**Urban Jamification: Gincanas as location-based mobile games in Brazil**

Adriana de Souza e Silva  
North Carolina State University  
201 Winston Hall Box 8104  
Raleigh, NC USA  
+1 919 515 9736  
aasilva@ncsu.edu

Isabel Fróes  
IT University of Copenhagen  
Rued Langgaards vej 7  
2300 Copenhagen, Denmark  
+45 7218-5000  
igcf@itu.dk

**ABSTRACT**

Location-based mobile games use the city space as their game board. They are multiplayer games, in which players use mobile devices to communicate with each other depending on their location in urban space (de Souza E Silva, A. et al. 2009; Shklovski, I. et al. 2012). First developed within academic circles (Chang, M. et al 2006; Lantz, F. 2006), such games were commercially appropriated as advertisement campaigns for movies and cars, to name a few (Hjorth, L. 2008; Mcgonigal, J. 2007). Location-based games often subvert traditional playspaces of digital games, merging digital and physical spaces through mobility (De Souza E Silva, A. 2006; Gordon, E. et al. 2011). As a consequence, they have the potential to transform modes of mobility and immobility within everyday life, allowing players to rediscover local surroundings.

Although location-based games have been extensively studied in North American and European contexts, scant attention has been paid to how mobile technologies and urban spaces act as game interfaces in developing countries. This is particularly interesting as technologies are appropriated differently in diverse parts of the world (Bar, F. 2007), and distinct environments affect urban practices of mobility, game design and play. When researching mobile technologies and urban spaces, Brazil is an interesting case. The country is a developing leading world economy with the 5th largest mobile market in the world (De Souza E Silva, A. et al. 2011). The country has also witnessed artistically and commercially development and deployment of urban and location-based games in its major cities. For example, Blast Theory performed Can You See Me Now? in Belo Horizonte (2008, Arte.Mov festival) and Audi developed the alternate reality game (ARG), Art of The Heist, to sell their Audi A3 car in 2005 (Gosney, John W. 2005). Despite the growing popularity of these initiatives, few studies have looked at how mobility and mobile technology in the developing world influence urban game design and play.
One interesting case study is the Global Gincana (Mobilefest & Waag-Society 2009), a location-based game developed in 2009 as a collaboration between the Brazilian Mobilefest festival and the Dutch Waag Society. The piece was based on the “gincana” concept, a traditional event in Brazilian culture where groups of people compete against each other by solving tasks involving a wide range of capacities. Gincanas may be described as a fusion between Olympic games and scavenger hunt. However, in the Global Gincana, GPS-enabled mobile phones were the game interface. On a map on the participants’ mobile phones they could see the location of tasks to be performed. Once they stood at a task location, instructions would pop-up on their mobile screen (Duarte, F. et al. in press). Gincanas are not new. They were popular throughout the 1970s and 1980s, organized by local governments and schools as ways of engaging, helping and educating large groups of people on social, political and cultural topics.

By exploring the history of Brazilian gincanas and how they have been re-appropriated through the spread of mobile technologies, this article addresses how mobility and urban space influence the design and performance of location-based mobile games. We use the theoretical frameworks of net locality and mobile mediality (Gordon, E. et al. 2011; Sheller, M. in press) to present the case study of the Global Gincana, in order to illustrate how such events cross cultural barriers and create new playful grounds.

Keywords
gamification, mobile technologies, location-based games, Brazil, global south

BIBLIOGRAPHY
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