the puzzles are quite simple, and the games rely so heavily on physical challenges that they are really action games" (ibid., p. 548).*

survival and suffering for entertainment are central.

In continuation of this, the adventure and perhaps action game genre could be a fitting genre for this setting. Puzzle solving as part of this genre may also be fitting, as for instance the Hunger Games are not just about survival through fighting and killing, but also about survival with regards to having enough food and water and keeping yourself mentally stable. Creative puzzlesolving could be the way to make the audience make up their mind about these themes. The game will both incorporate conceptual challenges and physical coordination challenges. This is why we choose the action-adventure genre with emphasis on adventure and elements of puzzlesolving as a game genre.

## Game Mechanics

When it comes to designing the mechanics it will have to be done in the same manner as the genre, by defining a set of mechanics that can encompass a range of videogame concepts and which fit with the overall image and tone presented in the trilogy. The mechanics need to have the potential to span three completely different games, and act as a solid foundation. That is why we choose to define mechanics only with regards to the playable avatar or character, as it is the only constant we see in the game at this point.

If we try to find mechanics that fit with flow theory we have to take three flow conditions (see box to the right) into account that have to be met to achieve this state. The action-adventure genre allows us to incorporate both elements of puzzle as well as combat, switching the content from physical to conceptual challenges with

**Flow theory** presents *three conditions* that have to be met to achieve flow:

1. The activity has to have a clear, visible and attainable set of goals and progress, as it adds direction and structure to the task.
2. There has to be clear and immediate feedback, so that the player is aware of successes and failures and is able to adjust his performance to maintain flow.
3. There has to be a balance between the player's level of ability and the difficulty of the challenge. The player must have confidence that he is able to do the task at hand.

(Csikszentmihalyi, Abuhamdeh, & Nakamura, 2005)

emphasis on the latter. In continuation of choosing the genre, the game is also chosen to be a third person game, where the player controls a visible avatar or character, depending on the type of game (we will call it an avatar from now on unless specified otherwise). The reason for this choice is that the player will be able to see his actions more easily, which fits to the action-adventure genre, where searching the terrain and also timing in jumps can be crucial. It also allows for a wider view as well as the avoidance of motion sickness due to a first person perspective (Adams, 2009, pp. 217-218).

Considering this together with the theme, story and challenges set throughout the story of the trilogy, as well as the considerations made earlier in the previous section Genre and Themes, we can create a set of mechanics that reflect this.

- The avatar has to two modes: combat and a free mode.
  - Combat: the avatar can fight, use weapons and skills directly on the opponent, an enemy or any hostile creature.
  - Free mode: the avatar can move freely and interact with objects, buildings and people. In this mode the avatar can also use objects to solve puzzles and conceptual challenges.
- In addition to the modes the avatar is able to use a special skill called “instinct” to become especially aware of the surroundings (see an example on the image below). The skill can be used in combat and in free mode. In combat mode using the skill will slow down time and make it easier to hit targets. In free mode it enables the player to perceive important objects in the surroundings like prey or a food source, which is perceived almost like a heat-map. The amount of “instinct” available to the player can be seen in a bar that runs out when the skill is used. It fills up when solving puzzles or defeating an enemy.



FIGURE 29 - SCREENSHOT FROM HITMAN: ABSOLUTION, WHERE A SIMILAR SKILL CAN BE USED TO POINT OUT IMPORTANT OBJECTS IN THE SURROUNDINGS (GONZÁLEZ C., 2012)

- The player can upgrade weapons and skills to become stronger and to specialize within a certain field, like for example sneaking, shooting with the bow or charming people. For every accomplished mission or puzzle skill points will be rewarded. Weapons can be upgraded through certain objects or skills. Certain weapons can also be found and equipped.
- The avatar has a health bar that consists of two bars: a smaller “hunger” bar and an overall “health” bar (as to be seen on the image below).
  - “Hunger”: When going for a long time without food the “hunger” bar will deplete and change color from green to yellow to red. When it is red it means the character is starving, which will begin to affect the overall “health” bar, which will begin to deplete. It can be refilled through the intake of food and water.
  - “Health”: When starving or getting hurt in combat or by accident the overall “health” bar will deplete. It can be refilled through medical treatment (medical kits).

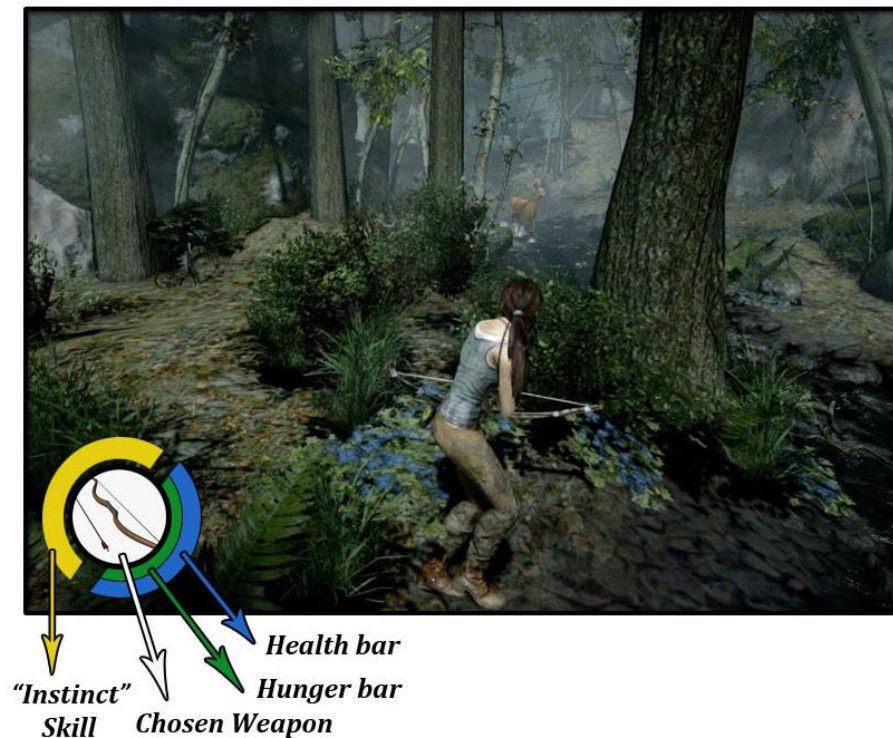


FIGURE 30 - SCREENSHOT FROM THE VIDEOGAME TOMB RAIDER (2013)  
WITH OUR HEADS-UP DISPLAY (HUD) (ADAMS, 2009, P. 414)

- The goal of the game is to survive and complete puzzles or/and missions in order to do so. These missions and puzzles will grow in difficulty the further the player progresses in the game.

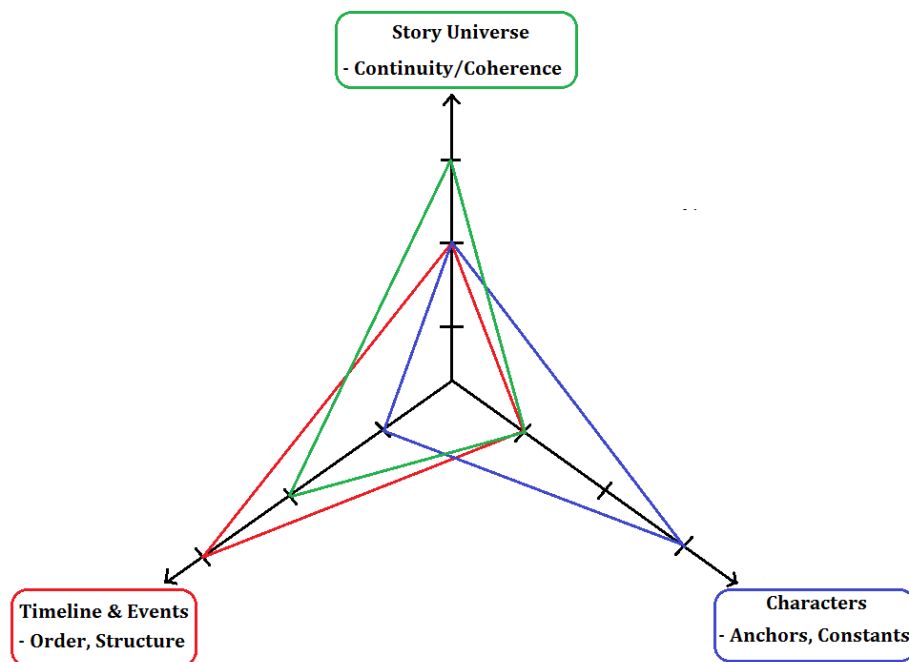
This set of general mechanics will be the foundation for our upcoming design experiment with the story bridges. The overall theme and setting from the trilogy has been taken into account. With regards to the three flow conditions we can sum up in short how the conditions have been incorporated. The clear and visible goal of the game is to survive, which can be seen through the health bars and the purpose of keeping them filled. The immediate feedback can be felt and seen through combats, the health bar and the possibility to gain skill points. The balance between ability and challenge level can be controlled through obtaining skill points and upgrading

weapons. The growing difficulty of missions in continuation of this will also keep the player interested in continuing to play and uphold this balance.

In this sense the general mechanics are now chosen. The next step will be to go through each of the setups in the model and describe the different videogame concepts with these mechanics as constants and the story bridges as variables.

## The Three Videogame Concepts

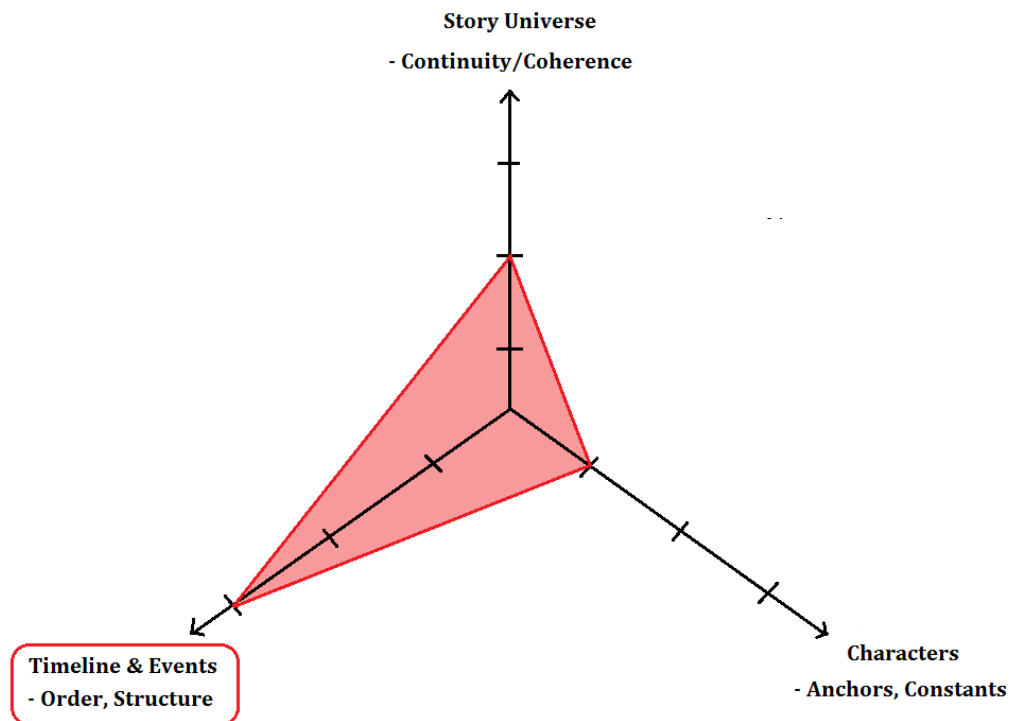
The purpose of this section is to show three different setups for our Hunger Games video game concept, where each setup focuses on one particular story bridge and uses the other two as supporters, as shown in the model below. We want to investigate how the story bridges can be used as variables and see how the concepts provide meaningful frameworks in relation to the chosen platform. We also create these varying setups as an experiment, because we are interested in seeing the consequences of doing so. In this way, we can also use and test the model as a design tool.



In the model above, the three different setups can be seen with their respective focus areas. “Green” represents the setup with the story universe in focus, “red” with the timeline and events in focus and “blue” with the characters in focus.

## Design Concept 1 – Timeline & Events

In this concept we chose to focus on the timeline and events explained through the story universe, while the characters from the books are just on the sidelines.



When brainstorming for this design concept, where the HG trilogy is the tentpole, we created a mindmap, where a branch of it is marked as the concept that we have chosen to move on with (see Appendix 1). Creating a concept for a videogame where the setup focuses on the timeline and the events required us to look at the timeline of the books and see where there were holes to be explored by the audience, which would motivate them to collect missing puzzle pieces.

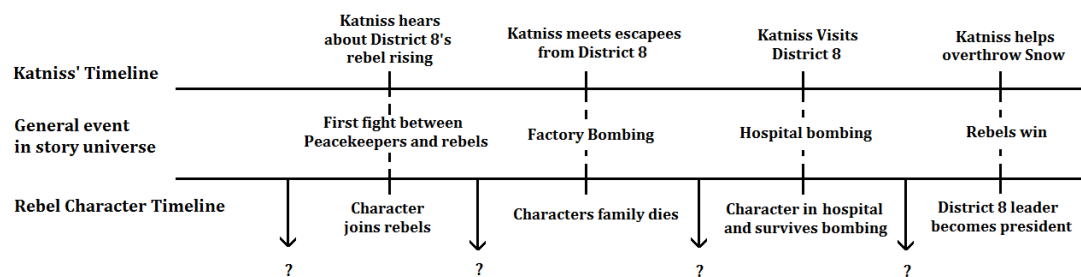
As the story in HG is narrated from a first-person perspective by the protagonist Katniss there are certain events which are relatively unknown to the reader, since Katniss in unison with the reader only perceives what happens in her immediate vicinity. For example, in the first book she participates in the 74th Hunger Games. This means that the reader cannot know what happens outside the games' arena, for instance when it comes to her mother or sister while they are back home in District 12. Explaining the events, which occur when Katniss is not present, through the story universe, seems to be a very meaningful way to create this specific concept.

It was difficult to find specific events that could be used in the context of a videogame created after the tentpole that would be interesting to explore for the audience. It seems that one of the main benefits of the interactivity of a videogame is that it allows the audience to take control in order to answer and explore unanswered questions that occurred during the experience of the tentpole, like in The Walking Dead videogame. In the HG there are not many of these questions left unanswered when it comes to the timeline and events, as all three books have already been published and are complete at this point. This questions the validity of creating a concept with this setup as a retro-active concept, as it could seem that it might be better to create a pro-active concept in this case.

In the end, it came down to focusing on an event that could possibly motivate the audience to puzzlesolve, even though most of the pieces have been given already, and in relation to what the viewer cannot know, as the story of the tentpole is told from Katniss' perspective.

With this in mind we chose to use the events occurring on the sidelines while Katniss' story plays out, the rebel uprising. During the books, Katniss' effect on the rebellion in the districts is often referred to. This is mostly told through other characters who inform her about it. Giving the audience the opportunity to collect puzzlepieces of the happenings behind Katniss' actions, seems like a logical extension to the tentpole, which would make it part of a meaningful framework.

Seeing this from the perspective of an unknown rebel growing up in one of the districts would be a fitting way to present the events. District 8 is one of the districts with most references in the book (besides 12 and 13 that are directly related to the story), so using events that Katniss' experiences or refers to in District 8 makes sense. These references can be placed on a timeline for Katniss. With her timeline from the books in mind, it is possible to create our videogame character's timeline in relation to the events that happen in the story universe due to Katniss' actions. This timeline can be seen below.

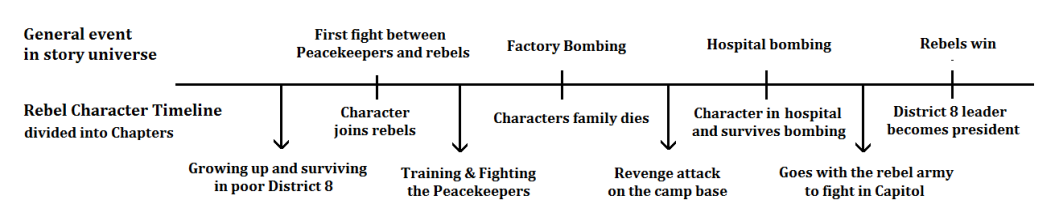


The question marks on the timeline are then to be filled in by the game, so a timeline is created which makes sense when playing through the story of the videogame character. These events (pointed out by question marks) may be indirectly related to events that could happen due to Katniss' actions. For example, her creation of a promotion video against the Capitol may have caused the rebels in District 8 to keep their hopes up; even though this is not mentioned directly in the book. Here we use Genette's terms *order* and *frequency*, which we introduced in the chapter Storytelling, to navigate how to feature events. We take some of the same events from the tentpole and retell them in the videogame (frequency) using the same timeline as the tentpole to tell other aspects of the story which happened simultaneously with the events in the books (order).

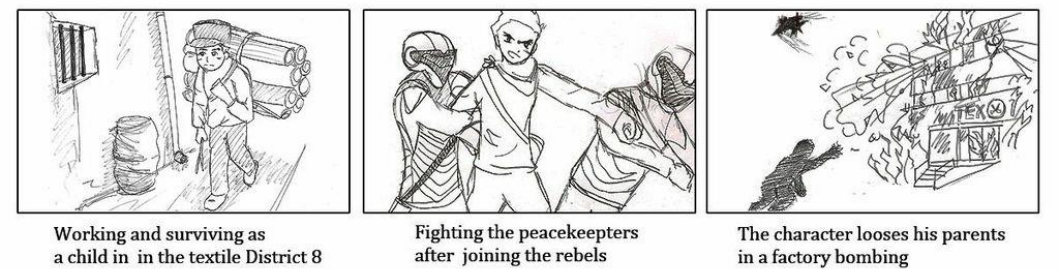
The reason we need so many references to the book, is that we want a timeline axis which is high, and thus allows the player to puzzlesolve. A single event would not suffice, hence the difficulty in creating this kind of setup after the tentpole has been established. Since the tentpole was not created with the possibility of puzzlesolving

and answering unanswered questions through a secondary platform in mind, it is difficult to find a number of events that are referred to, which is why we simply have to build something out of the references that occur during the book. It seems that this kind of setup would benefit from being a pro-active transmedia concept, as it is difficult to add puzzle pieces to a puzzle that is intended to be complete, which should be the main motive for the audience to move when the timeline and events are in focus.

Since we have decided that it will be an action-adventure game with a fixed set of mechanics we are able to use these to create the basic videogame. The choice of focusing on the rebellion in this concept was of course made with the mechanics and genre in mind. In the following timeline the overview of our rebel character’s story can be seen.



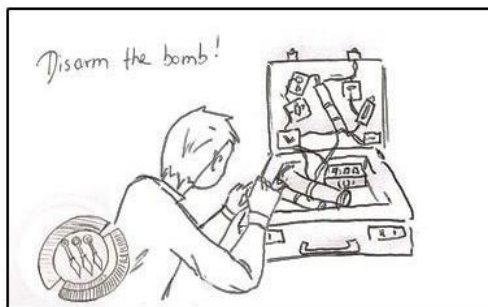
The timeline above shows the story of the main character played in the videogame divided into eight chapters (seen in the lower part of the timeline). Three of the events in these chapters can also be seen in the following storyboards, which can also be seen in a larger version in Appendix 2.



## Describing the Videogame Concept

In general the videogame will switch from more peaceful scenes to fights, where the player will be able to use the combat mode. When fighting for survival against the peacekeepers from the Capitol, the instinct skill will be useful. The skill can be used when trying to find the way out from the factory bombing where the characters family dies (see storyboards).

In more peaceful settings such as the city, free mode can be used by the player to find important objects, food and weapons in alleys or trash bins or in the outskirts of the city. It will be a job in itself to fill up the “hunger” bar to survive. Interacting with people to progress will be part of the games too. An example could be finding and speaking with the rebel leader of District 8. Puzzles could consist of numerous things, like for example disarming bombs (see storyboard below and Appendix 2).



Puzzles could consist of disarming bombs or to find a way out of a dangerous place.

The goal of the game is to overthrow President Snow and to give the character peace after the killing of his family (see timeline). Upgrading weapons and skills will be a natural part of this. The game will be told in chapters, as shown in the timeline, and there will be several missions in each chapter that have to be completed to move on.

## Discussing the Setup: Timeline & Events

It may be debatable whether this case has a high score on the axes events or story universe, as they are very much related in this concept. The history of Panem, the

totalitarianism of the Capitol towards the other districts leading up to this rebellion, and the fight for freedom are all part of the story universe. Maybe this is also why it seems to be a meaningful extension. It certainly seems to be a logically correlative extension to the tentpole. The reason might be because the focus is partly on the story universe as well. Even though it is difficult to incorporate puzzlesolving into a retro-active concept and even though the videogame platform might not fit perfectly, a focus on the story universe, which is more about exploration for the audience rather than puzzlesolving, might explain why this setup seems meaningful. Maybe a setup, where the story universe is in focus is naturally the easiest way to create a meaningful framework after the tentpole has been established.

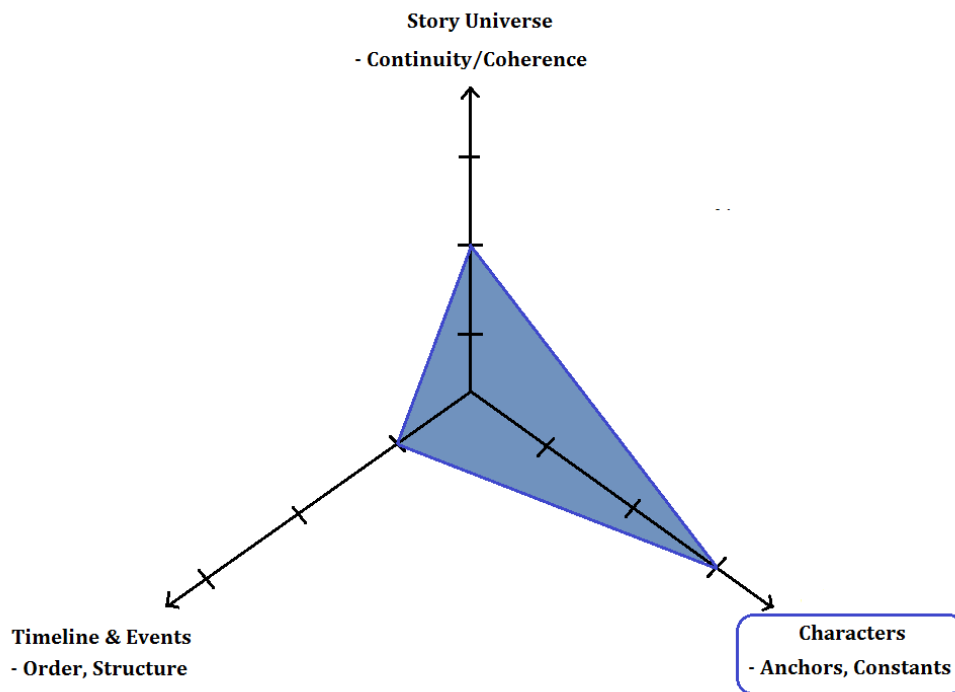
This experimental concept has generated insights with regards to the relation between tentpole and secondary platform. This specific concept seemed to exemplify the difference between the retro-active and pro-active concept in relation to the meaningfulness the secondary platform to the tentpole. When it comes to the timeline and events as a variable, it seems that a meaningful framework may be created more easily as a pro-active concept, because the difficulty in creating a retroactive concept lies within the difficulty to add puzzle pieces to a puzzle that is intended to be complete. In this setup, it seems the relation between the tentpole and secondary platform is dependent on the presence of holes in the timeline or numerous references in the tentpole to a certain number of events that are interesting enough to stand on their own on the secondary platform.

## **Design Concept 2 – Characters**

As we did with the first concept, we again brainstormed and created a mindmap over the different ways a concept, where the focus is on the character axis, could be depicted in a videogame. This mindmap can be found in Appendix 1. Creating a concept for this type of videogame required us to look at the characters in the HG trilogy and see where there were possibilities to tell a story which had not been told in the books. Because the first book begins when Katniss is 16 years old, her childhood is largely untold to the readers. This means that the reader does not know

what happened in Katniss' childhood to make her the person she is in the books. Explaining her childhood will help expand the reader's insight into her personality and might help build a stronger relation to the character. This seems to be a meaningful way to create this specific concept where one or more characters should be focused on. The childhood story we have chosen to tell, will include her father before he died in a mining accident when Katniss was 11 years old. In the first book, Katniss reveals that her father took her hunting and taught her about nature and how to shoot with a bow and arrow.

This setup will feature our chosen game mechanics as a constant and the story bridges will be the variables. The story of the game will focus very much on Katniss, how she became the person she is depicted as in the books, and her relationship to her father. The story universe will become the second most featured story bridge, because most of the gameplay will take place in the woods surrounding District 12 where Katniss and her father live and the character Katniss will be explained through the story universe (the hunting trips in the forest). The events will not feature much, because the videogame becomes a backstory to the main character of the books, but does not have much else to do with the events in the books. Thus our model will look like this:



Using this setup in a videogame with the genre action and adventure becomes a difficult task. The character Katniss should take center-stage, while the player not only learns about her childhood and personality but at the same time walks around, performs tasks and shoots in the story universe. Otherwise the constants we have chosen would not be used correctly. This focus on characters and their personality was very well carried out in TWD videogame, but that was a point-and-click game where the purpose was to talk on behalf of the avatar Lee, and thus help shape his personality and decisions. It would not work in this concept, since the idea is that the player should learn what Katniss was like as a child, not choose what she can be like. The choice of her answers and reactions cannot be up to the player, because this would cause the correlation to the tentpole to weaken.

Since we are dealing with a character who the player already knows from the tentpole, it is important that Katniss is recognizable to the player and reader, otherwise she cannot be an anchor and constant within the transmedia universe. Telling the story of Katniss' childhood will be a new addition to the existing tentpole,

but it could also stand alone as Jenkins mentions that it should be able to, because the backstory does not rely too much on the events and timeline of the tentpole. Thus, a player would not need to have read the books to understand the premise of the videogame, and the introduction to Katniss would happen through the game, which will give the player a chronologic timeline and image of her as a character. If the player then picks up the books after having played the videogame, he would know Katniss' background to begin with, but this would not harm the ability to enjoy the books. In the books, Katniss is depicted as a strong, clever, caretaking and providing girl with great hunting and survival skills, who volunteers to be in the Hunger Games in order to spare her younger sister. These personality traits will need to be focused on and be developed in Katniss throughout the game, so the correlation between the two platforms will be meaningful to the player/reader.

These personality traits could be developed with the help of Katniss' father as her mentor. Because Katniss will be with him in the videogame, we have the opportunity to create dialogue between the two characters, but this dialogue cannot be controlled by the player. A heavy use of dialogue between the two characters might also be beneficial when trying to help the player become emotionally engaged and empathize with Katniss.

Because our constants prescribe an action and adventure game, this affected the choice of story universe setting. The woods where Katniss' father took her hunting seemed to be the optimal choice with these constants, because it will allow us to follow the genre, where the player will have to be able to engage in combat and puzzlesolving situations.

### **Describing the Videogame Concept**

The choice of concentrating on Katniss' hunting sessions with her father in this concept was made with the mechanics and genre in mind. The player controls Katniss. Her combat mode is in this game used to shoot animals with her bow and arrow. The free mode is used to interact with her father and objects in the forest.

The idea is that her father follows Katniss throughout the forest. He is her mentor who for instance spots a squirrel and then teaches her how to shoot it. He will also present her with puzzles and missions, such as finding food, tracking animals and climbing trees. This character cannot be controlled by the player.

Because the emphasis has to remain on the characters' relationship, the two characters will frequently talk to each other. Her father, as her mentor, will be patient and encouraging (see storyboard below and Appendix 2 for larger version). The two will refer to Katniss' mother, younger sister and life in District 12 throughout the game and make the player aware of how their situation is, and this focus on dialogue between Katniss and her father will show the player her development into the strong, clever, caretaking and providing girl with great hunting and survival skills which might already be recognized from the books. This will help provide the relation to the character which would enable the player to emotionally engage in the character and feel empathy and admiration etc. towards her.



When hunting Katniss' father acts as her mentor. When something goes wrong she is frustrated, but when she hits her target she is proud.



By using skillpoints Katniss' can become stronger and specialize within a certain field, like for example climbing trees, identifying plants and making traps.



Epilogue: Katniss is 11 when her father dies, "I miss you. I promise I will take care of mom and Prim from now on".

In the videogame the special skill "instinct" will be used in combat mode to slow down time and make it easier for the player to hit targets. In free mode the player will become able to perceive important objects in the surroundings like prey or a food source. The player starts out with no amount of "instinct" available, and will slowly receive it as Katniss learns. The instinct will fill up when the player solves a puzzle, finds food or hits the targets when practicing shooting. For every

accomplished mission skill points will be rewarded (see story board above). Weapons are given to Katniss by her father, and they can also be upgraded with these skill points.

When Katniss walks around in the forest with her father, the “hunger” bar will slowly deplete and has to be refilled through the intake of food and water which the player will have to find in the forest. The “health” bar will be affected if Katniss has gone too long without food, if she falls from a tree or if the player accidentally makes her eat poisonous berries and plants, which will cause her to through up.

There will be an epilogue (see storyboard) that will help depict Katniss as the strong, caretaking and providing girl who is the anchor and the strongest story bridge between the videogame and the books. In relation to the promise made, the goal of the game is to provide for the family and to survive in order to do so.

### **Discussing the Setup: Characters**

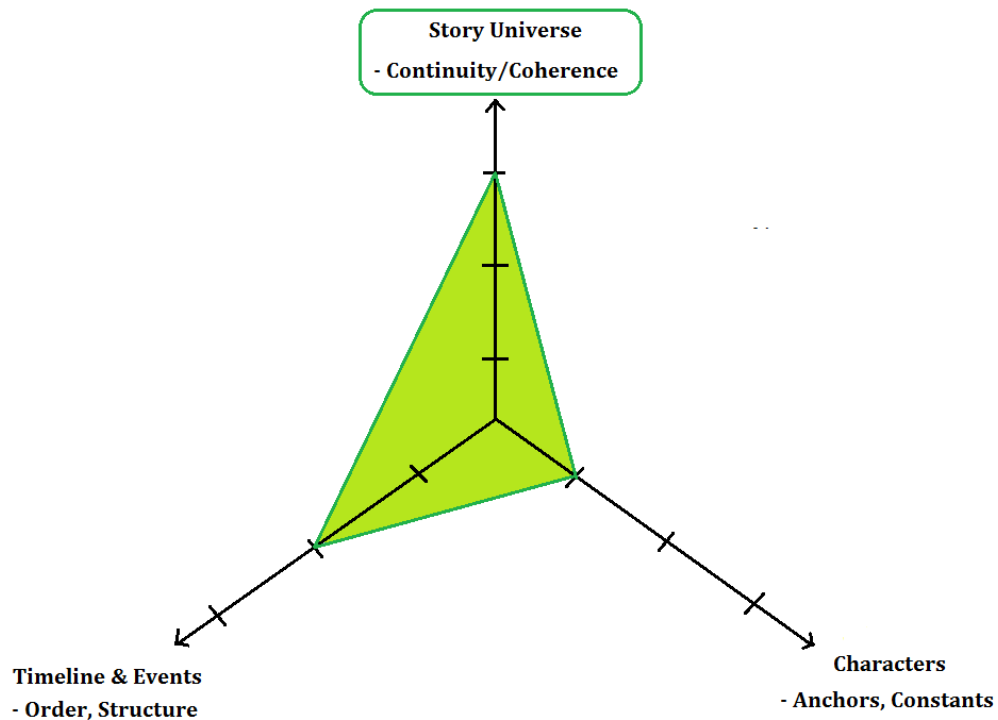
A focus on characters in a videogame concept is relatively hard to make. The narrative should allow the player to play and interact, but the focus on characters and character development as it is known from TV shows and movies, requires a relatively passive audience. In our case, we have to make a retroactive concept which means that we cannot let the player choose how the character develops, because the character’s traits are already established in the tentpole. This balance between heavy character presence and gameplay was made possible through the other story bridge, the story universe, and the character’s backstory which allowed us to incorporate interactive elements where the player can shoot targets and solve puzzles, while Katniss’ development is shown through dialogue and the player’s corresponding skill-gain.

Because the story bridge characters should provide anchors and constants which the player can recognize on the secondary platform and these should be relatable and evoke empathy, the balance between playing action sequences and getting to

know the character has to be upheld in transmedia videogames in order for them to be part of a meaningful framework. The videogame should not only contain combat sequences, because this requires the player to concentrate on hitting targets, which would make characters difficult to introduce at the same time. The character needs to become more than an avatar for the player which he controls, but a fleshed-out character which he can relate to. This means that the game genre should be thoroughly considered for transmedia videogames. Balancing the 'delicious otherness' in this concepts has been rather easy. Perhaps there might not be enough of it. Katniss should be relatable, the forest where she hunts is fairly normal, with only references to the parts of the story universe which separates it from a regular forest and the events might only hold a small amount of otherness, because it is not too farfetched to hunt in the woods to most people.

### **Design Concept 3 – Story Universe**

The variables in this concept are set to focus on the story universe which is tied to and explained through the timeline and events, while a few of the characters from the books are just mentioned.



In this case, we again brainstormed and created a mindmap over the different ways this concept could be depicted in a videogame, which can be found in Appendix 1. Creating a videogame concept where the focus is on the story universe required us to look at the whole story universe in the HG trilogy and see which part of this universe would be interesting to explore first-handed. We looked at our chosen constants and thought that a meaningful way to create this specific setup would be to let the player be a participant in the Hunger Games.

It was surprisingly easy to design a videogame concept with this setup, which can be seen on the size of our mindmap. As we indicated in the last videogame concept, where the setup focused on the timeline, it may be possible that a concept where the story universe is in focus is naturally the easiest way to create a meaningful framework in case of a retro-active videogame concept. We saw it in our case-analysis of TWD, where the videogame after the tentpole allowed the audience to answer and make up their minds about questions they had during the TV show. The range of possibilities that come with a vast story universe and giving the audience

the ability to explore it certainly seems like a good foundation to create a meaningful framework. Especially, if this universe has aspects that make it a “special world”, as Vogler calls it.

In this setup we decided that the focus would be on the 73<sup>rd</sup> Hunger Games, one year before Katniss participated. The reason for this is that the player will not know who ends up being the victor. The story line will begin at “the reaping”, the event where the contestants from the districts are chosen by drawing random names from a bowl. From here, the player will go through the same process as Katniss went through in the first book. This will ensure that there is a sense of continuity and cohesion in the story universe, because the recognizable order of events from the tentpole are used to explore the story universe through. The characters from the books will not be featured much; maybe the player will meet some of the minor characters such as Katniss’ mentor Haymitch or the host of the Hunger Games Caesar Flickerman, who interviews all the contestants before the games start.

In the books the story universe that the audience learns about can be divided into three parts: the districts, the Capitol and the Hunger Games arenas, which seem to be an entity for themselves. This division also shows the contestant’s journey, from his home district to the very different Capitol where the character begins training for the Hunger Games, which afterwards take place in a closed, controlled arena. This journey and the accompanying settings are the focus, which allows the player to interact with the story universe and explore it. This strong focus on the story universe which will be in coherence with the story universe from the books will ensure that the videogame is recognizable to the player, which will allow him to explore it and immerse himself in it.

Telling the story of an old contestant from the previous year will be a new addition to the existing tentpole, but it could also stand alone as Jenkins mentions that it should be able to, because the videogame does not rely too much on the characters, events and timeline of the tentpole. The videogame could be enjoyed even if the player has not familiarized himself with the books and movie beforehand. If the

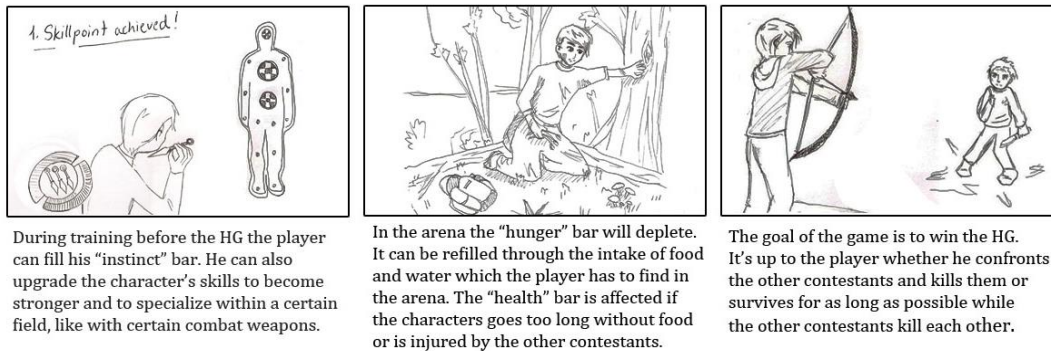
player reads the books, *after* having played the videogame, he would only know the story universe beforehand, but not the plot of the book, and thus the videogame would not have spoiled the books and movie for him.

Since we have picked the constants, we know that it will be an action-adventure game with a fixed set of mechanics and we are able to use these to create the basic videogame. The choice of focusing on the Hunger Games competition in this concept was made with the mechanics and genre in mind. The player controls a contestant who is an avatar. The combat mode is in this game used to fight with other contestants with or without weapons. The free mode is used to interact with objects in the arena.

Because the emphasis has to remain on the story universe, the player will have to walk around looking for food, shelter and other contestants. This will help the player when exploring the story universe which would enable the player to immerse himself in the videogame and its story universe. The mood will be dark and serious, similar to TWD and the player must decide which path he wants to follow to win the Hunger Games.

### **Describing the Videogame Concept**

In the videogame the special skill “instinct” will be used in combat mode to slow down time and make it easier for the player to kill other contestants. In free mode the player will be able to perceive important objects in the surroundings like food and weapons. The different mechanics and scenarios which are of importance are explained in the storyboards below, which can also be seen in a larger version in Appendix 2.



As seen in the storyboard, the goal of the game is to win the Hunger Games. The further the player progresses in the game, the harder it will become to survive and the more difficult it will be to win over the other contestants in the arena and during the game the player will have to find out – which type of player am I and what am I willing to do to survive the Hunger Games?

### Discussing the Setup: Story Universe

Similar to the last concept where the timeline is in focus, it may be debatable whether this case has a high score on the event axis as well, as they also seem quite related in this concept. We argue that the story universe is in focus here, because there aren't specific events in this concept that are referred to in the book, like in the previous concept where we could use them in a timeline, but just the same order of general events in relation to the Hunger Games competition. The player sees the control of the Capitol and the consequences hereof, which makes it a meaningful extension to the books. The focus on the story universe gives various possibilities to create a videogame concept as a transmedia extension. An explanation could be that exploration, as the main motivator with regards to this story bridge, fits videogames well as it seems to be a wider and more general concept which can relatively easily be applied to the content of a secondary platform.

To sum up, the process of creating this concept through this specific setup was straightforward. The videogame platform fit well with the focus on the story universe, and how it allows the player to explore the story world and make up his

minds about situations he might have thought about when reading the books, such as: what would I be willing to do to survive the Hunger Games? Thus the videogame concept together with the books seems to be a meaningful framework.

The focus on the story universe in a videogame might work well because it allows the player to move through the realm and immerse into it. What we on the other hand saw with characters was that the focus had to remain there and it was important to make them relatable. This is not as important with this kind of setup because the avatar becomes more of a stand-in for the player, who he can project himself onto. So here the focus is on the player and his exploration of the story universe, and less on empathy with an inhabitant of the story universe. This seems to be a very straight-forward way to create transmedia videogames. But this focus on the story universe might not be the best choice for other kinds of secondary platforms such as mobisodes or ARGs.

The three videogame concepts will be further discussed in the next chapter, New Insights Part 4, where we will, once again, evaluate and present our findings that we have accumulated through the Design chapter.

# New Insights

## Part 4

Here, we make a brief stop to discuss our findings from the research through design process.

After having designed the three different videogame concepts we are now able to answer the last research questions. They were:

- How can our model be used to design transmedia concepts?
- How can we test our model in the design process?

We used our model in a design experiment to test the story bridges as variables and to see how they can be used to design different videogame concepts. Our model enables the designer of the transmedia story to focus on the relation between the story bridges in the design process. It also highlights the possible setups, which can be created.

We tested our model by using it with a real-world tentpole to see if it could be used to expand the story from the tentpole to a secondary platform. This also enabled us to test whether concepts could be created where one story bridge was in focus and the other two were in a supporting role while still being part of a meaningful framework.

The use and test of our model and the design process will now be evaluated by using Zimmermann et al., who list four criteria for evaluating the outcome of using their design method: *Process, invention, relevance and extensibility*. Our use of these criteria will be as an inspirational frame for evaluating our model and insights. We see the criteria as being applicable in the sense of evaluating the framework for the concept development process towards being able to experiment with a theoretical idea.

**Process** includes a detailed description of the choices and actions made during the process, so it can be reproduced by others. **Invention** refers to the output of the activity, which should be a significant invention. In this thesis these inventions can be seen as our contributions to the field of transmedia storytelling. The Story Bridge Model itself can be said to be a significant contribution to the field of transmedia storytelling. During the process of creating the three concepts, through the use of the model, we were aware that they were retro-active concepts. We discussed the difference between retro- and pro-active with regards to each concept as well as its influence on the meaningfulness of the framework when it comes to each story bridge: It seemed that the different concepts benefitted differently from being one or the other type. Concepts where the focus was on timeline and event or characters were more difficult for us to create. The story universe on the other hand was easier to create. The reason might be that the timeline relies a lot on the tentpole having multiple holes in the plot, which can limit the possible amount of stories that can be created on the secondary platform. Looking at the story universe, it presents more freedom when telling stories because it simply is a frame where there is room for more creativity in relation to events and characters. Focusing on the story bridge characters requires that the designers also relate to the timeline and universe, as we did with Katniss' childhood in District 12.

When it comes to the videogame platform, the concepts indicated, that this platform seems to fit well when letting the audience answer unanswered questions produced during the experience of the tentpole. It seemed that the platform benefits from being a retro-active concept and it seemed most applicable in the context of story

universes. In continuation of this, a hypothesis can be formed, which explains the reason for this:

*It may be easiest to apply the videogame platform in a concept where flow and immersion can be established for the audience to experience, which seems to be the case in a setup where the story universe is in focus.*

It may be more difficult to achieve this with events and characters, as they usually are more complex. The complexity of the experiences, which each of these story bridges enable, might be greater, which also makes it more difficult to create frameworks for these bridges and make them meaningful. Creating a setup where the audience can puzzlesolve or become emotionally engaged via a videogame seems more complex than providing them with a cause to explore a story universe. This said, when finding the right approach, a videogame that focuses on characters and events may be just as meaningful, it may just not be as easy to design. Because this insight came from the experimental design of a transmedia videogame, we cannot tell how it applies to other types of secondary platforms such as mobisodes or ARGs.

**Relevance** refers to framing the work within the real world and articulating the state which should be achieved by the design, and why this state is relevant. In this case, the state is the balance of the three story bridges on the secondary platform. This balance secures that the platform, which is an extension of the tentpole, becomes a meaningful framework. We used our story bridges differently in every setup, and this affected the outcome to a high degree. The focus on one story bridge became the base for the roles of the other two bridges, which were used to underline the one in focus. This is how we used the model to make the concepts relevant in relation to the tentpole.

The tentpole for the design process was chosen based on the criteria we presented in the chapter New Insights Part 3. These criteria stated that the tentpole had to incorporate a high presence of the three basic story elements as well as a balanced

degree of “delicious otherness”. The Hunger Games trilogy as a tentpole turned out to be a solid foundation for the creation of the concepts. This further supports our synthesis regarding tentpoles.

**Extensibility** refers to future expansion of the work and the ability to use the knowledge gained from it. Here, we must say that the work on the three story bridges is not complete; much can still be done to describe how the three story bridges function as variables in transmedia and transmedia universes as a whole. Because we chose to focus on a videogame, we delimited ourselves from knowing the consequences of applying the story bridges to other platforms, whether these might be ARGs, mobisodes or something else entirely. As for the extensibility of the three concepts, they could all be developed further to become finished videogames.

In general, comparing the three concepts to each other, the ability of each setup to link to the content of the tentpole varies in strength. The story universe focus seems to be a very strong setup. This might have to do with the fact that the player goes through the exact same course of events as Katniss does in the first book, which means that there are strong references from both story universe and events which are connected to the main character’s events presented in the book. The meaningfulness of the framework in this setup lies within the combination of recognizable events and story universe and the indirect relation to the main character that the player gets while exploring the possibilities within this setting.

The concept that focuses on the character also seems quite strong. This might have to do with the fact that we used the main character from the tentpole instead of a supporting character. Because Katniss is the narrator and main character of the books, it is plausible that she also might be the character who is the easiest to empathize with, so this already established relation has been transferred to the secondary platform. The meaningfulness in this framework seems to rely on the relation between the audience and the main character. The weakness of this setup might be the missing focus on both events and story universe which do not play an essential role in making this concept meaningful in relation to the tentpole.

The last concept, with timeline and events in focus, is perhaps even less strong than the other two or at least weaker than the one that focuses on the story universe. This might have to do with the fact that the events chosen for the secondary platform are mentioned in the books, but not all are experienced directly by Katniss, which might make it harder for the player to remember the pieces that are supposed to be references from the book. However, the fact that this concept also focuses on the story universe, links it more strongly to the tentpole again. So the meaningfulness of this concept lies within the overview that the player can get through exploring the story universe, even though the event/timeline element could be more strongly represented.

Since the stories of all three concepts were created independently of each other, but incorporate the same core game design, an interesting suggestion would be to make a complete meaningful framework by integrating all three concepts into one videogame, where each concept would be an episode, mimicking the way it is done in the Walking Dead videogame. It could be an extension that includes three different setups with focus on the different story bridges referring back to the same tentpole, hereby creating a complete and meaningful framework. Using setups that are closer to each other, by for instance using a theme, might benefit the experience though, as the directions of our concepts are very different. This could for example be the rebellion in the HG, which could be a reference which the three different concepts have in common.

After having gathered our new insights from the design process and presented them an since we have already answered the final research questions, we are now able to sum up this knowledge in the answer for the second part of the problem statement, that is:

**How can these criteria [that a story has to meet when expanding from one platform to another] be used to design concepts as part of a meaningful framework?**

Since we defined the criteria for the expansion with the meaningful framework in mind we can focus on the actual design process in the answer of this part of the problem statement.

To design concepts as part of a meaningful framework, it is possible to use the Story Bridge Model. The story bridges can be used as variables in an initial design phase, to help construct different concepts. This will help keep a focus on the relation between story bridges. In general, the model should be considered a supplement in the design phase which can be used with other design tools.

In the following chapter we will discuss and evaluate our process and insights, including this answer to the second part of our problem statement. In this process we might add to the answer, as we will look at it from a holistic point of view.

# Discussion

The goal of this chapter is to evaluate and discuss the entire process and our approach while looking at our findings. The discussion will be a hermeneutic, concatenated discussion which will take the validity of the insights made throughout this thesis into consideration and see how these insights apply to the whole that we consider a meaningful framework.

The goal of this chapter is also to discuss our contributions in the light of the entire process of answering our problem statement, as we have had numerous insights, which we now want to discuss in its entity. We will begin by refreshing these numerous insights from the entire thesis in the following section.

## Summary of Insights

As the problem statement was divided into two parts we had to answer the first part in able to answer the second. The process of answering the first part of the problem statement started with defining transmedia and storytelling, which gave us the basic knowledge to understand how we could expand the story universe from platform to platform in a meaningful transmedia context. We pointed out the importance of the relation between platforms to the transmedia experience, which lead us to look further into bridges, which seemed to play an important role in building the framework for the meaningful transmedia experience. This insight together with the insight, that a story's ability of threading platforms together is essential in transmedia, lead us to think that the combination of the two insights could be what made the transmedia experience meaningful. This lead us further in the direction of bridges, which influenced the rest of the thesis, and the creation of our Story Bridge Model.

Through the discussion of the subsequent topic of transmedia storytelling it was pointed out that the use of bridges is central to the coordination of the complex system of transmedia storytelling. It also became clear that the separate parts of a meaningful framework create a whole that is more satisfying to the audience than the sum of its parts, where it is important that these parts fit together, so the audience can get a meaningful experience by assembling them. This was later used indirectly in the design phase, where we made sure that the story elements on the secondary platform were made to fit with the tentpole.

After this, we established three story bridges that reflected the theoretical knowledge we had gathered. We also presented the idea of three basic story elements, which we saw as necessary components of any story, as we had learned about them in a traditional storytelling context and held them up with our prior understanding of what stories should contain: Characters, timeline (with corresponding events) and story universe.

The three story bridges were then arranged into the Story Bridge Model. We presented an initial hypothesis that stated the more all three story bridges were represented on the secondary platform, the more meaningful the framework would be. We revised this hypothesis later, after analyzing three cases where this turned out to be incorrect, and created a synthesis, where we stated that to design a meaningful framework the focus has to be on one story bridge with the other two in supporting roles on the secondary platform.

Our subsequent design in the form of three videogame concepts with the same game mechanics, but different setups made it possible for us to view the story bridges as variables. This gave us insight regarding their role and their differences when being in focus in a conceptual design. We created an experimental design phase, where we researched through design, with the goal to use and test the model and theoretical insights we had had so far. One of the insights regarded that each of the story bridges have a different level of complexity making it more difficult to create a

framework to achieve the meaningful experience. Also the difference of which story bridge benefits of being pro-active or retro-active became clear in the design phase.

After the design phase we hypothesized that it may be easiest to apply the videogame platform in a concept where flow and immersion can be established for the audience to experience, which seems to be the case in a setup where the story universe is in focus. This story bridge was also the one, which benefitted the most from being made as a retro-active concept. Our synthesis regarding tentpoles was further supported because the chosen tentpole was found by using the synthesis and this tentpole turned to fulfill the needs in the design phase.

## Discussing our Contributions

With the work carried out in this thesis we have made a number of contributions to the field of transmedia storytelling. These contributions are:

- Our definition of story bridges in relation to the tentpole
- The corresponding Story Bridge Model
- Adding to the definition of a tentpole in a transmedia storytelling context

These contributions, which are based on our numerous insights, are in many cases related to the concept of meaningful experiences which we used in a transmedia context. In this context, one of our contributions includes how meaningful experiences are to be seen in the light of the relation between tentpole and secondary platforms, which is what this section will start by discussing.

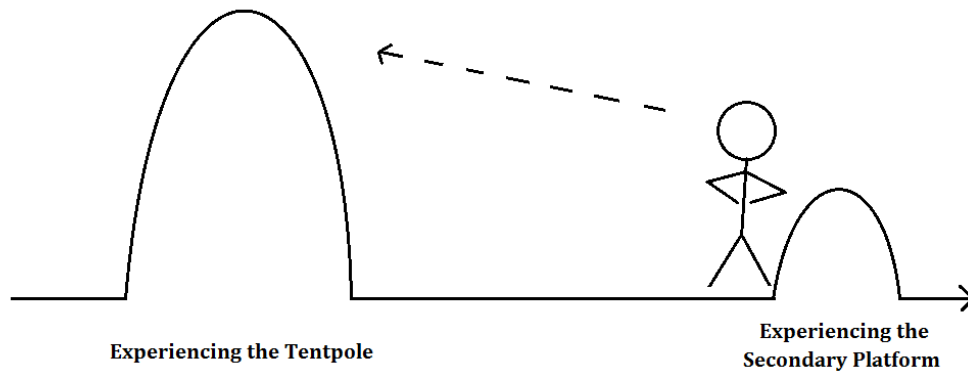
Right from the beginning we were interested in finding the meaningfulness behind the transmedia experience. We started with defining the framework for the meaningful experience, which we defined as logically correlative content that can allow for a meaningful experience to occur. The meaningful experience was defined as a valuable, logic and worthwhile experience to the audience. Choosing and

defining meaningfulness in relation to the experience and the framework as a constant, granted us a theoretically measurable constant to hold our insights up against, which would have been more difficult with constants such as *successful* or *good*.

We then looked at these concepts in a transmedia context, where the criteria for expanding across platforms with regard to the tentpole and the story bridges also became the criteria for the framework to become meaningful, allowing for the meaningful experience to occur.

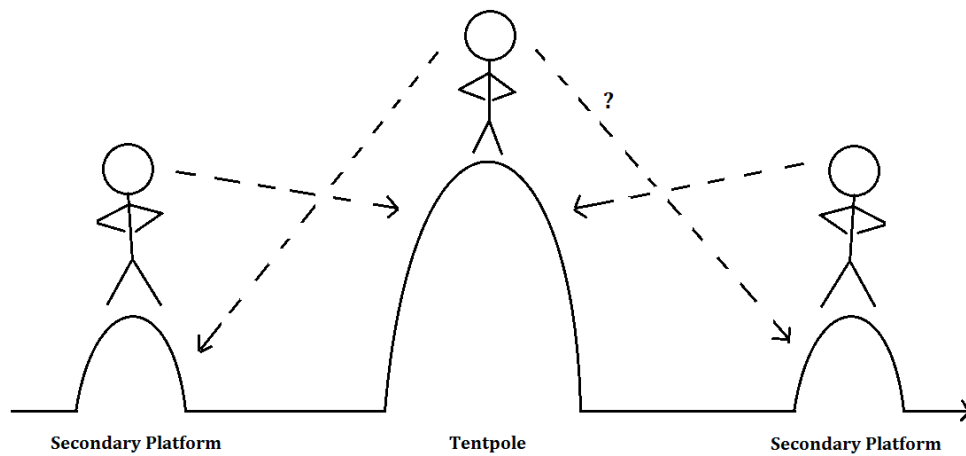
In hindsight, through our design experiment with the different setups, we can create a synthesis that is our contribution to our earlier definition and understanding of what is necessary to frame a meaningful transmedia experience, *meaningful extensions*. It is possible to see these meaningful extensions in the light of Gadamer's definition of experiences. He states that experiences are not just over when the corresponding event is, because reflection is also part of experiences and experiencing (Gadamer, 2004, p. 58). He also makes a distinction between experiences (something a person has, *Erlebnis*) and experiencing (something a person goes through, *Erfahrung*) (Gadamer, 2004, p. xiii).

In this context, there would be meaning in experiencing the secondary platform after the tentpole. Our experience is not over when the immediate experience of the tentpole is over. The secondary platform would give the possibility to reflect on the tentpole, which in continuation of Gadamer's theory makes it an essential part of the overall meaningful transmedia experience.



The illustration above not just illustrates Gadamer's idea how an experience is generated, it can also be used to explain our idea of meaningful extensions. Explaining these extensions in relation to Gadamer's notion, meaning can be found in secondary platforms, because it creates reflection as soon as the experiencing person meets the new experience (in this case the secondary tentpole) by which the earlier experience (in this case the tentpole) is recalled as a memory or experience (Erfahrung) of the past experience (Erlebnis). A question that would arise would certainly be if a meaningful extension also applies if one experiences the secondary platform before the tentpole? Is it still a meaningful extension?

Instead of only involving Gadamer's view on this, one could question his idea of simply reflecting back. Jeanne Sørensen, assistant professor at Aalborg University, presents the idea of an experience being a "before-during-after experience" (our translation) (Sørensen, 2007, pp. 186-188). It promotes the idea that an experience has more than two states, as Gadamer mentions, but in addition to the immediate experience and the reflection, the expectation and motivation beforehand is also part of the experience (ibid.). This means that this perspective on the concept of experience allows for more directions that the person experiencing can look, enabling us to paint a more elaborate picture of experiences in transmedia as well. Gadamer's notions of Erfahrung and Erlebnis are for the most part about looking back, where the second perspective is about looking forward and looking back. An illustration of this approach to the experience concept can be seen below.



In a general experience context, we can say that the first small heap is *before*, the large heap is *during* and the final small heap is *after*. In a transmedia context, the small heaps would represent secondary platforms and the large one would be the tentpole. This could for example be a promotional ARG, followed by a movie tentpole with a subsequent videogame.

The difference between Gadamer's and Sørensen's notion also becomes clearer in the illustration, where the directions are shown. The question mark on the illustration denotes an idea that there might be a feeling of anticipation during the experience of the tentpole towards a possible secondary platform. This could take shape in many ways, through the knowledge of an upcoming extension, or the anticipation to create something such as fan-fiction or art after experiencing the tentpole and as part of reflecting.

In light of Sørensen's notion, the idea of the meaningful extension would make even more sense. In our case analysis of *The Dark Knight*, we looked at the preceding ARG as the secondary platform and the movie as the tentpole. Seeing the case with just Gadamer's theory in mind one could say that the meaningfulness of the ARG has to be explained as a stand-alone experience, the same would apply to the tentpole. This way, the main experience of the tentpole would be an experience of the movie but at the same time the reflection on the secondary platform, the ARG. The reflection, that

comes after, could be granted through any form of secondary platform or as we explained previously, through the creation of your own extension. With the ARG it would be the same; the main experience is the ARG itself, with the tentpole as a reflection of this experience.

In the light of Sørensen's theory, the case can be outlined in a more holistic way, where the role of the experience of the secondary platform would be more cohesive as it becomes a preceding experience that accounts for the expectation that happens in relation to the following experience of the tentpole. In this holistic description of both experiences, the ARG could be the *before* experience to the tentpole, the experience *during* would be of the movie itself, as the story bridge to the tentpole is created as part of the transmedia experience. *During* the experience of the tentpole one would also reflect on the ARG. The *after* experience would be the reflection of the whole experience of both platforms, which again can take many shapes.

Through the discussion of our hermeneutic framework and these two notions it is made clear that our framing benefits from the inclusion of another perspective. A different reflection of the experience term may have influenced some of the choices made in relation to the design, which indicates that there still are numerous perspectives that can be applied and discussed in relation to the content of the thesis.

Now, as we have outlined and discussed the meaningful extension and the experience in light of our thesis we can move on to look at one of the main contributions that are our story bridges. Looking at our final synthesis that regards the use of the story bridges in a setup that can be shown through our model, we can say that it has changed quite a lot from our initial idea of how the three bridges contribute to a meaningful whole. Initially our hypothesis was that all three of them had to be highly represented in the secondary platform in order to frame the meaningful experience. If we look at the difference from the hypothesis to our final synthesis in the light of a meaningful extension, as we have defined it now, it is possible to see that our synthesis makes sense. If we consider the meaningful

extension as simply an extension to the tentpole, the complexity of the content of the extension should probably not match the complexity of the tentpole, as it is an extension which grants reflection (in Gadamer's case) upon the specific experience that has happened in the tentpole. This also makes sense in relation to the secondary platform not being an adaption of the tentpole. So, if we assume that reflection is not an experience identical to the experience of the tentpole, but rather a reflection of some specific part of the tentpole, then our synthesis again makes sense. This is because the synthesis stated that just one of the story bridges should be in focus on the secondary platform, which means that the content of the secondary platform should just share a part of the experience that came from the tentpole. This would look like the illustration that was created earlier to explain the meaningful extension in relation to Gadamer: the heap of the experience we create when reflecting (in the secondary platform) is not as great as the one the audience came from (the tentpole).

In continuation of the story bridges, we can look at the Story Bridge Model as another valuable contribution as well. In relation to a whole meaningful framework in transmedia, which is the logically correlative transmedia content, our model can be used to analyse existing cases and to guide the design process of meaningful extensions that can allow for meaningful experiences to occur. We claimed that our model enabled the designer of the transmedia story to focus on the relation between the story bridges in the design process, while also highlighting the possible setups, which can be created.

Using the model in the design process we found that it was more difficult to create concepts with it *after* choosing the videogame platform. This could indicate that the platform should not be selected until after the Story Bridge Model has been used to find out which setup to use in the concept. The choice of which kind of story you want to tell (which story bridge you want to focus on) should dictate the platform, not the other way around. This would also mean that the story made by using the model would benefit from being pro-active transmedia concepts as the platform has not been decided yet.

Generally, transmedia concepts should not be created solely by using the Story Bridge Model, as the model is relatively simplistic. For instance, it does not help in the creation plots or game mechanics but as we saw in our design process it can supplement the design process by showing a range of possible setups which helps to create a meaningful extension.

Finally, we made a smaller contribution by adding to the definition of tentpoles in a transmedia storytelling context, by finding out that a story should contain the three basic story elements to a high degree, in order for it to be a potential tentpole. During the previous discussion of the relation between the story bridges and the tentpole, we highlighted its importance and how the content of the tentpole can contribute to the creation of meaningful framework. If we see this in the light of our earlier discussion of Gadamer's experience concept, or even Sørensen's, we can see that it fits with our idea of the content of the secondary platform in relation to the tentpole's content, as the secondary platform is a reflection of the tentpole. In order for the secondary platform to have a focus that can be high with regards to one of the story bridges, they also have to be high in the tentpole. Our synthesis on story bridges was that one has to be in focus while the other two support it. This means that the tentpole needs to have a solid representation of all three story bridges as they have to make sense in order to support each other in a relation where the one can be in focus. The tentpole therefore contributes to the meaningfulness of the whole by having a high degree, meaning a strong representation of the three basic story elements as they are the ones that will create the basis for the content of the secondary platform. This means, that a high degree of these elements in the tentpole also ensures that it is possible to use the Story Bridge Model as a design tool, when creating various concepts for the same tentpole, where the secondary platform concepts focus on one of these elements.

This new knowledge seems to have potential effect on the semantic understanding of tentpoles in transmedia storytelling. Tentpoles in transmedia storytelling are often seen as 'blockbusters' (movies or TV shows with great success) but our contribution helps understand *why* tentpoles are meaningful tentpoles in

transmedia storytelling: because they consist of a high degree of all three basic story elements, which means that these elements can be used as story bridges when expanding to a secondary platform.

## Anomalies Discovered in the Analyses and Design Phase

After discussing our different contributions from this thesis, certain anomalies which we have experienced during both the design and analysis became clear. We find it interesting from a scientific point of view to present and discuss these to see where our current framework falls short. In the light of this, we will only be able to make hypothetical assumptions as to why that is so, or how this might be improved.

Looking back at our game design experiment, we see that the choice of platform also had a large say in how the story bridges could be used. Under the constraints of our choice of setup for the secondary platform, being a video game, we could suggest that each different story bridge might come with a different level of complexity, which influences the difficulty of creating a framework for a meaningful transmedia videogame. Within the frame of this thesis, we cannot validate this because it would require more design experiments to be conducted with the inclusion of other kinds of secondary platforms than (just) videogames, but looking back at our table from New Insights Part 2 we have indication that it might be true.

		Story Bridge 1 Story Universe	Story Bridge 2 Timeline & Events	Story Bridge 3 Characters	
Content	Characteristics, that provide	Continuity/Coherence	Order, Structure	Anchors, Constants	From Meaningful Framework  To Meaningful Experiences
		Recognition	Overview	Relation	
Audience	Audience Motives, that result in	Exploration	Puzzlesolving	Emotional Engagement	
		Immersion	Relief of Suspense Mental Catharsis	Empathy, Admiration, etc.	

In this table we see the main characteristics and motives for each of the story bridges. Looking at what the characteristics provide, we can suggest that *recognition*, *overview* and *relation* are concepts which grow in what we would call complexity; recognition being a less complex concept than relation. In addition to the process that is indicated in the table, we may be able to add a level of complexity.

This would add another level to how the relation between the three story bridges can be seen. This suggestion can also be seen in the light of the causality between the three bridges in a storytelling context, which we described earlier as the presence of a world, where there is a timeline to this world and lastly characters that inhabit this world and affect the timeline. *We might suggest that the growing complexity of the three story bridges is a natural extension of this causality, as it fundamentally frames the relation between the three story bridges.* This would for instance mean that the story universe is less complex than characters, events and timeline, which makes it easier to use in the creation of meaningful frameworks.

It would be interesting to view this relation, of a growing level of complexity in each story bridge, in relation to the audience experience as well, as to be seen in the last two rows of our table, but at this point it is not possible for us to conclude anything definitely. But if there was a possibility to look into this in future work, the audience experience would need to play a larger part in an expansion of this fundamentally theoretical thesis. It may also be one of the critical points when it comes to the work, that the audience experience has been a vague aspect to work with, since we were not able to relate directly to it because of our own delimitations

During the use of the model, we also saw that the fact that we chose a retroactive setup in the design process influenced our view on story bridges in general and how they acted as variables. In the insight chapter succeeding the design process we highlighted the difference of the pro-active setting opposite the retro-active. We made the suggestion that each story bridge had a preferable or easy way when it came to applying it to a secondary platform; some were easier to work with as pro-active and other as retro-active concepts. In continuation of this, we found out that

setups with timelines in focus may be more difficult to create as meaningful frameworks as it requires a certain setting in the tentpole, which limits the possible amount of stories that can be created on the secondary platform. It is difficult to discuss this statement in the light of the other two story bridges, because we are not certain whether it could have something to do with the relation to the other two or the relation to the tentpole.

The complexity of the story bridge might be of influence, but if this was the case the character story bridge should have been difficult to create as well, but this was not the case. Another suggestion could be that the timeline's role as the story link between the characters and the story universe makes it more difficult to apply in a secondary platform, as it is more dependent on the other story bridges. This would certainly be a possible aspect to look into in future works.

With our delimitations, these anomalies can at this point only be explained through hypothetical suggestions and would have to be further investigated in future work.

During this presentation of the anomalies and the discussion of our contributions it became clear, that the content of this thesis would benefit from further validation, both in the light of audience experiences, but also by taking other theoretical perspectives and theories into account. In the final chapter of this thesis we will sum up our answers to the problem statement and look into possible future perspectives, both practical and theoretical.

# Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to answer the problem statement that has framed this thesis. This problem statement was:

**Which criteria does a story have to meet when expanding from one platform to another platform in a transmedia context and how can these criteria be used to design concepts as part of a meaningful framework?**

Throughout this thesis we have been answering the two parts of the problem statement as well as the subordinate research questions. The answer to the first part of our problem statement was presented after we had analyzed three cases in order to validate a hypothesis, which ended in a new synthesis that is now part of this answer. The second part of the problem statement was answered before the discussion. We are now able to add further insights to this answer, since we were able to reflect on it through discussing our contributions.

In order to expand the story from one platform to another in a (meaningful) transmedia context the following criteria have to be met:

- The relation of the story bridges must be emphasized. One of the story bridges should be in focus on the secondary platform and the other two should be in supporting roles.
- The story bridges have to meet the criteria that have been defined for each respective bridge in order to be meaningful. To be part of a meaningful framework when expanding from one platform to another...
  - ...the story universe story bridge has to be coherent, continuous.

- ...the timeline and events story bridge has to have order and structure.
- ...the characters story bridge has to provide constants and anchors.
- The tentpole has to incorporate a high presence of the three basic story elements.
- The tentpole has to have a balanced degree of “delicious otherness”.

Through our discussion, design process and case analyses we were able to investigate and test these criteria and we have shown that they are valid, even though they may not be completely generalizable.

The second part of our problem statement asked how these criteria can be used to design concepts as part of a meaningful framework. Since we made the criteria with regards to the meaningful framework in transmedia, we can focus on how they can be used in designing concepts.

Using the Story Bridge Model to implement the story bridges, while meeting the respective criteria, is a possible way to design concepts. By using the story bridges as variables in the initial phase of the design, different concepts can be constructed that can show the possibilities in varying stories for the same tentpole. The model enables the designer to focus on the relation between the story bridges during the design process.

Generally, meaningful frameworks should not be designed solely by using the Story Bridge Model, as the model is relatively simplistic. However, it can supplement the design process by showing a range of possible setups which helps to create a meaningful extension.

Even though we were able to design concepts while using the previously mentioned criteria, the knowledge regarding the design process cannot be generalized. We

suggest a possible way to design concepts, through the use of the story bridges as variables, but further practical validation would probably be necessary to see the possible application methods for the criteria. The Story Bridge Model as a design tool would also benefit from further validation.

Finally, when it comes to the choice of platforms in the design of transmedia concepts, we hypothesized that it may be easier to apply the videogame platform in a concept where flow and immersion can be established for the audience to experience, which seems to be the case in a setup where the story universe is in focus. Looking further into the options with regards to platforms in relation to our story bridges is a possible route to take in future work.

## **Further Perspectives**

Here we will present further perspectives on our thesis. How can we challenge and validate our knowledge and especially the Story Bridge Model further? This could be done in several different ways, some of which will be presented in the following.

In order to test our model further, one possibility is to conduct more case analyses, with multiple different platforms, to further validate our synthesis that one story bridge should be in focus with the other two in supporting roles on the secondary platform. Another possibility could be to conduct more design experiments with other secondary platforms in order to gain more insight on which story bridges fit which types of platforms. Here, it could also be prudent to construct both retro-active and pro-active concepts, to further research which story bridges fit in these cases.

The Story Bridge Model could also be tested further as a mapping tool through case analyses to find out whether it can be used on all types of transmedia platforms. We think it is possible to use our model to analyze and map out an entire transmedia universe by looking at the story bridges between all platforms, as it is necessary to look at all the parts to understand the whole. This was something we delimited

ourselves from in the chapter The Model, because it was not essential to the answer of our problem statement, which only focused on the expansion from one platform to another. Looking into this could also help find further uses for our model and help evaluate the meaningfulness of a whole transmedia universe.

A different approach could also be to carry out empirical studies of the audience of transmedia universes. This could test our insights in regards to the audience experience, which have been purely theoretically-based in this thesis. We mainly focused on the audience motives and experiences which were linked to our story bridges:

<b>Story Bridge</b>	<b>Story Universe</b>	<b>Timeline &amp; Events</b>	<b>Characters</b>
<b>Motive</b>	Exploration	Puzzlesolving	Emotional engagement
<b>Experience</b>	Immersion	mental catharsis, relief of suspense	Empathy, admiration, etc.

These are of course only a fraction of a much larger range of motives and experiences, which can only be found and validated through empirical studies.

In further work, new theories could also be included, which could help test and discuss the framework and basis for the syntheses we have come to throughout the thesis.

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# Appendix 1

**Mindmap1 for Design Concept 1 - Timeline and Events:**

## **Mindmap2 for Design Concept 2 – Characters:**

## **Mindmap3 for Design Concept 3 – Story Universe:**

# Appendix 2

## Storyboard for Timeline & Events Concept



## Storyboard for Character Concept

## **Storyboard for Story Universe Concept**