

## Stories in Place

"Stories in Place" is about creating a shared, collaborative, situated story. Starting with a small initial phrase, users are asked to contribute their own words in order to complete a story, which is presented in a public screen or projection surface.

Collaboration is simply a matter of sending a text message via bluetooth to a specific device -- StoriesInPlace. Each time a user gives a contribution, the story up to that moment is sent back to his mobile device, so that he automatically holds a copy of his contribution and of those before him. There are no constraints to what can be written (actually, some swear words are masked and the size of each contribution is also limited, but apart from that, there are no restrictions). Users are free to write unrelated phrases, to comment on something that has just happened, etc. There are a number of questions that arise with this project, mostly due to its open nature. The screen ends up being just a text-based board, so anything goes and "story" in this context must be understood in a very broad sense. Will something coherent emerge from this? Will users of a given place be motivated to contribute? How will such an open system be used? Will users find a purpose? Will there be a situatedness characteristic in the interaction? We have only given an initial sense to the project by calling it "Stories in Place", but the system does not impose any significance to the contributions of users. Users themselves are free to come up with a meaning and purpose. The restrictions imposed are merely practical ones meant to mitigate possible abuses: the size of each individual contribution is limited to prevent, at least, partly that a single user takes over the whole screen space; and some swear words are masked. This project started as a demonstration/evaluation of the DiABlu Mailman tool and, as such, has also other purposes for us. Despite seeming a simple task, programming a computer program to receive files sent by a plethora of mobile devices using bluetooth has a lot more to it: some devices look for particular services that depend on the type of file being sent; different devices support different file type; some usb bluetooth dongles don't seem to work with some devices; different operating systems allow different bluetooth services to be used by applications. Those are some of the problems that can only be debugged by submitting the tool to a real usage scenario. Usage of the DiABlu Mailman tool by means of the Stories In Place project will give a lot more data to sort through these issues. This project has been submitted to the Future Places festival and will be in display at Maus Hábitos and at the School of Arts of the Portuguese Catholic University until October 19, 2008. This project, and DiABlu Mailman, have been developed at the Research Centre for Science and Technology in Art, by Jorge Cardoso and Pedro Santos.