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UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

Faculty of Social and Human Sciences

Sociology and Social Policy

**Smartphones and Pervasive Play: An Examination of the Effect
foursquare has on Physical, Spatial and Social Practices**

by

Michael Saker

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

July 2014

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHAMPTON

ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF SOCIAL AND HUMAN SCIENCES

Sociology and Social Policy

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

SMARTPHONES AND PERVASIVE PLAY: AN EXAMINATION OF THE EFFECT FOURSQUARE HAS ON PHYSICAL, SPATIAL AND SOCIAL PRACTICES.

Michael Saker

This thesis aims to explore the effect foursquare, a popular and prominent location-based social network (LBSN), is having on physical, spatial and social practices. Undertaking this research is important owing to the rise of location-based applications, and their increased prevalence in society. Foursquare functions in three broad ways: social, locational and playful.

In social terms, foursquare uses the GPS functionality of smartphones to allow users to geographically 'check in' at a given location. Individuals can then leave locational suggestions or 'tips', as well as see where their friends are. Regarding the playful aspect, foursquare 'gamifies' 'ordinary' life, awarding points and badges for check-ins, and allowing users to become the 'mayor' of any venue, once a certain level of check-ins has been reached. Mayors can then enjoy 'real' world rewards, such as special offers and discounts, as well as the knowledge that other foursquare users can see their status.

My thesis is driven by the following questions. How do the playful elements of foursquare - points, badges, mayorships - affect how users spatially and socially approach their environment? How does the sharing of location, as well as the use of user-generated locational suggestions,

impact identity? How does foursquare affect social practices? Is foursquare used as a locational archive, and if so, how does this impact engagements with space and place? These questions are addressed using a qualitative methodology, involving a diverse selection of foursquare users being interviewed about how they use this LBSN, as well as understand its effects.

My findings illuminate that the playful elements of foursquare can strengthen spatial relationships with familiar environments, as well as accentuate social bonds. This study also illuminates that the sharing of location, impacts identity, just as foursquare is employed to create spatial archives. In sum, this study reveals that foursquare, and the pervasive play it allows, affects the physical, spatial and social practices of users; leading to new ways of approaching space and place, as well as new ways of coordinating social interactions.

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DECLARATION OF AUTHORSHIP

I, Michael Saker declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

Smartphones and Pervasive Play: An Examination of the Effect foursquare has on Physical, Spatial and Social Practices

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
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3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
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Signed:

Date:

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Chapter 1: Introduction

My research is driven by four interests revolving around the impact location-based social networks (LBSNs) that overlay 'real' world environments with the potential for digitally mediated play, spatial explorations, and social encounters, might have on physical, spatial and social practices. As it is one of the more prominent and popular LBSNs, my research will focus on foursquare. Firstly, I am interested in examining how the playful elements of foursquare - points, badges, mayorships - might affect how users spatially and socially approach their environment. Secondly, I am interested in how the sharing of location, as well as the use of user-generated locational suggestions, might impact identity. Thirdly, I am interested in the social effect foursquare might have on existing relationships, how encounters are arranged and if it leads to new connections. Lastly, I am interested in whether foursquare is presently being used as a locational archive, or as a form of spatial memory, and how this might impact engagements with space and place. These are important questions: within a relatively short period of time, mobile phones have shifted from a technology ostensibly used to audibly communicate with others, to smartphones imbued with the potential for new ways of experiencing and engaging with digital information and, perhaps, new forms of social and spatial engagement. It is this potential that my research is interested in exploring.

The overlaying of 'real' world environments with the possibility for digitally mediated play in part stems from the advent of the web, as well as advancements revolving around mobile devices, and their transition into something more multifaceted vis-à-vis functionality. I will now consider these developments in more detail, so as to bring the potential physical, spatial and social impact of foursquare to the fore. I will begin by examining the seemingly 'disembodied' interactions the web has been seen as enabling, and how a focus on this kind of 'virtual' communication has overshadowed the impact computer-mediated communications (CMCs) can have on physical, spatial and social practices, which is significant here. I will then examine the rise of web-based services that enable connections to be made between people in 'real' world environments, before considering how this kind of connectivity has been

built upon by mobile phones, as well as the development of mobile social networks. I will then examine how these factors have led to the rise of smartphones and LBSNs, and why exploring the impact LBSNs can have on how people engage with their environment, themselves and each other is important. Following this, I will outline a more detailed list of research questions stemming from my 4 interests noted above, before considering the contributions my research will make to various fields, as well as identifying existing gaps in the literature on LBSNs that my study will address. Lastly, I will outline the subsequent chapters of my thesis.

The rise and growth of the web, as well as social networking sites (SNSs), has enabled new forms of seemingly 'disembodied' social engagement to emerge. Specifically, the idea of cyberspace has moved the focus away from the materiality of location and in so doing the somatic essence underlying any form of embodied communication (Heim, 1993; Benedikt, 1991). Indeed, much of the early thrill around new forms of CMCs, in the hype at least, revolved around their ability to circumvent time and space (Manovich, 2001; Castells, 2000). For some theorists this is seen as a positive and emancipatory advancement; a digital narrative enveloped in a utopian discourse of technology that can momentarily free individuals from their fleshly form. As Heim (1993: 89) puts it, '[suspended] in Computer space, the cybernaut leaves the prison of the body and emerges in a world of digital sensation', 'free from the constraints of geography ... and, in more extreme cases, the messy contingencies of the flesh' (Wilken, 2008: 39). Following in this vein, the web has been celebrated as transcendently eliciting disembodied interactions that effectively cut through the materiality of 'place', and with it the restrictions touched on above.

For some then, 'computer space' offers 'a world where you can be yourself, against a duplicitous world in which you have to conform to the expectations of others: a fake and fragmented world of similarly disconnected individuals' (Coyne, 2001: 4). This 'thrill' can readily be identified in many examples, as people do of course employ web-based applications to engage and interact with others whom are not physically present, and thus can conceal their physicality, as well as their identity. However, and despite such 'technoromanticism' (Coyne, 2001), the role of the body as well as space and

place, when considered in relation to new media technologies and CMCs, is an area of research that warrants more work, especially given the rise of new LBSNs, like foursquare, and the physical, spatial and social possibilities they might permit. As Humphreys (2010: 775) suggests, '[despite] a 25-year history ... the role of physical and social spatial practice has been relatively neglected in [this] field'. In other words, the verve surrounding cyberspace and its possibilities hasn't lifted the ephemeral anchor that is the body 'from the constraints of a material world' (Coyne, 2001: 63); quite the opposite in fact. The body is still very much rooted in the physical spaces it inhabits, just as engagements with the web may now be eliciting new opportunities for social interactions in space and place, as well as new ways of representing identity.

Indeed, the physical, spatial and social impact of new media technologies alongside CMCs has more recently been brought into focus by applications that allow web-based connections and interactions between people, places and activities. 'Services such as Craigslist.com, MeetUp.com and Plazes.com harness the power of the internet to facilitate connections between people based on geographic proximity' (Humphreys, 2010: 763-764). Beginning in 1995 as simply an email distribution list of friend, Craigslist.com primarily functioned to inform locals of nearby events. In a comparable vein, MeetUp.com was launched in 2002, and likewise assisted people in forming and joining similar interest groups in their local area; 'taking the standard idea of the virtual community - people who have something in common, who wouldn't have known about each other if it wasn't for the internet - and then throwing in the novel idea that they might actually get together for a coffee' (Gauntlett, 2011: 125). Plazes.com was launched in 2004, and allowed users to share their location, as well as their present activities, with friends.

What is significant about all three of these examples is that the web isn't used here to transgress space, place and the body, in the manner explored above (Manovich, 2001; Castells, 2000; Heim 1993), but rather to forge different, and perhaps deeper, physical, spatial and social connections to this or that locale. Importantly then, this illuminates that the web can be employed to facilitate social and spatial engagements in 'real' world environments, just as it can be used to communicate with those not physically present. In each service outlined, what markedly takes place is a transition from the world of 'computer

space' to the tangible realm of the 'real'. This transition highlights that while the web and CMCs can effectively circumvent the material restrictions of any given environment, actual connections formed in space are significant nonetheless, and perhaps increasingly so, given the rise of mobile social networks that may offer the potential for a different kind of spatial and social approach to this or that place, as well as a different approach to social encounters and their arrangement. Certainly, the mobile phone has become a suitable tool for extending the kind of connectivity examined above, by utilising the mobility that defines it.

'The accessibility and mobility of these devices suggests that people can ... connect with local people in real-time as they move through the cities' (Humphreys: 2010: 764). A prime example of a service that does just this is explored by Humphreys (2007, 2010) in her study of the mobile social network, Dodgeball. Dodgeball was developed by Dennis Crowley in 2000, before being taken over by Google in 2005, and then eventually shutdown in 2009. During its tenure Dodgeball functioned in the following way: users would post their location on Dodgeball's accompanying website which would then send out a series of SMS text messages to a defined list of friends, updating them of their whereabouts. From her research, Humphreys (2010: 768) found that Dodgeball did shape how users felt about their environment, identifying a process termed 'parochialization'. By 'creating, sharing and exchanging information, social and locational,' users felt a 'sense of commonality among a group of friends in a public space', which produced a sense of familiarity within often unfamiliar public environments. This then led to unexpected social interactions. Furthermore, Humphreys also found users frequently changed their pathways through the city depending on what social and spatial information they had received on their mobile devices; reconfiguring or adapting their usual routes if it became apparent that a friend or friends were nearby. These findings add weight to the suggestion that '[people] increasingly use mobile social networks to transform the ways they come together and interact in public space' (ibid; p.764), and that the mobile phone can be 'firmly embedded in what it means to experience place, co-present or not (Hjorth, 2008a: 93).

Since then, the mobile phone has moved beyond SMS text messages in terms of its communicative potential, just as it now engages with location in a more complex manner. I am referring here to the development of smartphones; a development which may, in conjunction with LBSNs, impact spatial and social practices, as well as how users understand and represent themselves. Indeed, the advent and use of smartphones, such as the iPhone, which bring together previously distinct functions, from web browsing to GPS, have dramatically altered the ways in which 'old' technologies such as mobile phones are understood, and what they are 'for' (Ling & Pedersen, 2005; Bassett, 2003; Fortunati, 2002); transgressing the monistic functionality of their original incarnation. As Richardson (2007: 205) rightly observes.

Handheld media and communications technologies are becoming increasingly composite interfaces, combining the functionality of standard telephony, text-based interaction, e-mails and Internet browsing, digital video cameras, PDAs, MP3 players, and game consoles.

As Boyd (2005: 28) goes on to explain, the 'mobile phone has become the Swiss army knife of consumer electronics, becoming by turn a games machine, emailer, camera, or news browser. Heck, you can even talk to people on them'. Boyd illuminates here that the original purpose of the mobile phone, to make phone calls, has been somewhat displaced by the growing allure of convergence and the possibilities this seemingly carries in its wake. As Hjorth (2008a: 91) concurs.

Whether we like it or not the mobile phone has become a vehicle for multimedia ... so much so that users who just want a mobile phone for voice calls find it impossible to get such a device without all the "extras".

In short, what has been witnessed is the 'transformation of mobile phones from communication devices to multimedia devices par excellence' (Hjorth, 2011: 41). A significant feature of smartphones is that they allow users to access the web as they move through the city, enabling 'real' world locations to be overlaid with digital information. This is important as it can then potentially affect how users engage with the web, which may likewise impact

how they interact with their environment and so on. Prior to this transition, 'surfing the net' necessitated minimal physical movement or spatial awareness; the 'computer [could] be said to discipline the body more or less into a face-to-face interaction' (Hjorth, 2008a: 101), just as engagements with any given locale weren't so explicitly rooted in explorations of digital space. For de Souza e Silva (2006) this merging of 'real' world environments with digital space has led to the development of 'hybrid spaces'; producing a sense of 'virtual coimplacement' (Moore, 2006), as users now inhabit two different spaces, the digital and the 'real', simultaneously. Correlatively, this concept forms an important part of the research surrounding new mobile technologies and location-based applications (Farman, 2012; de Souza e Silva, 2006). To be clear, however, this kind of 'hybrid' engagement entails more than simply interacting with digital information in space, but also involves interacting with digital information in space which is itself tethered to a specific location, owing to the use of GPS. The incorporation of GPS by smartphones consequently means users not only have the ability to share their location in a manner that goes beyond SMS text message-based services, like Dodgeball, it also means they can interact with locational information, itself digitally connected to any given environment.

Smartphones might thus provide a different way of approaching and exploring 'real' world environments, just as they have the potential to allow a more physical engagement with digital space; one that at the same time involves moving through 'real' space. This is an important development, if space and experiences of space are understood as constructed through use, rather than being predetermined (Soja 1996; de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1974/1991), as this in turn means new approaches to space and place, alongside new social possibilities, could emerge symptomatically of LBSNs like foursquare, and the 'hybrid' spatial engagements they outwardly allow. Likewise, if embodiment is understood as not necessarily limited by the flesh (Richardson, 2005; Ihde, 1993; Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1968), but rather open to alteration by the various technologies we employ, as well as identity similarly seen as constructed by the individual (Siapera, 2012; Gauntlett, 2008; Giddens, 1991), the use of smartphones and foursquare may also suggest the potential for new embodied approaches to space and place, as well as perhaps new understandings of the self and identity. As a means to better understand these possibilities, and thus

to focus on the LBSN I intend to explore, a more detailed description of foursquare and its functionality is helpful here.

Foursquare was developed by Dennis Crowley and Naveen Selvadurai in late 2008, before being launched in 2009. Foursquare ostensibly functions in three broad ways: it allows users to 'keep up with friends', 'discover what's nearby', and 'save money and unlock rewards' (Foursquare, 2014); in other words, it functions in a social, locational and playful manner. In social terms, foursquare uses the GPS functionality of smartphones to allow users to geographically 'check in' at a given location, and for this information to then be visible to their foursquare friends. Individuals can leave locational suggestions, or 'tips', as they are referred - textual advice concerning a specific location, which other users can see - as well as see the tips left by others. Regarding the playful aspect, foursquare 'gamifies' 'ordinary' life, awarding points for check-ins, and allowing users to become the 'mayor' of any given establishment, once a certain level of check-ins has been reached. Mayors can then enjoy 'real' world rewards, such as special offers and discounts, as well as the knowledge that other foursquare users can see their status. In addition, foursquare awards various badges for different individual check-ins, as well as combinations of check-ins.

In comparison to older mobile social networking site, foursquare significantly allows users to engage with public space in a digitally mediated and explicitly playful manner. The potential of integrating play with 'ordinary' life, suggests an updated approach to theories surrounding play, as play has traditionally been understood as somehow separate from 'ordinary' life. This is a position that most famously stems from the work of Huizinga (1938/1992), who suggests that one of play's defining features is its delineation from the 'real' world: that play is always contained inside a 'so-called "magic circle"' (de Souza e Silva & Hjorth, 2009: 605) and thus performed within certain 'limits of time and space' (Huizinga, 1938/1992: 9). As he states, '[all] play moves and has its being within a play-ground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, or deliberately or as a matter of course' (Ibid; p.10). Conceptually speaking, this idea of a 'magic circle' is one that appears repeatedly in literature around gaming (Apter, 1991; Bogost, 2006; Caillois, 1958/2001; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004) just as it is now appearing in literature revolving around new mobile

devices and pervasive forms of play (de Souza e Silva & Hjorth, 2009; de Souza e Silva & Sutko, 2009; Montola, 2005). Indeed, for Montola (2005: 4) pervasive play 'is not limited to the contractual playspace of the traditional magic circle [meaning] that participating in a pervasive game influences the ordinary life of the player quite directly'. For mobile game designers like Priebatsch, this intermingling of digital space with 'real' space, along playful lines, is presently forging 'the third era of the web ... [which he defines] as the game layer' (Kiss, 2011).

Traditional theories of play (Caillois, 1958/2001; Huizinga, 1938/1992) then appear insufficient for investigating how new smartphones and LBSNs like foursquare might be transforming user engagement with play, precisely because 'ordinary' space is being overlaid with digitally mediated play. It would seem that the world of play is no longer as explicitly distinct from 'real' world environments, or 'ordinary' life, as it once was. Examining this new relationship is significant here, working from the premise that foursquare has the potential to transform how users approach their environment, understand or construct their identity, make social arrangements, and forge new social connections.

To recap then, I have thus far outlined the salient developments that have led to the rise of LBSNs; illuminating that the 'disembodied' interactions the web has enabled have in turn overshadowed questions of spatial and social practices vis-à-vis CMCs. Given the rise of smartphones and the likes of foursquare, this is a position that needs to be addressed. Following this, I detailed several web-based examples of applications that demonstrate new media technologies being used to forge various social connections in space and place, as opposed to transcending it; just as I explored how the mobile phone has henceforth been used to build upon this kind of connectivity, leading to the advancement of mobile social networks like Dodgeball, which has been shown as impacting how users socially and spatially approached their environment (Humphreys, 2007, 2010). Moving forwards, mobile phones have been replaced by smartphones, and mobile social networks have been replaced by LBSNs like foursquare; applications that not only overlay 'real' world environments with digital information, but also the opportunity for digital mediated play that could lead to new ways of experiencing and engaging with

digital information and, perhaps, new forms of social and spatial engagement. What hasn't change, however, is the continued need to understand how new mobile technologies alongside the likes of foursquare are being used, physically, spatially and socially speaking, and how this use is then understood by those using it. As a mean to make my research clear, I shall now go into more detail about my specific research questions.

As established from the offset, my research is driven by four interests revolving around the effect foursquare might have on physical, spatial and social practices: a popular and prominent LBSN. An ethnographic approach is appropriate here, as I am chiefly interested in investigating how foursquare, and its impact, is felt by those that use it. Each of my research interests can be broken down into a more extensive list of enquiries. Firstly, I am interested in examining how the playful elements of foursquare - points, badges, mayorships - might affect how users spatially and socially approach their environment. Does it, for instance, underline or deepen relationships with familiar environments, and if so, what is the impact felt? Does the playful engagement with space and place see users wanting to go out more, or lead to them moving through their environment following modified routes? Also, what impact does this form of pervasive play have on existing friendships? Does it deepen social bonds, for instance? Secondly, I am interested in how the sharing of location, as well as the use of user-generated locational suggestions, might impact identity. Does it make users feel differently about the spaces they choose to share, as a result of what they think this or that place might signify about them, or does it actually lead them to go to or perhaps avoid certain places? Likewise, how does the use of user-generated locational information make users feel about themselves when they employ such information? Do unfamiliar environments feel more familiar, and if so, what is the impact on identity? Thirdly, I am interested the effect foursquare may have on social practices. Does it change how users make social arrangement? Does it lead to unexpected or 'serendipitous' encounters? Does it create new social connections? Lastly, I am interested in exploring whether foursquare is presently being used as a locational archive, or as a form of spatial memory. If users do employ foursquare in this way, to record their locational past, what effect does this have on their present engagements with space and place? Having elaborated on my specific research questions, let me now consider

what contributions my research will make, as well as detail gaps in the literature surrounding LBSNs, and how my research will address these.

Firstly, more empirical work is needed in terms of how foursquare might be affecting the physical, spatial and social practices of users, owing to the pervasive play it allows. As detailed above, although foursquare is a mobile social network of sorts, it is significantly different from older mobile social networks, like Dodgeball. Firstly, it engages actual location through the use of GPS. Secondly, it combines gaming elements. To reiterate, this suggests a different understanding of play vis-à-vis how play has traditional been theorised as somehow separate from 'ordinary' life (Huizinga, 1938/1992; Caillois, 1958/2001). Accordingly, by exploring the kind of play foursquare permits, while drawing on the work of various play theorists (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Apter, 1991; Crawford, 1984; Caillois, 1958/2001), as well as linguists (Bateson, 1972), my research will offer a different understanding of play; one that appreciates the paradoxical spatial relationships play might permit, as well as its effect on 'ordinary' life. Accordingly, my study will contribute to research exploring the question of play, just as it will contribute to research exploring LBSNs. Secondly, more research is needed to investigate how location is presently being used to construct and continue various identities, owing to the playful engagements with space foursquare seemingly allows. Although there is now research emerging on location-based identities vis-à-vis foursquare (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2014; Cramer et al., 2011), as well as discussions revolving around foursquare and the sharing of location (de Souza e Silva & Gordon), my research differs from these examples, as I am also exploring how the use of location-based suggestions, or tips, are employed by users, and how the use of such information impacts identity and so on. Put differently, my research on LBSNs and identity moves beyond simply the sharing of location. In turn my research will address this gap, as well as continuing discussions around identity, pervasive play and new engagements with space, place and LBSNs. Lastly, although there is a considerable body of work that examines mobile phones and their impact on social arrangements (Campbell & Park, 2008; Ling, 2004; Ling & Yttri, 1999, 2002), there is limited research exploring the social impact of specific LBSNs like foursquare. Accordingly, my research will address this gap.

The theoretical foundations underpinning this thesis are outlined in chapters two and three. Chapter three explores frameworks from which to approach identity, embodiment and space, as well as detailing the need for more empirical work in this field. In approaching identity, space and embodiment, I draw together anti-essentialist approaches that insist there are no givens when it comes to any of these areas. This consequently allows me to ask the kind of questions detailed above, as LBSNs could thus impact identity, embodiment and understandings of space. Chapter three addresses play, focusing on Huizinga's notion of the 'magic circle' (1938/1992), where 'ordinary' life is perennially theorised as somehow separate from play, as a means to then challenge it by the kind of play endemic of foursquare. At the same it is also establishes that such a divide is similarly contested by playful approaches to space that precede the development of new mobile technologies and LBSNs. A new position on play is subsequently proposed; one that appreciates the disruptive potential of play, as well as it not being hierarchically Othered by 'ordinary' life. Chapter four moves on to outline the rationale underpinning this research and its aim to develop an understanding of the effect foursquare might be having on physical, spatial and social practices. An ethnographic methodology is accordingly devised to investigate how a diverse selection of users understand their use of this foursquare, as well as interpret this use, in their own words. Semi-structured interviews are adopted here as a way of getting at the kind of information I am interested in, before being subjected to thematic analysis with the broad themes established by the theoretical framework, including: play, identity, location and social. Chapter five moves on to analyse the data produced by participants with a focus on the playful side of foursquare and how the play of this LBSN can be seen as intermingling with 'ordinary' life, and thus enabling new approaches to space and place. Chapter six analyses the data produced by participants focussing on how check-ins can be used to construct a sense of location-based identity. The locational information provided by foursquare is then explored in terms of its perceived connection to something 'authentic', allowing users to *feel* as if they have experienced this or that environment as a 'local' would. Chapter seven analyses the data produced by participants, focussing on social arrangements and 'serendipitous' social encounters. Alongside this it investigates whether foursquare is employed by some users as a way of documenting their day-to-day locational movements, before considering the spatial impact of sharing

locations in this manner. Lastly, chapter eight brings together the key findings stemming from my field work; importantly casting a light on the impact foursquare is having on the physical, spatial and social practices of my participants. Alongside this, my research as a whole is reflected back on, identifying its limitations, as well as making suggestions for future research around LBSNs.

Chapter 2: Identity, Embodiment & Space

The aim of this thesis is to explore the effect foursquare might have on physical, spatial and social practices. More specifically, I am interested in what effect the play of foursquare - points, badges, mayorships - may have on how users approach their environment. I am interested in what effect foursquare and its engagement with location and location-based suggestions might have on identity. Any impact on identity is seen here as being 'physical', as my interest in identity revolves around its embodied relation to space, place and the use of smartphones. I am interested in the potential social impact of foursquare. Lastly, I am interested in whether foursquare is being used as locational archive, and if so how this impacts engagements with space and place. These are my 4 lines of enquiry, as developed in my opening chapter. Before I begin exploring this, however, it is my intention to first examine identity, embodiment and spatiality. Doing this will provide me with the theoretical footing needed to ask the kind of questions I am interested in asking. The chapter in turn begins by examining identity and how the self is not simply given but rather constructed through various choices, such as those that revolve around lifestyle (Gauntlett, 2008; Giddens, 1991), for instance. This position is then built upon through an examination of Foucault's (1988) 'technologies of the self', with the use of LBSNs explored concerning their potential to modify the environments this or that person frequents, symptomatic of the sharing of location. The chapter then moves on to establish an appropriate way of understanding embodiment in light of the body's engagements with technology, such as smartphones. The phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964), as well as Haraway's (1991) 'cyborg', are both used here to demonstrate that embodiment is not defined simply by the flesh alone. This is significant when it comes to the exploration of engagements with smartphones and the like, as it could be argued the body is subsequently extended in some way. Following this, the chapter establishes a suitable way of approaching the question of space. The work of Lefebvre (1974/1991) and de Certeau (1984) are in turn employed to illuminate the

constructed nature of all spaces, which importantly means different engagements with space can produce different spatial experiences. Lastly, actor-network theory (ANT) is used to further underline the anti-essentialist position developed thus far, before the art of *flânerie* is explicated to flesh out embodied approaches to space and place, as well as their impact on the experience of this or that environment.

2.1 Identity

In *Modernity and Self-Identity* (1991), Giddens outlines a helpful framework to understand the role of identity in a modern society. For Giddens, social structures and human agency are inextricably connected, with the former being reproduced by the latter through the repetition of certain human actions. As Gauntlett (2002: 102) explains, '[this] means that there *is* a social structure - traditions, institutions, moral codes and established ways of doing things; but it also means that these can be changed when people start to ignore them, replace them or reproduce them differently'. Differentiating between pre-modern and modern societies, or post-traditional societies, as he also refers to them, Giddens suggests, whereas pre-modern societies revolve around traditions and customs, modern societies are no longer *as* limited in this way. Not that this is to posit modern societies have neither customs nor traditions, nor is it to suggest that they are not restricted in other ways. What Giddens is simply highlighting here is that as a symptom of the development of modernism, the extent to which society is *controlled* by traditional habits has been reduced. As he goes on to explain, '[modern] institutions differ from preceding forms of social order in respect of their dynamism, the degree to which they undercut traditional habits and customs, and their global impact' (Giddens, 1991: 1). Consequently, '[in] post-traditional times ... we don't really worry about the precedents set by previous generations, and options are at least as open as the law and public opinion will allow' (Gauntlett, 2002: 96). This development accordingly impacts on questions of identity, and for the following reasons. When customs and traditional habits are in place, there is less need for individuals to analyse their actions because their choices have already been decided. In post-traditional societies it is argued, however, these decisions are not *as* circumscribed.

'In the setting of modernity ... the altered self has to be explored and constructed as part of a reflexive process of connecting personal and social change' (Giddens, 1991: 32-33). Self-identity is therefore 'a person's own reflexive understanding of their biography' (Ibid; p.53); 'an ongoing project that we are constantly modifying, updating, safeguarding and so on' (Siapera, 2012: 173). In modern societies, or rather in societies where modernity has developed to a sufficient degree, identity has thus become an important issue. It is not one that can easily be escaped, as we are all obliged in various ways to engage with questions of identity. 'Even those who would say that they have never given any thought to questions or anxieties about their own identity will inevitably have been compelled to make significant choices throughout their lives' (Gauntlett, 2008: 105). For instance, decisions about how one looks, what one is wearing, what technologies one employs, or what games one engages with, each implicitly revolve around identity. 'What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity - and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behaviour' (Giddens, 1991: 70). For Giddens then, the self is consequently tantamount to a *kind* of project, or a work of art (Foucault, 1998: 261). Identity is accordingly seen as being in 'a perpetual beta phase, to use new media terminology' (Siapera, 2012: 173), never quite complete, but instead always in the process of becoming. Significantly this means the self can be altered.

Self-identity, then, is not a set of traits or observable characteristics. It is a person's own reflexive understanding of their biography. Self-identity has continuity - that is, it cannot easily be completely changed at will - but that continuity is only a product of the person's reflexive beliefs about their own biography. (Giddens 1991: 53)

In post-traditional societies Giddens (ibid; p.81) proposes that one important way identity is constructed is through lifestyle. 'A lifestyle can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity'. It would be wrong here to assume that this process is in any way 'trivial', as 'there is something much more fundamental going on' (Ibid). In modern societies we are all coerced into

choosing certain lifestyles: habitual practices that are reflexively open to modification. 'Lifestyle choices, then, can give our personal narrative an identifiable shape, linking us to communities of people who are 'like us' - or people who, at least, have made similar choices' (Gauntlett, 2008: 112). A person's identity can thus be found within their 'capacity to keep a particular narrative going' (Giddens, 1991: 54; italics in original). This is accomplished through the construction of a biography that details the 'self' in a fashion that makes sense to the individual in question. Such practices then produce a certain level of 'ontological security', being 'the confidence that most human beings have in the continuity of their self-identity and in the constancy of the surrounding social and material environment of action' (ibid; p.92). As a result of this, 'the materials we use' to construct any given identity, 'as well as circumstances under which this construction takes places, acquire an increased significance' (Siapera, 2012: 173).

This last point is important when it comes to considering new forms of pervasive play, which may be used as 'materials' for constructing identity. What I am interested in then, is the extent to which users of LBSNs like foursquare might associate themselves with a particular lifestyle, and if so, how this lifestyle may tie in with their sense of self, as well as potentially providing new social connections. Exploring this preliminary question could in turn cast a light on those presently using LBSNs, which may then feed into other questions revolving around LBSNs and their impact on identity. Indeed, I would suggest that the use of LBSNs goes beyond lifestyle choices, or rather builds upon them, as foursquare, for example, also offers users the ability to share their location with friends. What is significant here, aside from the possible social and playful effect of sharing one's location in this fashion, which may elicit new ways of arranging social connections in space and place, is that when individuals share their location, they are also sharing information about the kind of places they frequent. In other words, whether they are aware of it or not, users are revealing something about their identity, through their location, which may then make them feel differently about their location and so on. For example, it may underline a desire to be 'seen' at this or that place, or *vice versa*, because of what this place outwardly connotes. As Goggin (2013: 202) puts it, while following in a similar vein, 'place is a fundamental pillar of human identity', as well as 'a key category of understanding the dynamics of

new media'. Just as '[social] networking sites (SNS) ... provide opportunities to create an identity ... through digital objects like photos, videos, and self-descriptions' (Belk & Ruvio, 2013: 87) perhaps LBSNs are currently enabling users to perpetuate this or that identity through the places they choose to share, which may then feed into a sense of personal biography, again affecting their identity and so on. From this position, it could be argued that location and its relation to identity is presently being accentuated by LBSNs. Alongside this foursquare can also be used to glean user-generated locational information, concerning where to go and what to do in this or that environment. What is of interest here is whether the use of this kind of information then affects how users feel about themselves as a result. For instance, it might be the case that using such information makes users then feel more familiar in otherwise unfamiliar environments, which correlatively impacts their identity. This is an area of research on LBSNs, one revolving around identity, that I would suggest is lacking, and will be addressed with my research.

This leads me on to another way identity can be approached in terms of the effective role of LBSNs: Foucault's (1988) later work, 'technologies of the self'. Identity is, in part at least, Foucault suggests, constructed by the individual. As he explains, '[the] subject constitutes itself in an active fashion' (Foucault, 1998: 291); a position evidently resonating with Giddens's understanding of the self, as detailed above. 'Far from simply forming automatically in relation to our practical role, the self -constitution of the subject according to Foucault passes through techniques ... and indeed entire technologies ... of the self' (Kelly, 2013: 517). Here Foucault is referring to 'the multiplicity of ways in which individuals constitute their identities in a creative and constructive fashion' (Elliot, 2013: 110), such as their beliefs, for instance, or perhaps their use of LBSNs, as I will go on to explore. 'Technologies of the self' permit, Foucault (1988: 18) clarifies

individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.

Foucault is not suggesting here that individuals are accordingly free from social and discursive conditioning or that they are no longer entrenched in various structures of power. What Foucault is bringing to the fore is that individuals still have *some* say over their identity, within these structures, even if the forces that surround their sense of self are not of their choosing, or indeed their creation, as well as being rooted in power relations. This sentiment again echoes Giddens and his understanding of the structures and forces that encase individuals in society, structures that are the by-product of repetitious acts of human agency. 'Thus, for Foucault, individuals actively construct their own identities, but using discourses and practices which are already steeped in power relations' (Siapera, 2012: 173).

To explore this notion of self-modification further, Foucault examines the ethics of the ancient Greeks. Foucault is not employing the term 'ethics' here as it would commonly be used today, but rather as 'the elaboration of a form of relation to self that enables an individual to fashion himself into a subject of ethical conduct' (Foucault, 1998: 263). 'If ethics refer to a person's concern for the self - a set of internal ideas or loose rules - then the 'technologies of the self' are what is actually done about it: the ways that an individual's ethics are manifested in their mindset and actions' (Gauntlett, 2008: 135). Following in this vein, the ethics of the ancients were linked to a notion of 'care for the self', which was accordingly associated with another 'technology' of the self, namely 'self-knowledge'. 'Each of the technologies relates to a fundamental injunction, to take care of yourself on the one hand, and to know yourself on the other' (Kelly, 2013: 518). Knowing oneself, however, is not as passive as it might sound, as knowing our-selves through self-knowledge, is in effect to change ourselves. As Kelly (ibid) explains:

Paradoxically, knowing our-selves is in actuality one of the acts by which we constitute ourselves: our attempt to know ourselves is not a neutral act that allows us to see what was already there, but for Foucault a ritual by which we change and produce our own subjectivity.

To know your-self is not a technique that occurs in a manner abstracted from self-knowledge, far from it in fact. The self, as a result of being explored and

documented in this way, or rather as a result of being cognisant that it is being explored and documented in this way, is then modified. This is a consequence echoing the Hawthorne effect. 'The Hawthorne effect is a form of reactivity, the term was coined in 1955 by Henry A. Landsberger when analysing older experiments from 1924-1932 at the Hawthorne Works' (Khurana, 2009: 139); experiments which highlighted how individuals changed their behaviour when they were aware they were being watched. In short, the Hawthorne effect refers to any situation where individuals alter or modify their behaviour as a result of being observed; or rather, and thus following in a vein of thought comparable to the Panopticon, where individuals alter or modify their behaviour once the observer has been internalised (Foucault, 1977). For my purposes this is an important observation, as the use of LBSNs such as foursquare, for instance, could be posited as a form of self-knowledge, or rather a 'technology of the self', as the self is here spatially documented, and thus observed as a result of its location being shared with friends, a position which is likewise internalised by the user. Correlatively, what is of interest to me is whether the sharing of one's location in this manner consequently affects the places users either choose to share, or perhaps visit in the first place, if this or that location is in some way incongruent with their own sense of self. In either case, I would suggest that the use of LBSNs have the potential to not only feed into a person sense of self-identity, but also modify that identity, spatially speaking, as a result of the tools employed. These are questions my research will address.

When examined in relation to movements through, and engagements with, space and place, the self, and with its self-identity, is, in part at least, a physical activity, that necessitates an understanding of embodiment; this is because it is of course through the body that individuals experience themselves, as well as interact with various technologies, and perhaps 'technologies of the self'. Indeed, theorists such as Hjorth (2011a) have written about our 'haptic' engagement with smartphones; bringing the tangibility of mobile screens, as well as our physical contact with them, to the fore. For Elliot (2013: 104) '[the] body is something we are, we have and we do in daily life; the body is crucial to an individual subject's sense of self, as well as the manner in which the self relates and interacts with others'. As Giddens (1991: 56) puts it, '[the] body ... is experienced as a practical mode of coping with external situations and events'. Just as the use of smartphones is a somatic activity, for any given

location to impact the self, as well as questions of identity, I would similarly suggest the individual has to be physically present, or at least have an appreciation of that environment regarding its material significance. It is for these reasons that I include identity within the physical impact of LBSNs, as identity is explored here in terms of its connection to location, as well as its engagement with technology, which is experienced through the body. To take this forward, I shall now examine how embodiment might be approached vis-à-vis smartphones and their impact on dealings with space and place, as it is my suggestion that the use of LBSNs have the potential to affect how users feel about themselves, as well as how they interact with their location. If this is the case, what is required is an examination of embodiment that explores the boundaries between the flesh and technology, as I would argue, drawing on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964), as well as Haraway's (1991) notion of the 'cyborg', it is through a blurring of this boundary that different understandings of the self might be forged.

2.2 Embodiment

For Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964) 'the structure of embodiment is not determined by the boundaries of the material body' (Richardson & Wilken, 2009: 23). Take the blind man's stick, for instance, it 'has ceased to be an object for him and is no longer perceived for itself; its point has become an area of sensitivity, extending the scope and active radius of touch and providing a parallel to sight' (MacColl & Richardson, 2008: 104). As Richardson (2007: 206) further elaborates, 'every human-technology relation is also a body-tool relationship, and as such every mobile-body merger invokes certain kinds of being-in-the-world, and particular ways of knowing and making that world'. From this position, embodiment can be understood as 'inherently open, allowing us to incorporate technologies and equipment into our perceptual and corporeal organisation' (MacColl & Richardson, 2008: 104).

In the context of everyday activities, the experience of one's own corporeal schema is not fixed, but encompasses a range of potential body-aspects and body-images in the form of material and technological mediations, and cultural and historical contexts. (Richardson, 2007: 206)

Exploring this point further still, Richardson (2007) contemplates the act of learning to drive, and the effect this experience has on the body. Certainly, when an individual learns to drive they have to develop a *mode* of embodiment that ostensibly transgresses the more quotidian, spatial understandings of the flesh. They inhabit a ‘corporeal schema’ that is different than what they would usually associate with routine bodily movements and the like. This is not to suggest the formation in question does not itself eventually become routinized and in turn concealed from a more explicit revealing. What is instead important here is that the body can apparently extend itself through the incorporation of technologies beyond the flesh. Indeed, the car, as a technology-body merger, requires an altered appreciation of distance, position and orientation. As Richardson (2007: 206) explains, ‘[within] the material shape and capacities of the car, we adjust our physical deportment, spatial orientation, and our entire physical relationship’. Driving therefore dictates that the driver inhabits a different kind of logic than that of the pedestrian. Importantly, it is a way of ‘having a body’, stemming from ‘the essential *mutability* of our soma, which adapts according to a complex range of cultural, personal, physical and medium-specificities, that describe the very nature of embodiment’ (Ibid; emphasis added). The boundaries between the body and technology in turn are not as delineated as they may at first glance seem. This is significant, as such an observation implicitly suggests that the physical use of smartphones have the *potential* to produce new embodied understandings of the self, and with it space, which is precisely what I am interested in exploring through my research.

To approach the intimate nexus between flesh and machine, or to consider the blurring of these boundaries, is in effect to approach Haraway’s (1991) cyborg. As Haraway (2004: 7) explains, ‘[a] cyborg is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction’ (Haraway, 2004: 7); and Murphie and Potts (2003: 116) continue ‘the cyborg is a series of real connections between bodies and machines, but it is also a series of metaphors, or new ways of telling stories in order to negotiate culture’. As a result, perhaps the unfolding ‘stories’ surrounding smartphones, LBSNs and the flesh are the conduit through which new understandings of our changing culture might be gleaned. ‘The point, argues Haraway, is that

identities are neither given nor essential, unchanging blocks characterised by the same attributes across time' (Siapera, 2012: 175), echoing both Giddens and Foucault, while imbuing this conceptual assemblage with a more explicit sense of physicality. The multiplicity of proliferating and embodied conjunctions is henceforth equally effectual and receptive to modifications and alterations, stemming from its ability to be interminably revised, just as Merleau-Ponty's (1964) 'corporeal schema' or 'body image' is open to alteration. For Richardson (2007: 206) the body's apparent capacity to revise itself using various media technologies at the same time suggests something *more* fundamental about the relationship between media technologies and embodiment:

Both *as* and *in* context, our embodiment exists as a complex intersection of physicality and biology, material and cultural environment, somatic memory and habit. Within this relational ontology qua embodiment and technology, the body is a material-semiotic assemblage with constantly shifting boundaries; but also, in my analysis, as quite literally *mediatropic* - disposed both metaphorically and materially towards media technologies.

What is important for my purposes then is that embodiment can be altered by the incorporation of different 'technologies', just as identity can itself be adapted through lifestyles and other such 'technologies of the self'; incorporations which may then feed back into questions of identity and so on. I would suggest the use of smartphones not only have the potential to elicit new ways of 'having a body', but also new ways of *experiencing* the world. In other words, LBSNs have the potential to produce new embodied engagements with space and place, which likewise may open up new social possibilities and the like. A good example of this potentiality, and thus *how* smartphones and LBSNs might presently be producing different physical, spatial and social approaches to an environment, is the 'mobile massively multiplayer location-based Role-Playing Game (RPG)' (Joffe, 2007) Mogi. Let me continue.

Active between 2003 and 2006, Mogi involved players navigating 'an actual geographical city - in this case, Tokyo - at the same time as they [navigated] the game space, which [consisted] of a virtual map of the same geographical

space' (Richardson & Wilken 2009: 30). For the most part the play of Mogi simply required players to collect an array of virtual objects; ranging from simple things like fruits, to more abstract concepts, like 'the idea of morning' (ibid). Collecting objects led to points, which were then used to rank players. 'The other key feature of the game ... [was] that the onscreen map ... which [had] a radius of 500 metres ... [showed] the icons of other players present in the same geographical space (Licoppe & Inada, 2008: 166). From my vantage-point, what Mogi highlighted, is the possibility of a different kind of physical, spatial and social engagement with place, just as it brought to the fore, the potential for new embodied forms of identity. For example, by embedding itself into the everyday activities of those who played it, Mogi quickly led to users developing an implicit understanding of the different players that occupied different environments, which then transformed into a more explicit awareness of territories. As Licoppe and Inada (2008: 12) explain, 'because of the publicity and witness ability of location, the frequent occupation of some areas by a player's icon [were] treated by other players as giving him [or her] rights to specific claims about items there' (Licoppe & Inada, 2008: 12). Consequently, just as it could be suggested 'locations ... get new meanings through playing' (Sotamaa, 2002: 43), it could equally be suggested that the incorporation of new media technologies, such as smartphones, have the potential to produce new understandings of space. This is itself an important point for my research, as the physical incorporation of smartphones, alongside new forms of pervasive play, like foursquare, might presently be producing new physical, spatial and social understandings of the urban environment, or rather new embodied approaches to space not necessarily rooted in locational purpose *per se*, but rather the playful engagement with both 'real' and digital locales, as a result of 'real' world environments being overlaid with a sense of play. These are questions my research will examine.

To recap then, identity has thus far been posited as tantamount to a project, open to modification through various 'materials' (Siapera, 2012; Gauntlett, 2008; Giddens, 1991), be it lifestyle choices or engagements with technology and location. This is an important point, as it means smartphones and LBSNs might presently be used as such 'materials', and could consequently affect how users feel about themselves and the like. Indeed, these are areas of research I will go on to explore. As a means to get at the physical act of

engaging with smartphones, as well as space and place, embodiment has subsequently been examined above, with the suggestion being that just as the self can be altered, so too are the boundaries between the flesh and technology blurred. A corollary to this is that physical engagements with different technologies have the potential to produce not only different understandings of embodiment, but also different approaches to space and place. This claim, however, doesn't simply suggest something about identity and embodiment regarding their malleability, it also suggests something about space, and interactions in space: namely being that space is also flexible, and thus not as rigid as it might otherwise seem. Put differently, space too is seemingly fashioned through use, as opposed to being wholly predetermined from the offset. Following this, the question of space now needs to be more specifically examined, as it of course within space and place that users are presently engaging with LGBs, as well as experiencing themselves. Drawing on the work of geographers such as Lefebvre (1991), and de Certeau (1984) while undertaking this exploration will in turn provide me with a more detailed theoretical understanding of space, which is needed when it comes to asking the kinds of questions I have been raising above.

2.3 Space

'In recent years within social theory there has been a noticeable shift from questions of temporality to those of spatiality' (Elden, 2004: 189). Some of the reasoning behind this theoretical shift must also be attributed to Lefebvre (1974/1991), as well as geographers more generally, and his insistence upon the importance of location, and thus the need to critically interrogate the nature of space; an insistence which has moved the Kantian notion of time and space as being simply *a priori* containers of experience forwards in some way. As Lefebvre (1974/1991: 2) explains, 'Kantian space, albeit relative, albeit a tool of knowledge, a means of classifying phenomena, was yet quite clearly separated (along with time) from the empirical sphere', it was considered a hollow means of experience, while its mediating quality was not explicated or unpicked from the experiences thus mediated. Indeed, for Lefebvre what Kant significantly failed to appreciate was the *more* active character of space, a situation he sought to rectify; and one that is important to my exploration of LBSNs and their spatial impact. 'No longer the Kantian empty formal

containers, no longer categories of experience, time and space could be experienced *as such*, and their experience was directly related to the historical conditions they were experienced within' (Elden, 2004: 185).

'As early as 1939, Lefebvre had described geometric space as abstractive, and had likened it to clock time in its abstraction of the concrete' (Ibid; p.187). This can be seen in his work *Descartes* (1947), where the Cartesian distinction between the ideal and the real was examined. For Descartes 'all problems can be reduced to the length of some straight lines, to the values of the roots of the equations, thereby turning space into something measurable' (Elden, 2004: 187). In effect, quantity subsumed quality, producing 'a very precise contradiction' (Ibid). The *experience* of space was at once superseded by its abstract representation in thought, under the auspices of scientific quantification. Lefebvre's (1974/1991) seminal work *The Production of Space* can accordingly be understood as an attempt to synthesis the Cartesian divide between mental space and real or lived space.

On the other hand, and following from this, space is a reality, outside of thought, the thought of the Cogito. Space is *res extensa* [(the physical world)], which is entirely other than *res cogitans* [(the thinking being)]. This position is, of course, untenable. If space is an 'extended thing' entirely other than thought, then thought is unable to comprehend it; if space is nothing other than thought, knowledge of space is without content. (Elden, 2004: 187)

Understanding space in this dialectical manner, as either abstract or concrete, for Lefebvre, was inherently paradoxical, precisely because it failed to account for the lived experience of space. A similar sentiment can be found in de Certeau's (1984) thoughts from the 110th floor of the World Trade Center, as detailed in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. What struck de Certeau as he looked out across Manhattan, was the image's failure to represent the lived experience of actually being 'down below'. 'When one goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors or spectators' (de Certeau, 1984: 92). In other words, what was evident to de Certeau (Ibid; p.94) was the problematic relationship between geometric and anthropologic space, or rather 'the *concept* of a city' and the 'urban *fact*'. The

'*concept* of a city' in turn failed to appreciate the more active role played by the individuals 'down below', in the construction of the spaces they frequented. For Buchanan (2000: 110) what this means is 'the constellation of lives that make a city what it is ... the actual experience of the city ... is not contained in the concept of the city'. Put differently, 'the *concept* of the city', in its geometric form, can't untangle the myriad paths, stories and perspectives interwoven, or unknowingly written, by the pedestrians that inhabited these spaces and thus forge them at street level. This observation is of course important for my purposes, as I am not interested in the city, geometrically speaking, but instead I am interested in the use of LBSNs within this or that environment, and what effect this may have on experiences of space and place. That is to say, I am interested in the 'lived' experience of LBSNs.

To temper this problem, Lefebvre (1974/1991: 33) suggested that space should be understood in three overlapping, ways: '*spatial practice, representations of space and representational space*'; totalising the mental, material and social. In other words, for Lefebvre space is understood as simultaneously perceived, conceived and lived. As Elden (2004: 190) explains:

The first of these takes space as physical form, *real* space, space that is generated and used. The second is space of *savoir* (knowledge) and logic, or maps, mathematics, of space as the instrumental space of social engineers and urban planners, of navigators and explorers. Space as a mental construct, *imagined* space. The third sees space as produced and modified over time and through its use, spaces invested with symbolism and meaning, the space of *connaissance* (less formal or more local forms of knowledge), space as *real-and-imagined*.

To consider this suggestion through the eyes of de Certeau from atop the World Trade Center would produce the following vista. The perceived space of Manhattan would be the city itself, in its vibrating and interminably evolving totality; the *real* space of the environment, if you will. The conceived space would be the abstracted cartographic map overlaying the streets and back alleys, ocularly texturized from this vantage-point. Finally, the lived space would be the embodied experience of actually being within the city, of configuring oneself amongst the myriad flows and forces that emanate from,

'down below'. In effect, just as de Certeau highlights the implicit somatic differences between experiencing the urban whole in its abstracted and extensive whole, from actually experiencing the city, intensively, Lefebvre's '*representation space*' illuminates the productive, or rather constructed, character of space, as well as the phenomenology of actually being within an environment; of constructing that environment through social and physical engagements. This is something not accounted for by either spatial practices, or representations of space on their own.

To reiterate then, Lefebvre highlights the *ways* that space alters experiences, or perhaps experience alters space; an observation echoed by de Certeau (1984: 98). This is important for my purposes. 'First, if it is true that a spatial order organizes an ensemble of possibilities (e.g., by a place in which one can move) and interdictions (e.g., by a wall that prevents one from going further), then the walker actualizes some of these possibilities'. Accordingly, the footsteps of these stories, from 'down below', are as important as the streets they are written on, which is in effect to posit the possibilities of these spaces cease to exist without the myriad footsteps that incessantly narrate their fragmented trails, as well as their fading stories, on a daily basis. What a space is, or perhaps the shape that it takes, therefore, has a more malleable quality to it. Much like identity and embodiment, detailed above, space can be reconfigured to produce different effects, patterns and understandings. This is significant as it means that the incorporation of smartphones engaged in pervasive play not only have the potential to produce new embodied understandings of the self, they also have the potential to produce new approaches to space, as space is similarly constructed, as opposed to simply given. Following this I would suggest the use of LBSNs, such as foursquare, might presently be producing new embodied approaches to this or that environment. Understanding these potentially new spatial experiences is consequently one of the aims of this research.

Taken as a whole, my exploration of identity, embodiment and spatiality thus far configures a radical anti-essentialist position that implicitly underlines that there are no guarantees when it comes to any of these areas. Just as identity can be altered (Gauntlett, 2008; Giddens, 1991), embodiment doesn't end with the boundaries of the flesh (Richardson, 2007; Merleau-Ponty, 1962, 1964),

and understandings of space aren't given but rather created (Lefebvre, 1974; de Certeau, 1984). If there are no predetermined effects, accordingly there is a need to speak to those presently engaging with LBSNs, as opposed to suggesting that LBSNs have 'irretrievably altered our sense of embodied 'location and presence''; circumventing dialectics of near/far, public/private, inside/outside, and so on; 'dialectics which dominated our understanding at the beginning of the twentieth century' (Richardson, 2007: 212), or that new mobile phones are themselves 'fundamentally concerned with our negotiation and engagement with space and place' (Wilken 2008: 39-40). Indeed, I would suggest inquiries into LBSNs are ultimately only useful if they are grounded in an understanding of the role of technology in a social setting. To propose smartphones are themselves 'fundamentally concerned with our negotiation and engagement with space and place' (Wilken, 2008: 39-40), while 'irretrievably [altering] our sense of embodied 'location and presence'' (Richardson, 2007: 212), risks misrecognizing effect for essence. This is an important point that needs re-examining, as claims surrounding the uses and effects of smartphones and LBSNs shouldn't be rooted in essentialist conjecture, but rather research. To be clear, this isn't to suggest that smartphones and LBSNs aren't presently producing physical, spatial and social effects, but rather that there is nothing 'fundamental' about them if they are. Correlatively, and as noted above, what is thus required is a more critical understanding of the role of technology in a social setting. Actor-network theory (ANT) will help me here.

ANT is a sociological approach 'developed by the Science and Technology Studies (STS) researchers Bruno Latour and Michel Callon, and further extended by the sociologist John Law' (Karyda et al, 2010: 231). ANT provides a more critical understanding of the 'role of technology in a social setting' (Ibid). As Dyb and Halford (2009: 233) explain, ANT sits within Science and Technology Studies (STS), 'both propose that technology, and the science that underpins it, is always done in particular locales, by distinctive assemblages of people, objects and processes'; put differently, 'there [is] no single answer, no single grand narrative' (Law, 2003: 2). This position in turn has ramifications for LBSNs, when it comes to suggestion of 'fundamental' effects and the like. As Law and Mol (2003: 2-3) elaborate:

Bruno Latour caught the issue in question when he asked how it is that the laws of Newton work just as well in the Gabon as in London. And the answer is that it takes effort, work, to maintain a stable configuration. It takes effort at each end (an experiment that works in a laboratory in London will only work in a laboratory in the Gabon if the configuration that produced it in London is reproduced, no doubt at great expense, in the Gabon). And it takes effort along the way, for whatever it is that moves between the two locations - a letter, an email - has to hold its shape, or there is no communication between the two.

Accordingly ANT can be called upon to provide a better understanding of the relationship between place and technology, which is important here given the context of my research. This is because ANT understands the construction of space as being rooted in an effervescent network of shifting human and non-human assemblages, resonating with my approach to space developed above (de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1974/1991). The stability of any mobile structure is consequently stabilised through repetition, rather than some underlying essence. This is a position that provides new approaches to space and place (Law, 2003; Thrift, 1996,). To dabble in terms of 'essences' or 'fundamentals' is in effect to remove questions of physical, spatial and social practice. As Law (2003: 4) explains, 'ANT is a semiotic ... it is a method (or better, a sensibility) that has to do with and explores relations and relationality'.

The implication of this apparently simple move, a move to what we might call *radical relationality*, is that we arrive at a logic which dissolves fixed categories. Elements have no significance except in relation to their neighbour, or the structure of the system as a whole. (Law, 2003, 4)

Indeed, 'nothing that enters into these relationships has essential significance or attributes' (Dyb & Halford, 2009: 236). A corollary to this, and as stated above, is that it would be wrong to suggest smartphones are 'fundamentally' concerned with 'space and place' (Wilken, 2008: 39-40), or anything for that matter, as there is nothing fundamental about their concerns, their concerns are merely the product of the ever-changing network within which they are enmeshed. Importantly then, the physical, spatial and social effects of

smartphones and LBSNs are not necessarily the same when configured in different locales, or by different people. In short, there is nothing guaranteed about either side of this configuration.

What ANT significantly does here then, is demystify the erroneous belief that the effects produced between the technological and the social are anything more than emergent relations between heterogeneous actors. To attribute an essence to any given technology is to ignore this effective relationship, which in its turn is to misunderstand the active role physical, spatial and social practice plays in the effects produced, as well as to ignore the kinds of questions I want to ask; reintroducing the very problems previously identified as stemming from CMC research and its associated 'technoromanticism' (Coyne, 2001). As suggested above, what is required before making any such claims is empirical evidence, which is seemingly lacking within this field, perhaps stemming from the nascent status of LBSNs. Accordingly this is something I am seeking to rectify, by exploring the physical, spatial and social effects of LBSNs through a study that engages with 'real' people who use the likes of foursquare in 'real' world environments. Moving forwards then, and while drawing on the work of de Souza e Silva & Hjorth (2009: 606) who employ the *flâneur* to contextualise 'the role of play in contemporary urbanity', the art of *flânerie* here serves as a good example of the kind of 'lived' experience that different spatial practices can produce, as well as the kind of practice I am interested in exploring, only in this instance in relation to LBSNs as opposed to Parisian Arcades. Indeed, by examining this practice, a practice documented by both Baudelaire (1963), within his essay 'The Painter of Modern Life', as well as Benjamin (1991), within *The Arcades Project*, it will allow me to 'rewrite spatiality in terms of perspective' (Buchanan, 2000: 112), which is, in essence, what I intend to do with my research.

2.4 Embodied-Space

In its most basic form *flânerie* consists of the intermingling of scopophilia and movement (White, 2008; Gleber, 1999; Shields, 1994; Tester, 1994); promenading while visually, haptically and sonorously arresting the surrounding environment. The strolling in question here occurs at an explicitly unhurried pace, just 'behind the fashionable amble of a pet tortoise' (Shields,

1994: 65). As Tester (1994: 1) continues, 'the activity of strolling and looking which is carried out by the *flâneur*, is a recurring motif in the literature, sociology and art of urban, and most especially of the metropolitan, existence'. *Flânerie* grew out of a specific time and place, specifically nineteenth-century Paris; a period which witnessed the construction of glass-covered arcades, creating an interior-without or rather an exterior-within (Geist, 1983). As Benjamin (1999: 417) explains:

Paris created the type of the flâneur... Paris [is] the promised land of the flâneur - the "landscape built of sheer life," as Hofmannsthal once put it. Landscape - that, in fact, is what Paris becomes for the flâneur. Or, more precisely: the city splits for him into its dialectical poles. It opens up to him as a landscape, even as it closes around him as a room.

Although *flânerie* of course does refer to a real practice, the 'notion of the *flâneur* is essentially a literary gloss: it is uneasily tied to any sociological reality' (Shields, 1994: 61). The *flâneur* is as much mythic as he is real; forging an interesting link between this figure and Haraway's (2004: 7) cyborg, which is similarly 'a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction'. For Tester (1994: 1), 'the *flâneur* has been allowed, or made, to take a number of walks away from the streets and arcades of nineteenth-century Paris', becoming a mediating figure on the 'nature and implications of the conditions of modernity and post-modernity' for many social and cultural commentators; something which could similarly be levelled at Haraway's cyborg. In this instance, however, and as noted above, what I am interested in is exploring here is how different spatial practices can produce different embodied understandings of space and identity, as well as how these engagements can then lead to different ways of connecting with other people and the like.

Baudelaire's *flâneur* is a kind of poet, using, modifying and appropriating the metropolis as a locational canvas to build upon, merge with and get lost in; a material to mould, texturize and explicate, evoking the *lived* space of Lefebvre as well as the observed 'stories' of de Certeau, as written by the pedestrians 'down below'. Indeed, for de Certeau (1984), this form of appropriation would be termed an 'art of doing'. In an embodied sense, what this highlights then is the various ways in which any given space is itself constructed precisely

through the engagements that make it up, rather than this or that space wholly dictating the engagements that overlay it. Accordingly, it could be argued that different engagements with technology, such as smartphones and LBSNs, within this or that space, could similarly produce different spatial experiences. Baudelaire's *flâneur*, in Gilloch's (1997: 152) words, 'is the stroller, the pedestrian who finds delight and pleasure in ambling contently and unhurriedly through the city. He is at home in the metropolitan environment'; just as he is at home intermingling with the crowd. For Baudelaire, the crowd is an important facet of *flânerie*. 'The crowd is his domain, just as the air is the bird's, and water that of the fish. His passion and his profession is to merge with the crowd' (Baudelaire, 1972/1981: 399). As Benjamin (1999: 446) continues:

The masses in Baudelaire ... [they] stretch before the flâneur as a veil: they are the newest drug for the solitary.-Second, they efface all traces of the individual: they are the newest asylum for the reprobate and the prescript.-Finally, within the labyrinth of the city, the masses are the newest and most inscrutable labyrinth. Through them, previously unknown chthonic traits are imprinted on the image of the city.

However, and importantly, whereas the Baudelaire's *flâneur* is 'one flesh' with the crowd, for Benjamin (1983: 128), '[the] man of the crowd is no *flâneur*'. Certainly, although the *flâneur* derives his pleasure from the crowd, he never *merges* with the crowd, 'the "crowd" is a veil which conceals the "mass" from the flâneur' (Benjamin, 1974: 421). Following in this vein, 'the distinctive heroism of the *flâneur*, whether poet or not, resides precisely in his refusal to become part of the crowd' (Gilloch, 1997: 153). The arcade is thus the *flâneur's* haunt, just as the *flâneur* is perhaps haunted by the arcade. As Benjamin (1983: 36) explains, '...strolling could hardly have assumed the importance it did without the arcades'. The *flâneur* purposefully wanders the interior, exteriors of the Parisian arcades in search of diversion, to harness his scopophilic gaze and to be seen. 'It is a spatial practice of specific sites: the interior and exterior public spaces of the city' (ibid), including the exploration of parks, back streets, short-cuts, shopping centres, arcades and malls. However, there is more to this practice than simply shallow diversion, just as lifestyle choices are more 'fundamental' than they may at first glance seem. As

Tester (1994: 7) suggests, '*Flânerie* is the *doing* through and thanks to which the *flâneur* hopes and believes he will be able to find the truth of his being'. In other words, for Benjamin at least, this spatial practice of exploring the urban environment is itself a pastime interminably wrapped up in questions of identity, as it is a symptom of the *flâneur's* sense of self that entails him engaging in *flânerie*. Following in this vein, it is my suggestion that location and its relationship with identity could potentially be accentuated by LBSNs.

For both Baudelaire and Benjamin's then, *flânerie* raises several interesting questions about spatial engagements, and how these engagements in turn affect embodied approaches to this or that environment. What this importantly brings to the fore is that different embodied engagements with space can produce different ways of experiencing this or that locale. This observation resonates with the 'parochializing' effect of the mobile social network Dodgeball, as detailed by Humphreys (2007, 2010). For instance, it could be suggested that Baudelaire's *flâneur* effectively *experiences* unfamiliar environments as being in some way *more* familiar, as a result of this spatial engagement. Indeed, just as the *flâneur* was able '[to] be away from home and yet to feel at home anywhere, to be at the very centre of the world, and yet to be unseen of the world' (Baudelaire, 1972/1981: 400), users of Dodgeball similarly experienced a veneer of 'home-ness' while inhabiting environments that were themselves less than familiar. As Humphreys (2010: 775) notes, 'Dodgeball allows for the exchange of social and locational information to encourage a shift from public to parochial realms by facilitating familiarity and commonality among members in public space'. For my purposes, what is interesting here then is what physical, spatial and social effect the use of LBSNs might presently be having on its users, as foursquare, unlike Dodgeball, explicitly enables users to engage with space, place and each other in a more playful manner. For instance, users of foursquare might find that far from abstracting themselves from the crowd, as with Benjamin's account of the *flâneur*, the use of this service actually creates new entry points back into the crowd, through an awareness of the playful social connections that surround this or that individual, perhaps producing new ways of maintaining social bonds in the process. Alongside this I would also suggest that exploring space and place in a manner not so locationally purposeful, 'as a creative performance rather than a transport orientated constraint' (Licoppe & Inada,

2008: 5), as well as being rooted in new forms of playful engagement, might likewise produce different approaches to space that then feeds back into questions of identity and so on. Again, these are questions my research will examine.

2.5 Summary

Smartphones and LBSNs evidently raise important questions about our changing relationship with technology and digital space; the impact this might be having on questions of identity, embodiment and spatiality, as well as its effect on new and existing social connections. In this chapter it was thus my intention to examine identity, embodiment and spatiality, so as to develop a radical anti-essentialist position that would enable me to ask the kind of questions I am interested in asking. Firstly, identity was established as being not something that is given *per se*, but rather constructed by the individual (Gauntlett, 2008; Giddens, 1991). It was then suggested that Foucault's (1988) 'technologies of the self' provides another useful way of understanding how LBSNs might presently be altering this or that person's sense of self concerning the places they inhabit, as the act of sharing a person's location with friends entails more than simply the sharing of one's location. What is also shared here is the *kind* of places this or that person frequents, which may affect questions of identity and so on. As identity is, alongside interactions with LBSNs, in part at least, a physical act, the chapter then went on to establish a fitting way of approaching embodiment, and its relationship to identity, regarding the physical effect of engaging with new technologies such as smartphones, as well as inhabiting space and place. The 'corporeal schema' of Merleau-Ponty (1962, 1964) was consequently employed to illuminate that embodiment is not restricted by the flesh, but rather different technological engagements can produce new ways of having-a-body or being-within-the-world. The chapter then moved on to establish a more suitable way of understanding space, as well as how it might be approached, as it of course within this or that environment that interactions with LBSNs take place. The work of both Lefebvre (1974/1991) and de Certeau (1984) subsequently illuminated the active character of space, with space, much like identity and embodiment, not simply being something that is given, but instead produced through the various spatial and social engagements that actualise it. Actor-

network theory then further built upon this anti-essentialist position; highlighting that the physical, spatial and social impact of LBSNs, such as foursquare, should be grounded in the voices of those ‘down below’, rather than essentialist conjecture. Drawing on the work of de Souza e Silva & Hjorth (2009) this point was then underlined by the practice of *flânerie* (Benjamin, 1999; Baudelaire, 1863/1964), which demonstrated *how* different spatial engagements *can* elicit different spatial experiences and so on. Following this, what I am interested in exploring is whether the use of LBSNs, that overlay ‘real’ world environments with a sense of play, not only affect users in terms of their identity, how they physically engage with space, as well as their social interactions, but also whether it then leads to individuals *feeling* differently about the spaces they frequent, as well as the routes they choose to follow. Giving these experiences a voice is the chief aim of this research, as I would suggest what is often missing from this field is a more explicit connection to empirical work, which is required, given my suggestion that there is nothing ‘fundamental’ about the effects produced by LBSNs. In the following chapter, the question of play and its engagement with ‘ordinary’ life will be explicitly addressed, as it is apparent pervasive play provides a potentially new way of approaching this phenomenon, which has traditionally been theorised as somehow separate from ‘ordinary’ life.

Chapter 3: Magic Circles & the Paradox of Play

In the previous chapter I explored how LBSNs like foursquare might presently be affecting physical, spatial and social practices. This was undertaken to enable me to ask the kind of questions I am interested in asking with my research. However, what I haven't yet examined is the question of play, which is of course extremely important given my focus on foursquare and the way in which this seemingly overlays 'ordinary' life with a sense of play. Indeed, any examination of the impact of LBSNs like foursquare should be framed by a discussion of play, as it ostensibly through play that space and place is presently taking on different meanings, as well as eliciting certain effects, for users. Moving forward then, this chapter begins by examining how traditional theories of play that suggest play is somehow separate from 'ordinary' life are incongruent with the kind of play being produced by smartphones and foursquare. To do this the chapter explores Huizinga's postulation that all play is contained within a 'magic circle' and thus "played out" within certain limits of time and space' (Huizinga, 1938/1992: 9), an enduring position (Apter, 1991; Crawford, 1984; Caillois, 1958/2001) popularised by Salen and Zimmerman (2004) and employed to bring one of the more prominent, as well as erroneous, facets of play's historical theorising to the fore: that '[all] play moves and has its being within a play-ground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, or deliberately or as a matter of course' (Huizinga, 1938/1992: 10). The chapter then moves on to demonstrate that while theories of play that posit such a division are indeed problematized by the kind of play foursquare permit, the 'magic circle' is at the same time challenged by playful engagements with space preceding the development of this LBSN. What is suggested here is that there is something wrong with this posited divide in the first place. Following on from this, the chapter then examines the constructed character of all structures, such as 'ordinary' life, by way of play's involvement in the evolution of complex signs and their ability to take on different and often conflicting meanings. Lastly, the chapter proposes an updated understanding of play and with it an updated understanding of the

‘magic circle’, one that nonetheless appreciates the disruptive potential of smartphones engaged in pervasive play, while suggesting what is important here is a focus on ‘lived’ experiences.

3.1 Play & Magic Circles

On the surface ‘play’ is a common term, regularly used in day-to-day discourse. However, it is precisely this commonality that then incorrectly implies play is easily understood. Dig below the surface and it becomes increasingly apparent that, ‘everyone knows what play is not even if everyone can’t agree on just what play is’ (Gilmore, 1971: 311). As Fagen (1981) correspondingly suggests, ‘play taunts us with its inaccessibility. We feel that something is behind it all, but we do not know or have forgotten how to see it’¹. This is likewise established by Huizinga’s (1938/1992: 1) postulation ‘[play] is older than culture, for culture, however inadequately defined, always presupposes human society, and animals have not waited for man to teach them their playing’. As a consequence of this scholarly interest, play has been comprehended in a number of different ways, with explanations including

a discharge of superabundant vital energy ... the satisfaction of some “imitative instinct”... a “need” for relaxation ... training of the young creature for the serious work that life will later demand ... an exercise in restraint needful to the individual ... the desire to dominate or compete ... an “abreaction” - an outlet for harmful impulses, as the necessary restorer of energy wasted by one-sided activity, as “wish-fulfilment”, as a fiction designed to keep up the feeling of personal value. (Huizinga, 1938/1992: 2)

Following this description, it would thus seem that play runs deeper than merely functioning to release energy or to temporarily satisfy the need for relaxation, owing to it being, on the surface at least, a universal activity that both *Homo sapiens* and animals respectively engage in. An important corollary to this is the implicit suggestion that there is some kind of unifying bond. Indeed, ‘these hypotheses have one thing in common: they all start from the

¹ Robert Fagen, as cited by Sutton-Smith, 1997, p.2.

assumption that play must serve something which is *not* play, that it must have some kind of biological purpose' (Ibid). As a result of this hypothesis, play has traditionally been posited as somehow separate from 'ordinary' life, as well as 'real' world environments. As Caillois (1958/2001: 6) succinctly puts it, '[there] is a place for play'. Within the context of pervasive play, where the play of LBSNs seemingly intermingles with the 'ordinary' space of 'real' world environments, this idea is therefore significantly challenged. Let me explore this further.

For Huizinga then, play is famously contained within what he terms the 'magic circle'. Theoretically speaking, this stresses that the play of any given game must occur within a spatially and temporally enclosed area, or play-ground, and is as such detached from 'ordinary' life. As Huizinga (1938/1992: 10) suggests, '[play] is distinct from "ordinary life" both as to locality and duration'; '[as] a player steps in and out of a game, he or she is crossing the boundary - or frame - that defines the game in time and space' (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004: 95). This is a sentiment markedly made by other game scholars. Caillois (1958/2001: 6), for instance, similarly proposes, '[play] is essentially a separate occupation, carefully isolated from the rest of life, and generally is engaged in with precise limits of time and place'. In either case, what is echoed is 'the emphasis ... on the artificiality of games, that they take place in a space and time separate from ordinary life' (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004: 78). Importantly then, 'ordinary' life (thesis) is itself not considered as being encircled *per se*, but rather the suggested center upon which any given 'magic circle' (antithesis) is itself constructed. 'The magic circle inscribes a space that is repeatable, a space both limited and limitless. In short, a finite space with infinite possibilities' (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004: 95). This is of course noteworthy when it comes to the kind of play associated with pervasive games, as while it could be argued, for instance, that foursquare is intangibly different to 'ordinary' life, it nonetheless occurs within a space not cordoned off from that which would be termed 'ordinary', and thus does still contest any such divide.

To delineate a split between play and 'ordinary' life then, is seemingly to suggest a world in which the play of playful structures are either open or closed, with no sense of crossover emerging in the process. In one moment

play is configured and engaged, the next it is disengaged and severed. For Bogost (2006: 135), '[play] thus implies an entry and an exit, a disruption in its very skin through which the game's players can move between the game world and the real world'. Following in this vein, all games are conceptualised as having a beginning, middle and an end. *However*, while players usually know when they are and aren't playing a specific game, the signs that manage the start and finish of play, aren't necessarily as clear cut as they might at first glance seem. Oftentimes when people engage in play, consciously or otherwise, they incessantly observe whether the codes surrounding play, the 'frame' if you will, is still present. For Apter (1991: 15) this 'frame' can be understood as a kind of 'shield'. 'In the play-state you experience a *protective frame* which stands between you and the "real" world and its problems'. This likewise chimes with Crawford's (1984) suggestion that the act of play produces a sense of 'safety'. What is being proposed in both cases then, is that play creates a border that simultaneously separates and actualises the line between 'real' and 'not-real', with the latter inhabiting tangible problems, and the former enabling the lightness of a world without consequences, or rather without the possibility of breaching this distinction. What is of interest here is how this 'frame' or 'shield' is subsequently maintained.

For Caillois (1958/2001: 7) '[the] confused and intricate laws of ordinary life are replaced, in this [configuration] and for this given time, by precise, arbitrary, unexceptional rules that must be accepted as such and that govern the correct playing of the game'; correlatively, '[these] rules in their turn are a very important factor in the play-concept' (Huizinga, 1938/1992, p.11). Ostensibly then, the magic circle is a potent tool that can define commanding and powerful spaces; 'investing its authority in the actions of the players ... creating new and complex meanings that are only possible in the space of play' (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004: 98). At the same time what is notably being expressed here is that *all* playful structures, by their very nature, are similarly fragile in their design, and, much like the networks ANT interprets and explores, require effort and maintenance to hold in place. To put it differently, without *some* kind of rules, without some kind of system, this or that game can all too easily collapse and fall into disarray. This is perhaps why the vast majority of game scholars emphasise the importance of rules, as without rules the *play* of any given game or system is unthinkable, precisely because there

would then be no structure to play within. As Huizinga (1938/1992: 11) suggests, '[all] play has rules'. Indeed, just as rules are imperative to, say, a game of football, so too are they needed in terms of the kind of play that can be found amidst LBSNs. That said this isn't to suggest all rules are the same, as different games of course require different degrees of governance. Let me follow this further.

The extent to which maintenance is required to hold this or that game in place accordingly stems from the *character* of play in question, as it is rooted in the type of game under scrutiny. Different games or playful structures quite clearly inhabit different levels of play, with the play in turn being more or less organised, more or less formalised, and more or less explicit in their adherence to this or that doctrine. To make this clearer still, Caillois (1958/2001: 13) helpfully defines the two emerging *sides* of play: '*paidia*' and '*ludus*', with the former being 'common to diversion, turbulence, free improvisation, and carefree gaiety', and the latter, 'a growing tendency to bind it with arbitrary, imperative, and purposely tedious conventions, to oppose it still more ceaselessly practising the most embarrassing chicanery upon it, in order to make it more uncertain of attaining its desired effect'. These suggested categories correspondingly resonate with Parlett's (1999: 3) proposed 'informal' and 'formal' game divide, as he explains, '[an] informal game is merely undirected play, or 'playing around,' as when children or puppies play at rough and tumble'. In contrast, '[a] formal game has a twofold structure based on ends and means' (Ibid). Salen and Zimmerman (2004) subsequently take this division further still by positing play can be more comprehensively approached using three subcategories, including: game play, ludic activities and being playful. The latter category here evidently echoes the underlying logic of *paidia*. It is accordingly this *type* of play that I am interested in, as I would suggest it is precisely its informality that makes it more open to intermingling with 'ordinary' spaces.

Salen & Zimmerman's (2004) notion of 'being playful' can be explored in a deeper fashion, using the example of a child playing with his or her doll, as this kind of play is evidently less structured than more formal games. What is required of the child or player is distinctly opaque, owing to the rituals involved being less explicit in their nature. The space or play is similarly

amorphous. To play with a doll is in effect to construct a rhizomatic framework or refrain that demarcates zones of intensity and extensity, as and when required, just as it demolishes them. In other words, it isn't that rules aren't involved *per se*, as of course all play must exhibit some *kind* of rules, it is rather that these rules inhabit a different kind of logic; one that may change at any moment. As Salen & Zimmerman (2004: 94) put it, '[the] boundary between the act of playing with the doll is fuzzy and permeable'. A corollary to this is that any sense of progression or destination is fashioned along temporal lines, as the game unfolds. This immanent unravelling then produces divergent axioms to experiment upon. Consequently the entry point of such a game or system is less defined, less distinct, but perhaps stickier than a more formalised structure, concerning its exit. Indeed, the play here may very well continue even when it appears to have concluded. Contrariwise, a game like tennis or basketball is manifestly stricter in its guidelines, organisation, definition and destination, both spatially and temporally speaking, just as the beginning and end of these games are more apparent and less malleable.

Drawing on the work of de Souza e Silva & Hjorth's (2008), Salen & Zimmerman's (2004) notion of 'being playful' can also be used here to help me theoretically approach the kind of play presently being produced amidst smartphones and LBSNs, such as foursquare, as this kind of play is of course less fixed and thus more open to interpretation than other games. Not that this is to suggest LBSNs exhibit exactly the same kind of play explored above, but rather to underline that they allow a potentially more playful approach to space and place, that has some flexibility to it. It would thus be wrong to suggest here that every facet of Huizinga's magic circle is contested by the kind of playful engagement I've been focusing on, as this clearly isn't the case. Indeed, just as explicitly formal games are governed by rules, pervasive games like foursquare also necessitate some structure in order to establish any sense of play. This is a position established above. Certain check-ins lead to the attainment of certain points, just as a certain number of check-ins can lead to the acquisition of this or that mayorship. In either case, the play in question is predicated upon a specific system of rules, as are all games. However, this equally isn't to suggest that there aren't areas of discrepancy apropos the magic circle and LBSNs, as there are. I am specifically referring here to the suggestion that all play is both spatially and temporally distinct from 'ordinary'

life. No matter how I might categorise the likes of foursquare in terms of the understandings of play thus outlined, the play in this instance is still problematically theorised as being somehow separate from ‘ordinary’ life, which simply isn’t the case. Symptomatic of this, I would argue the magic circle needs re-examining if the potential physical, spatial and social impact of LBSNs on ‘real’ world environments is to be properly understood as well as appreciated; a power which can permeate the supposed ‘frame’ of play, and in so doing affect ‘real’ approaches to ‘ordinary’ life. An alternative viewpoint is therefore needed, and one that doesn’t confine play to this or that space.

3.2 A Critique of Magic Circles

LBSNs like foursquare overlay urban space with a digital layer of information that can be playfully accessed and engaged with using smartphones. Regarding this particular LBSN, and as discussed in previous chapters, players employ their smartphones to check in at different ‘real’ locations, places within ‘ordinary’ spaces, earning points and inscribing locational tips in the process. In this respect the space of play clearly doesn’t have to be separate from ‘ordinary’ life, but can manifestly merge with it. It is in fact a requirement of the game. Similarly, the frame and supposed safety surrounding the magic circle is notably less rigid than has been historically suggested. This is noteworthy for my purposes. An analogous point can also be made using the mobile massively multiplayer location-based Role-Playing Game (RPG), Mogi, as in this instance players employed their mobile phones to collect virtual objects that were dropped in various locations around Tokyo, at various times, and as a result did interact with ‘ordinary’ life in a more playful manner, just as it led to them traversing the city following different routes and so on. What is important here then is the merging of different spatial structures. However, this breaching of borders isn’t simply spatial, but also temporal, which is of course another substantial facet of the magic circle, as neither Mogi nor foursquare exhibit the same sense of time-based distinction that you would experience with, say, a game of football, as both games can be engaged with at any time and within any given space. It could be argued at this juncture, at least concerning the latter case, that during Mogi’s active years, it only occupied a certain territory within Tokyo, and thus theoretically did establish a spatial structure which could be termed a magic circle, so to speak. This is in

itself correct. In response, I would suggest that this apparent spatial containment wasn't significantly out of necessity *per se*, but rather employed to explore what could be done with Mogi, within a certain locale. Such a design could of course be opened up to more cities, as well as more countries, as is the case with foursquare.

LBSNs aren't the only way this suggested distinction can be problematized, however; as Bogost (2006: 134) states, '[I]f all games are both ideological and extrinsically subjective, then the magic circle cannot maintain its status as a hallowed, isolated safe place, at least not entirely'. That is to say, the clear cut sense of distinction suggested between these two realms, and as elucidated above, is fuzzier than this discrimination seemingly allows for, with the play of games being carried through, at least intangibly speaking, beyond the confines of any given system. This can itself be seen with more rule-based and structured games, such as football, where the play in question interminably seeps beyond the pitch, both spatially and temporally speaking, just as it can be seen in less rigid games, like foursquare. Correlatively, if the space of play is distinct from 'ordinary' space then another one of Huizinga's defining characteristics also needs to be reconsidered: the suggestion that play is 'an act of cultural production and transformation, in which communal secrecy creates rifts in the status quo' (Bogost, 2006: 134). If the 'real' space of place is cut off from the 'unreal' space of play, then how can the latter affect the former, without this separation being challenged? In other words, how can the 'unreal' space of play conceivably create 'rifts in the status quo', as such a position implicitly posits that this twofold distinction isn't as firm as Huizinga (1938/1992) or Salen & Zimmerman (2004) would suggest. As Bogost (2006: 136) continues, 'for the magic circle to couple with the world, it must not be hermetic: it must have a breach through which the game world and the real world spill over into one another', with this 'spill over' reaching a certain threshold that removes the opposition originally inscribed.

The kind of play I have been focusing on then, namely pervasive play, clearly occupies both game space, as well as the 'ordinary' space of day-to-day life; there is a 'spill over'. This then elicits a conceptual problem when it comes to Huizinga's magic circle, one that needs reframing with regard to its undergirding dialectic. However, what is also apparent here is that just as it

would be wrong to posit a distinction between ‘ordinary’ life and play, similarly it would be a mistake to suggest that this distinction is solely problematized by smartphones and LBSNs, as in actual fact, it isn’t. This is itself touched on above, concerning the *play* of football ‘spilling’ beyond the pitch, and thus beyond the space of play. Historically speaking, engagements with space haven’t waited for the advent of smartphones and pervasive games like foursquare to occupy space and place in a playful manner, which is significant in this context. Indeed, de Souza e Silva & Hjorth (2008) suggest the practice of *flânerie* attests to this point. Likewise I could also point to the disruptive practices of the Situationist International (SI) in the 1950s, as another example of playful engagements with space and place that precede LBSNs and so on. Although the rules in these examples are evidently less prescribed than the likes of foursquare, rules are employed nonetheless. What is apparent in either case is the possibility of a playful engagement with space that precedes new mobile technology. What is at stake here then, is an awareness of the constructed character of space itself. A similar position was of course developed in the previous chapter, as play is always played out within space, which is itself only logically possible if space isn’t fixed but rather socially constructed (de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1974/1991).

The validity of any given magic circle only exists then within a system that discriminates between opposing understandings of play and ‘ordinary’ life. That is to say, it only exists within a schema that ignores the fabricated character of all spaces, and thus their ability to merge with other spatial constructs. De Souza e Silva & Hjorth’s (2008: 604) explication of ‘playful spaces’, and their connection to ‘social spaces’, helps further underline this point:

If we understand space as a product of social practices and as something constructed by movements of people and by the very “use” of this space, then, following Lefebvre, we might conceive spaces not only as social but also as playful, since play is an intrinsic social movement emergent by the relationships between people.

What de Souza e Silva & Hjorth (Ibid) are suggesting here is that if ‘social spaces’, or ‘real’ space, are rightfully positioned as being simultaneously

'playful spaces', as 'playful' spaces are 'a subcategory of social spaces in the realm of social practices (perceived spaces)', then Huizinga's magic circle is accordingly problematized. This is because 'ordinary' spaces cannot be comprehended as they traditionally have been, as distinct from play (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004; Caillois, 1958/2001; Huizinga, 1938/1992) as play is innately social, and social spaces are constructed by the social interactions that overlay them, which themselves unfold in 'ordinary' space. Following in this vein, 'ordinary' spaces are just as fabricated as any playful structure that might overlay them. As a result, it isn't so much the kind of play emerging amidst LBSNs then that is the issue here, but rather that there is *something* more fundamentally wrong with this distinction in the first place. This is worth exploring further, as a clearer understanding of play will in turn enable a clearer understanding of the physical, spatial and social impact of LBSNs. However, it would equally be problematic to suggest there is no distinction between play and 'ordinary' life, as there must be some kind of qualitative distinction in order for the play of foursquare, for example, to be experienced. What I am therefore dealing with here isn't so much the merging of spaces, but rather the ability of space to take on multiple meanings, simultaneously. This elicits a paradox of sorts that can also be found within the development of complex language, where signs assume different meanings, concurrently. What this unveiling suggests is that there is another vantage-point from which a more comprehensive understanding of play and the paradoxes it seemingly produces might be gleaned. Let me thus follow this path further.

3.3 Play & Complex Signs

In 1952 Bateson made a trip to the Fleishhacker Zoo in San Francisco. He did so to examine whether animals could communicate at a metacommunicative level: being the point at which 'communication [goes] beyond communication, i.e. communication between speakers over and beyond language... and/or speech' (Becker, 2004: 86) '(e.g., "My telling you where to find the cat was friendly," or, "this is play")' (Bateson, 1972: 315); with the 'metacommunicative level [being] precisely the one that makes communication at other levels, including the verbal, possible' (Sprioso, 1989: 197). In view of that, he needed to understand the necessary prerequisites for the evolution and development of language and communication. Since '[denotative] communication as it

occurs at the human level is only possible after the evolution of a complex set of metalinguistic (but not verbalised) rules which govern how words and sentences shall be related to objects and events' (Bateson, 1972: 317), the rationale behind his investigation was to explore whether the evolution of such rules could be seen at a prehuman/preverbal level. He was looking to find *something* that allowed animals to break away from mechanical responses to 'mood-signs', with 'mood signs' here understood as 'a spontaneous action, such as a bite, which produces a spontaneous response, such as a retaliatory bite' (Spariosu, 1989: 197). In short, Bateson wanted to ascertain whether animals could comprehend signs *as* signs 'which can be trusted, distrusted, falsified, denied, amplified, corrected, and so forth' (Bateson, 1972, 315).

During his observations he was struck with an epiphany when he witnessed one monkey playfully bite another; as he explains, '[it] was evident, even to the human observer, that the sequence as a whole was not combat, and evident to the human observer that to the participant monkeys this was "not combat"' (ibid; p.317). Importantly then, through play, both monkeys were able to move beyond involuntary reactions, to comprehending the message under scrutiny as a sign to be deciphered and decoded; they were thus communicating in a metacommunicative manner. Indeed, '[the] message "this is *play*" is a complex communicative act. Logically, *play denotes something that is "not play."* Hence the signals exchanged in play are false and that which they denote is nonexistent' (Spariosu, 1989, 197). The bite both *is* and *is not* the bite, and as such, 'contains those elements which necessarily generate a paradox of the Russellian or Epimenides type - a negative statement containing an implicit negative statement' (Bateson, 1972: 317)². The nip manages to denote what the bite *would* denote, while simultaneously *denoting* the bite as the 'not-bite' bitten. In other words, the attacking monkey signalled *through* play "[these] actions in which we now engage do not denote what those actions *for which*

² 'Russell's Paradox' is the name given to the mathematical paradox discovered by Bertrand Russell in 1901, which highlights that Georg Cantor's naive set theory leads to a contradiction. Following naive set theory any collection which can be defined is itself a set. 'Now is the set of the non-self-membered sets - call it *R* - a member of itself? It cannot belong to *R*, since then it would not be non-self-self membered. But since it does not belong to itself it must belong to the set of non-self membered sets, *R*. So it both belongs to *R* and does not belong to *R*. Contradiction' (Clark, 2007 p.190). This is 'Russell's Paradox'.

they stand would denote” (Ibid), which ‘[according] to the Theory of Logical Types ... is of course inadmissible, because the “denote” is being used in two degrees of abstraction, and these two uses are treated as synonymous’ (Ibid). A similar situation, or perhaps problem, can be found in what Korzybski (1933) refers to as the ‘map-territory’ relationship. Here Korzybski posits a map can never fully express the territory that it attempts to represent, which in turn resonates with de Certeau’s (1984: 94) suggestion that ‘the *concept* of a city’ is very different to physically inhabiting the ‘urban *fact*’. Here ‘[play] does not draw a complete distinction between the map and the territory’ (Günzel *et al*, 2008: 281), but rather allows the signifier to function in more than one way, just as smartphones seemingly enable ‘real’ world environments to operate as both ‘ordinary’ and ‘playful’. ‘If it no longer means what it denotes, then no longer meaning what it denotes becomes itself a denotation, bringing into existence something that does not yet exist’ (Iser, 1993: 248). Accordingly, play precipitates a situation where the map simultaneously is the terrain it represents, while representing something which isn’t itself contained within the terrain thus mapped. The bite both is and isn’t the bite, as it were. This paradox, however, is at the same time doubled.

As Bateson (1972: 319) comments, ‘[not] only does the playful nip not denote what would be denoted by the bite for which it stands, in addition, the bite itself is fictional’. This is in effect to suggest Korzybski failed to go far enough in his discrimination between the map and territory. Not only isn’t the map the territory for which it represents, the territory itself is equally fabricated, as it interminably evades totalization; and it does so precisely because it is impossible to fully inhabit what the map attempts to denote. Following in this vein then, and echoing the point made above, ‘real’ world environments are just as constructed as the playful spaces that seemingly overlay them. It isn’t so much that different structures can intermingle with one another, but rather all structures are themselves fabrications, and can thus oscillate between different meanings. This impossibility stems from the terrain in question, which is both temporal and spatial in character, and thus similarly as fictitious as the ‘not-bite’ bitten. It can never be fully inhabited. Importantly for my purposes, what this brings to the fore is play’s productive connection to language and communication, as well as its propensity to enable systems to inhabit different states, as it is significantly through play that the monkeys

were able to exhibit the elementary stages of denotative utterances; utterances that contain propositional content which can be tested, falsified and so on, as well as logical typing.

Arguably then, the rudimentary beginnings of language are rooted within the field of play. Here messages can be understood as signs to be decoded, just as spaces can be understood as systems to be constructed. Behind play then lies a 'complex set of metalinguistic (but not verbalised) rules which govern how words and sentences shall be related to objects and events' (Bateson, 1972: 317), itself required if language at the verbal and other levels is to be attained. Without this crucial step, the advancement of language would not be possible, which is in turn to suggest communication is itself predicated upon play, and the paradox of the 'not-bite' bitten. As Bateson (1972: 321) states

play marks a step forward in the evolution of communication - the crucial step in the discovery of map-territory relations. In the primary process, map and territory are equated, in the secondary process, they can be discriminated; in play, they are both equated and discriminated.

However, play isn't here simply the interplay between territory and map, bite and not-bite, but more importantly the condition that enables this oscillation to occur in the first place, which has important implications for any conception of 'ordinary' life, itself an important concept vis-à-vis the field of play. Indeed, and as suggested above, this provides a deeper definition of play, one where play (antithesis) is seemingly more stable in its instability than the, ordinary space, (thesis) that it was suggested encircles it. As Derrida (1978: 292) puts it, in his paper, 'Structure, *Sign*, and *Play* in the Discourse of the Human Sciences', '[play] is always play of absence and presence, but if it is to be thought radically, play must be conceived as presence or absence on the basis of the possibility of play and not the other way around'.

Taken as a whole, play can accordingly be approached as the genesis of metacommunication, eliciting the development of sophisticated verbal language that allows signs to take on multiple meanings. This is noteworthy within the context of LBSNs, as in a similar vein it is apparent the likes of foursquare function by explicitly imbuing 'ordinary' life with a sense of play, or

rather play is imbued with a sense of 'ordinary' life. In other words, LBSNs allow 'ordinary' life to take on a different set of meanings and customs, concurrently, moving beyond the usual attributes of this or that category. What traditional theories of play significantly fail to appreciate therefore is that 'ordinary' life is just as fictitious as the 'not-bite' bitten. Indeed, 'ordinary' life is a quotidian structure instilled with a doubled sense of meaning. Day-to-day habits and pastimes are simultaneously that which they represent, while at the same signifying the ordinariness they exhibit. This ordinariness then bolsters their legitimacy while evading any suggestion of construction. What needs to be underlined here then is what counts as 'ordinary' isn't in actual fact natural, but rather a playful configuration that has been normalised over a period of time, with the explicitness of its construction gradually being replaced by an implicit semblance of authenticity. Importantly, these structures are then theoretically detached from play or rather play isn't allowed to interact with that which is deemed 'ordinary'. The problem with such a dialectic is that 'ordinary' life is then approached as being hierarchically above play, as well as being interminably distinct from it, which in this instance means the potentiality of play is curtailed by its abstraction from the 'real' world; an abstraction ironically enabled though play, as it could be argued it is demonstratively always through play that abstractions occur. As Weber (2006: 123) observes, '[the] fate of philosophy is to establish distinctions that will need to be abolished within the discourse that christened them'. Moving forwards then, let me now provide a different position on play, one that not only appreciates the constructed character of all structures, but also the pivotal role play *plays* in signs or systems taking on multiple meanings.

3.4 Towards a New Definition of Play

Communication and language, in all of their richness, depth and scope have importantly been developed then, it could be argued, through the metacommunicative potential of play, through its abstracted abstractions. Following in this vein, without play, the ability to respond to 'mood-signs' in anything other than a predetermined and prescribed manner is itself unlikely, as it is specifically though play that the signs emitted are understood as denotative utterances, as signals, which can be tested and judged as such. Furthermore, from Bateson's (1972: 316) position, play doesn't simply enable

the development of language and communication, 'but also all the complexities of empathy, identification, projection, and so on. And with these comes the possibility of communicating at the multiplicity of levels of abstraction mentioned above'. In essence then, it is arguably through play that we have become human or rather it is through play that we have developed the necessary tools to critique the idea of this concept's validity in the first place. This helps in underlining Huizinga's insistence on the *gravitas* of play, and why he may have posited it as being so pivotal to culture, as it could be suggested, '[without] play there would be no culture' (Mandoki, 2007: 93), or at least no discernible culture to discuss, as discourse is predicated upon play and not the other way around. This leads me on to consider debatably the most intriguing aspect of this phenomenon: the paradox of play.

Play produces or enables inconsistencies through the paradox of abstracted abstractions by way of the Theory of Logical Types which it interminably inhabits and exhibits. At the same time this is a theme which dominates the many explorations that already surround this area of study. As Sutton-Smith (1997: 297) notes, for Bateson 'play is a paradox because it both is and is not what it appears to be', echoing the anthropologist Turner (1969), who refers to this phenomenon as being 'liminal' or 'liminoid' in character, meaning its place lies between two thresholds. This is a position similar to Spariosu's (1989: 2) suggestion that play is 'amphibolous', as he explains, '[this] double nature of play has been formulated not only phenomenologically, as a confluence of phenomenon and subjectivity, but also epistemologically, as a mixture of reality and irreality, of truth and illusion'. In turn, play both is what it isn't, and isn't what it is; a position correspondingly proposed by Derrida (1978). Indeed, Derrida (1978: 278) critiques the *idea* of there being a 'center' in any given philosophical system. 'Perhaps something has occurred in the history of the concept of structure that could be called an "event,"... What would this event be then? Its exterior form would be that of a *rupture*'. In this instance, the 'rupture' Derrida introduces isn't simply the back-and-forth between presence and absence, but rather the condition of their vacillation, with the slippage of meaning being predicated upon it, and not the other way around. Following this, play isn't merely the bite or the not-bite bitten, but rather the stipulation enabling the relationship and misrecognition of the two to unfold in the first place. This produces a further paradox to consider.

If play precedes language, if play enables communication, while meaning evades totalization, not because of its finite nature in terms of an infinite field to inhabit, but rather because there is always something missing, with a substitutive presence arriving through play, then play itself can be framed as a center, centering the play of meaning. In other words, it is through play that the play of language emerges, just as it is through play that 'ordinary' life is created. To talk about anything preceding this becomes untenable, as it could not itself be captured or discerned without the advancements that follow. Language contains the tools for its own critique, but cannot be critiqued without its development. This moves the idea of play before the construction of fictitious centers, creating a suitably duplicitous conception of play as 'center', just as Derrida's *rupture* destabilizes the structurality of structure while problematizing any notion of a 'point of presence' or a 'fixed origin'. Indeed, without play, and that which stems from play, the idea of a center, a fixed origin, or a transcendental signifier, as erroneous as they each may be, under the auspices of a center as it is currently understood, being outside of the structure, would not be possible aside from this occurrence, precisely because it is through play that these creations can emerge and then conceal themselves, within themselves. As Bateson (1972: 319) notes, play has 'evolved the "metaphor that is meant," the flag which men will die to save, and the sacrament that is felt to be more than "an outward and visible sign, given unto us"', which is what is apparent concerning a 'fixed origin' prior to Derrida's *rupture*, and what is still unfolding today. There is no limit to the playful structures play can create and perpetuate, just as there is no limit to language in terms of its totalization.

Play is consequently the entanglement of both center and not-center; the entanglement of presence and absence, of thesis and antithesis. It is the map and the territory, with an awareness of the fictitious nature of either side of this dialectic, negating a divide within itself though its immanence to the configurations it interminably erects. Indeed, play in this sense is allotropic. The playful structures that it enables contain play just as music contains vibrations, immanently within themselves; in the same manner that diamond and graphite are allotropes of carbon. In all that operates under rules, of whatever kind, is play, with the recognition that said rules are themselves in

place to hold these structures together. This is because playful configurations, much like scientific experiments, are always on the cusp of chaos and require effort to maintain. In an *Apollonian* and Dionysian vein then, play is tantamount to a kind of ethereal dance. As Nietzsche (1883-5/2008: 93) suggests, '[only] in the dance do I know how to speak the parable of the highest things', with the dance of play in this instance leading me towards a position from which play can be discussed. Play is the interaction between chaos and order, to the point in which a divide does not exist in actuality, but only theoretically. It is 'Nietzschean *affirmation* ... the joyous affirmation ... of the world and the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation' (Derrida, 1978, p.292). Accordingly, play is the innocence of creation without critique, it is the power that enables the *play* of playful structures to be internalised before being misrecognised as somehow fixed and immobile, as 'ordinary'.

A new and more fitting understanding of play consequently emerges from this and with it a new perspective on the problem of approaching centers under the auspices of post-structuralism. There both are and aren't fixed points, with this entanglement of the two finding its apotheosis in play. Play is a *Möbius Strip*. Arguably nothing lies outside of play. Nothing lies outside of the playful structures that play enables, as it is through play that communication and language have been developed, just as it is through play that fictitious centers can be discussed in this manner. Indeed, a radical understanding of play requires a reassessment of centers, one that discriminates between degrees of discourse. What is needed here is an acknowledgment that play can no more be inhabited than either the map or the terrain, or the bite or the not-bite bitten for that instance, as the *idea* of there being any such totality is, in effect, tantamount to denying temporal progression.

Allow me to consider this proposition through the suggestion that there isn't a center; that there isn't a point of presence, with the opposition to this position being the idea that there is a center. Now if I were to prioritise one side of this divide over the other, in the same manner Levi-Strauss prioritised nature over culture in his examination of 'the syntax of South American mythological systems' (Staton, 1987: 391), I am left with a situation which I can't justify. If

there isn't a center or a point of presence from which a sense of foundation can be built, and I am functioning from a mindset that negates the construction of oppositions, as oppositions lead to prioritisation, which leads to subjugation, by what logic can I prioritise the not-center over the idea of there being a center, without again falling back into a dialectical argument that assumes the hierarchical character of thesis and antithesis, with thesis in this instance being, and paradoxically, the implicit negation of said divide? Similarly, and as a means to balance up this argument, non-totalization in the same vein equally isn't possible. This is because presence slips into absence and *vice versa*. As Derrida puts it 'there is nothing outside the text', which is in effect, I would suggest, to state there is nothing outside of 'play'.

Moving forwards then, I would argue play is best understood as a foundational freedom; a nebulous base from which to build and dismantle playful structures, and to assign them various 'truth' values. It is the means needed to create structures where any semblance of playfulness is forgotten or hidden within the double paradox of play, which are oftentimes misrecognised as laws instead of rules. As Sutton-Smith (1997: 298) notes, '[the] diversity of play is well established by the varied kinds of play that are to be found within the larger menagerie of the "playing" sphere'. This has been sufficiently explored above. To deny play is an attempt to go back to the 'absolute innocence' of signs. Indeed, play enables play, just as it limits play through the rules that govern it, which are themselves needed to organise the very play of parts that play requires. This correlatively suggests a different understanding of centers, one that isn't deterministic or a fixed point of presence, while at the same time not being not-fixed, enabling the construction of playful structures, while avoiding deconstruction, as it is not itself rooted in opposition per se, but rather enables opposition to emerge and be critiqued. In sum, play should be reframed here, as it must be, paradoxically, as a decentred-center that contingently enables the production of playful structures, where the play of said structures is imminent to their construction and then held in place through concomitant rules and customs.

Play in this respect is comparable to ANT, owing to its fuzziness, which I would suggest isn't singularly an approach to social theory, but at the same time a means of understanding the relational workings of games, albeit with the

caveat that it has a tendency to ‘obscure embodied and human makings of place through emotions, politics, identities and histories’ (Dyb & Halford, 2009: 233). Playful structures, and the play immanent to the configurations constructed, are themselves relational in their understanding of the meanings made; ‘[the] game has no other but an intrinsic meaning’ (Caillois, 1958/2001: 7). As Law notes, ‘ANT is a semiotics... That is, it is a method (or better, a sensibility) that has to do with and explores relations and relationality’ (Law, 2003: 4), which is itself comparable to the playful structures detailed above. In this regard then, ANT is similarly a playful structure from which to understand other playful structures, with an acknowledgment that not all playful structures exhibit an explicit sense of play, as is the case with constructs such as ‘ordinary’ life, constructs which are then seen as somehow separate from the fabrication of play. Play is possibility, the possibility of social and spatial difference; of creating system that emit meaning through the rules in place. If nothing lies outside of the playful structures that play permits, beyond play itself, then Huizinga functions from a position in which difference is questioned. Indeed, if there is no base to work from, in the sense of a fixed origin beyond play, then the distinction between play and ‘ordinary’ life disappears. To conclude then, although there is nothing outside of play, this isn’t in turn to suggest that play, in its very immanence, can either be totalized or fully inhabited, because it can’t.

3.5 Summary

In sum then, and as a means to draw the key points of my position together, it is the explicitly playful quality of foursquare, and the different meanings it may allow ‘ordinary’ space to take on, that in turn sees Huizinga’s notion of the ‘magic circle’ (1938/1992), where play is interminably posited as separate from ‘ordinary’ life, in some way challenged. At the same time, however, what my explication of play above has also demonstrated is that it isn’t solely play that is responsible for disrupting ‘ordinary’ approaches to space and place, but rather the innately playful character of space. A corollary to this is that *all* spaces can be seen as being partly playful, as space is never given, but rather constructed through its use (Lefebvre, 1974/1991; de Certeau, 1984). Indeed, it is this sense of construction through engagement that is important when it comes to the idea of play, just as it is important to my understanding of space.

There is thus no *real* distinction between play and 'ordinary' space if the distinction is pursued, as it has been above; instead all that remains is a distinction between the different ways this or that space might be approached. This approach to play can in turn be seen as a continuation of the anti-essentialist position developed in the previous chapter. Moving forwards then, this chapter provides an updated position on play, regarding play's relationship with 'ordinary' life, while illuminating that the important thing to focus on when it comes to LBSNs is that they have the potential to create different understandings of space and place, which may then elicit various physical, spatial and social effects. Any difference felt here isn't because 'ordinary' life has been overlaid with a sense of play *per se*, but rather because all spaces are playful and therefore have the potential to be approached differently. Undertaking this exploration has in turn confirmed by suggestion of the need to focus on how 'real' people are presently engaging with LBSNs in 'real' world environments, just as it has confirmed the importance of exploring the question of play, as play and playful engagements with space are no longer seen as secondary to 'ordinary' life, but rather, and significantly, a new way of experiencing 'ordinary' life. Accordingly, the impact of LBSNs like foursquare is perhaps more important than it may at first glance seem, as it is no longer hierarchically Othered. Exploring the questions established in previous chapters then is the aims of this thesis. In the following chapter I will outline the methodological approach that will enable me to do this.

Chapter 4: Methodology

In the previous chapter I established that while play has never been abstracted from ‘ordinary’ life, new playful engagements with LBSNs may still produce various physical, spatial and social effects, owing to the constructed and thus playful character of all spaces. Prior to this, I have suggested that any discussion of LBSNs must themselves be grounded in empirical research, as there is nothing innate about LBSNs that can guarantee this or that outcome. Accordingly, it is my intention to focus on ‘the *detail* of human life’ (Payne & Payne, 2004: 176) by examining what effect foursquare might be having on the physical, spatial and social practices of its users, from the perspective of those who are presently using this particular LBSN. In terms of the physical side of things, I am interested in exploring how foursquare might impact identity. Does it make users feel differently about the spaces they choose to share, for instance, owing to what they think this or that place signifies about them, or does it actually lead them to go to, or perhaps avoid, certain places? Likewise, how does the use of user-generated locational information make users feel about themselves when they employ such information in any given locale? Do unfamiliar environments feel more familiar, and if so, what is the impact on identity? With regard to the spatial side of things, I am interested in exploring how the overlaying of ‘real’ world environments with a sense of play might affect how users engage with the places they inhabit. Does it, for instance, underline or deepen relationships with familiar environments, and if so, what is the impact felt? Similarly, does the playful engagement with space and place see users wanting to go out more, or perhaps move through their environment following modified routes? At the same time check-ins aren’t only undertaken for playful reasons, but can also be used to build a locational archive of the places users have previously visited. If users do employ foursquare in this way, to record their locational past, what effect does this have on their present engagements with space and place? With regard to the social side of things, I am interested in exploring what impact pervasive play might be having on existing friendships; does it, for instance, change how users make and engage with social arrangement. Finally, does the playful engagement with space and place, as well as the sharing of location, lead to the development of new social

connections or serendipitous encounters? Undertaking this research will provide a much needed voice for those ‘down below’, while producing valuable information about LBSNs, their connection to identity and location, as well as the creation of new social connections. These are areas of this field I would suggest require more work. The chapter thus begins by setting out the methodological design of my study, making evident ‘the research and choice of particular methods, and their justification in relation to the research project’ (Horrocks & King, 2010: 6); before outlining the sampling strategy employed, as well as how participants were approached, and concluding with a discussion of the analytical framework used to examine the collected data.

4.1 Methodological Design

The kind of information being sought by any research project is of the utmost importance. Accordingly, decisions have to be made about the methodological design. There are two paradigms in research: qualitative and quantitative. Each ‘represent very different ways of thinking about the world’ (Horrocks & King, 2010: 7). ‘Quantitative research is concerned with measurements, precisely and accurately capturing aspects of the social world that are then expressed in numbers’ (Ibid). In contrast, qualitative research ‘is about immersing oneself in a scene and trying to make sense of it’ (Tracy, 2012: 3); it is about having an ‘interest in how ordinary people observe and describe their lives’ (Silverman, 1993: 170). Qualitative and quantitative techniques are oftentimes employed with different research goals in mind. As Goertz and Mahoney (2012: 3) correspondingly suggest, ‘we believe that quantitative and qualitative techniques are appropriate for different research tasks and are designed to achieve different research goals’. That said this isn’t to posit quantitative and qualitative techniques cannot be used together, as quantitative and qualitative techniques can of course be employed in tandem, as is the case with any research project utilising mixed methods. In terms of my study, however, and as established in previous chapters, a qualitative approach is here appropriate as I am chiefly interested in exploring how ‘real’ users of foursquare are presently engaging with this particular LBSN, as well as how *they* interpret the *meanings* of this engagement. In other words, this approach is rooted in the kind of knowledge I am interested in bringing to the fore.

As implicitly established in previous chapters, ontologically speaking this study stems from a *relativist* position in that it ‘subscribes to the view there is no such thing as ‘pure experience’ (Willig, 2008: 12) waiting to be discovered, but rather all experiences are themselves the by-product of human engagements with the world. For my purposes, and contra a *realist* ontology that would posit ‘the real world is out there and exists independently from us’ (Horrocks & King, 2010: 9) the world is here understood as being ‘far more unstructured and diverse’ (Ibid). As a result, and methodologically speaking, this study falls within a broadly qualitative or interpretive perspective. I am therefore not looking to unearth fundamentals here, as per the anti-essentialist position developed in the first three chapters (Foucault, 1998; Giddens, 1991; de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1974/1991), as the idea of there being fundamental effects associated with this or that LBSN has already been called into question. Following in this vein, ‘[the interpretive social science] researcher wants to learn what is meaningful or relevant to the people he or she is studying and how they experience everyday life’ (Neuman, 2011: 102). By exploring the physical, spatial and social effects of foursquare presently the overlaying ‘real’ world environments with a sense play, from, significantly, the point-of-view of the individuals who are using it, my research will thus do this; helping to address the lack of empirical evidence identified as presently limiting this nascent field, as well as a lack of focus on identity. Put differently, what I am interested in is the reality of the experience for those experiencing it, which ‘exists as people experience it and assign meaning to it’ (Ibid).

Objectively speaking then, the ‘reality’ of these configurations isn’t questioned by those who configure them, but rather embraced in terms of their embodied experience. This is point is similarly demonstrated by the practice of *flânerie*, as detailed in previous chapters. As Willig (2008: 13) likewise suggests, ‘while experience is always the product of interpretation and, therefore, constructed (and flexible) rather than determined (and fixed), it is nevertheless ‘real’ to the person who is having the experience’. Correlatively, I am not only interested in understanding *how* users of foursquare are presently using foursquare, but also, and importantly, *how* they *interpret* these experiences, in their own words. Such a position at the same time echoes Weber’s (1864-1920) view on interpretive social science and its purpose; that it should, paraphrased by Neuman (2011: 102), ‘develop an understanding of social life and discover how

people construct meaning in natural settings'. As a consequence, this study will focus on 'how ordinary people observe and describe their lives' (Silverman, 1993: 170), in relation to foursquare, paying close attention to what "meanings" individuals attribute to their given social situation' (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007: 119), while maintaining a sense of 'epistemological integrity', which occurs '[when] a proposal presents the logical and compelling connections ... between the genre, the overall strategy, the research questions, the design, and the methods' (Marshall & Rossman, 2010: 93). Let me now go into more detail about the specifics of my research.

This project invited a number of participants to take part in a semi-structured interview, with interviews focusing on the following themes: play, identity, location and social, while asking participants to explain how, when and why they use foursquare. Indeed, by focussing on these themes, I was able to explore the kind of questions detailed from the offset. An open ended approach was employed to allow participants the space needed to discuss *how* they use foursquare in their own words (Lofland et al, 2006; Becker, 1998). At the beginning of the study participants were given the option of befriending me on foursquare, which in turn allowed me to diachronically keep track of the following information: the last five check-ins, total check-ins, badges, mayorships, friends, tips, to-do list, done list. As explained above, these methods were chosen as they would allow me to address the primary aim of this project: to explore the physical, spatial and social effects of LBSNs presently overlaying 'real' world environments with a sense play, from the point-of-view of its users.

4.2 Sampling Strategy

When examining any human engagement with technology it is not of course not possible to take every single encounter into consideration, nor in this instance would it necessarily be desirable to. As Payne and Payne (2004: 209) similarly suggests, '[it] is not possible to study *everything* ... [so inevitably] ... social researchers work on small sub-sets of the social phenomena that interest them'. This is because '[the] logic of qualitative research is concerned with in-depth understanding' (Nagy et al, 2010: 45). Consequently choosing a sampling strategy is extremely important to the vast majority of research

projects (Marshall, 1996); a process decided by the kind of information being sought, which itself stems from what is considered valuable knowledge. As Merriam (2009: 77) explains, there are 'two basic types of sampling ... probability and nonprobability sampling'. The former, probability sampling, is rooted in a realist vantage point, allowing 'the investigator to generalise results of the study from the sample to the population from which it is drawn' (Ibid). 'In these samples ... each element in the population has some chance of inclusion in the sample, and the investigator can determine the chances of probability of each elements inclusion' (Dejong et al, 2011: 139). In contrast, and concerning the latter, '[since] generalisation in a statistical sense is not a goal of qualitative research' (Merriam, 2009: 77) representative sampling is neither necessary nor valid. Indeed, the vast majority of qualitative studies choose a nonprobability strategy (Neuman, 2011) and are often small (Marshall, 1996). As Neuman (2011: 241) continues:

In qualitative studies, to allow us to make statements about categories in the population, we rarely sample to gather a small set of cases that is a mathematically accurate reproduction of the entire population. Instead, we sample to identify relevant categories at work in a few cases.

In turn, one of the purposes of qualitative sampling is to further understand about a particular interaction, or configuration, which is evidently applicable to this study, as I am chiefly interested in gathering 'rich' information about how people use foursquare and the physical, spatial and social effect it may be having on their day-to-day lives, stemming from the overlaying of play on 'real' world environments, as opposed to forging generalisations. In order to do this, a 'purposive sampling' (Mason, 2002; Marshall, 1996; Chein, 1981) or 'purposeful sampling' (Patton, 2002) is appropriate. Indeed, purposive sampling 'is used in exploratory research or in field research' (Neuman, 2011: 267). As Patton (2002: 230; emphasis in original) explains, 'logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth ... thus the term *purposeful* sampling'. However, although the aim of this study isn't to make statistical generalisations, this by no means suggests the sample being selected should be on an *ad hoc* basis, rather, 'it is their relevance to the research topic rather than their representativeness which determines the way in which the people to be studied are selected' (Flick, 2002: 41). 'Here the

researcher selects people on the basis that they are likely to be relevant to the subject being studied' (Kirby, 2000: 339) as 'the sample needs to relate in some systematic manner to the social world and phenomena that a study seeks to throw light on' (Horrocks & King, 2010: 29). This leads me on to what I am seeking in terms of criteria.

This study is interested in recruiting a number of foursquare users that exhibit diversity in terms of age, sex and occupation. Here the focus on diversity is justified as I am seeking to cast a light on a varied range of stories presently emerging amidst the use of foursquare. Following on from this, it would be incongruous to simply focus on one group of people, say, for instance, white, middle-class, 18 year old males, as the ensuing data gathered would be reduced in its potential to explore and detail the different ways dissimilar people use foursquare. That said, this isn't of course to suggest that all white, middle-class, 18 year old males use foursquare in the same way, but rather that by exploring the stories of a diverse range of people it may illuminate interesting differences in, for instance, the way older users feel about the spatial and social effects of foursquare, in comparison to younger users, or how it relates to their identity and so on. As Horrocks and King (2010: 29) explain, '[researchers] seek to recruit participants who represent a variety of positions in relation to the research topic, of a kind that might be expected to throw light on meaningful differences in experience'. Selected participants for this research thus include the following: both male and female foursquare users, all over 18, and from a variety of different backgrounds and occupations, were used within the following ages brackets: 18-29, 30-39, 40-49, 50-onwards (see appendix A.1). Alongside this, participants include both casual users as well as 'superusers'³. 'Superusers' are chosen specifically by foursquare to help maintain the data base of venues.

³ 'Superuser' is a rank given to a foursquare user as a result of their intensive use of foursquare. Users become Superusers following recommendations from other Superusers as a result of their involvement in the data side of things, in terms of flagging up duplicate venues, and correcting incorrect GPS coordinates. There are three Superuser levels: 'Level 1: Able to edit venue information (title/address, map pins, tags, categories - just go to the "Edit Venue" link on any venue page), suggest merges for duplicate venues, and access some venue edit queues. Level 2: Able to edit venue

4.3 Recruiting Participants

This study made use of social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, to recruit participants, as well as of course foursquare. As Lovett (2011: 145) notes, 'whatever it is that you do, social media can help spread the word', which is certainly the case in this instance. Alongside this I also reasoned that those involved with the likes of Facebook and Twitter were potentially more likely to engage in foursquare than those who have no connection or interest in social media in the first place. The main phase of recruitment took place through Twitter, relying on the viral potential of this form of communication to gain participants. 'Exposure is a powerful aspect of social media' (Ibid). Lastly, more traditional approaches, including the use of posters and leaflets and adverts were also employed. Let me now move on to discuss how participants were subsequently approached and recruited in more detail.

4.3.1 Foursquare

Initial Plan:

Firstly, foursquare was directly contacted, using both email and twitter. Here I detailed the nature and scope of the study, and asked for their cooperation in contacting foursquare users who reside in southern Britain. Secondly, the 'explore' feature of foursquare's accompanying website was utilised to identify the 'top picks', which are the most popular venues around southern Britain, such as, for instance, the British Museum in London, or Duke of York's Picturehouse in Brighton. Tips were then left at identified venues, detailing information on the research project, as well as explaining how participants could contact me if they were interested in taking part. The tip left was as

information (title/address, map pins, tags, categories - just go to the "Edit Venue" link on any venue page), approve merges, and access country venue edit queues. Level 3: Our most trusted superusers and are very rarely upgraded. They are able to edit venue information (title/address, map pins, tags, categories, aliases - just go to the "Edit Venue" link on any venue page), merge duplicates of popular venues, and access several venue edit queues. SU3s can also access the global venue edit queues and lock venues from additional editing.' (Foursquare, 2014)

follows, 'use foursquare & live in Southern Britain? Then you're invited to take part in a research project. For more info email mgs1g10@soton.ac.uk'. Lastly, mayors of key locations were specifically identified using both the mobile application and the accompanying website, before then being directly sent information on the study.

Outcome:

Neither my initial tweet nor my email led to any form of help or contact in terms of reaching foursquare users, with foursquare only replying to the latter to state the department I had contacted 'did not deal with such requests'. The email address I used was ascertained through foursquare's website. Moreover, the reply I did receive didn't allude to who I should be contacting. Secondly, the tips I left at 'top pick' venues didn't lead to the recruitment of any participants. Alongside this, I found that I wasn't able to use the same tip more than once, meaning my message had to be subtly changed each time, making this process more time consuming than I had initially thought it would be, as well as less fruitful. Lastly, I could only send messages to mayors if I was already friends with them, making this a more difficult method, as foursquare users, perhaps understandably given the sharing of location and the like, don't seem to accept friend requests from people they don't know.

4.3.2 Twitter

Initial Plan:

A retweet campaign was initiated (Figure 1) using the following tweet: 'use #foursquare & live in Southern UK? Get involved in a research project on #locationbased #mobile devices. Tweet @Michael_Saker. Pls RT'. As Twitter Support (2012) explains '[the] # symbol, called a hashtag, is used to mark keywords or topics in a Tweet ... People use the hashtag symbol ... before a relevant keyword or phrase (no spaces) in their Tweet to categorize those Tweets and help them show more easily in Twitter Search'. Here the following hashtags, #foursquare #locationbased, and #mobile devices, were used to help twitter users, with potentially an interest in these related areas, discover my tweet. Following on from this, said tweet concluded with 'Pls RT', which is

short for 'please retweet', and does as it suggests. Also, foursquare and Dennis Crowley, as well as fellow postgraduates and my supervisors, were sent messages, similarly asking for a retweet.



Figure 1 Retweet Campaign

Outcome:

Out of all of the methods employed, Twitter was by far the most successful, as it allowed me to identify users of foursquare who would then 'retweet' details of my project to larger groups of foursquare users and so on. At certain points during the day, and as noted, I would tweet 'use #foursquare & live in Southern UK? Get involved in a research project on #locationbased #mobile devices. Tweet @Michael_Saker. Pls RT', which would often lead to one or more of my Twitter followers retweeting it. I then found that by modifying my tweet to read 'get involved in @[unisouthampton](#) #PhD project on the #location-based #socialnetwork #4sq #play' (Figure 2), while also including a website site link detailing project information, University of Southampton students were more likely to come across it, and then more likely to retweet it, or, in one case, send it as an email to her friends. Moreover, creating a website replete with project information (Figure 3) was an easy way of letting individuals gain more information on my project on their own terms. Following on from this, I then found that directly tweeting users such @foursquare_uk ('an unofficial info hub for UK fans of foursquare') and @4sqKent ('unofficial foursquare community account for Kent run by a super user level 2 - helping with 4sq venue changes across Kent') led to the immediate recruitment of participants. This then allowed me to ask said participants to point me in the direction of other foursquare users who might be interested in taking part. It should be noted, that the above tweets led to me identifying several influential foursquare users

who had contacts with several other foursquare users and so on. Lastly, neither foursquare nor Dennis Crowley retweeted my tweet.

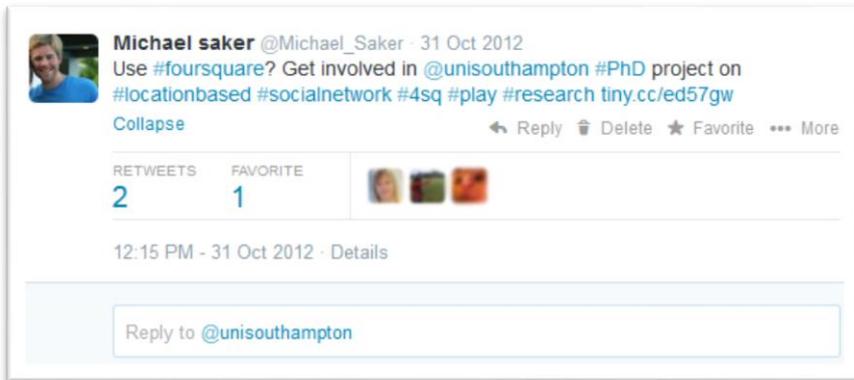


Figure 2 Modified Retweet Campaign Tweet

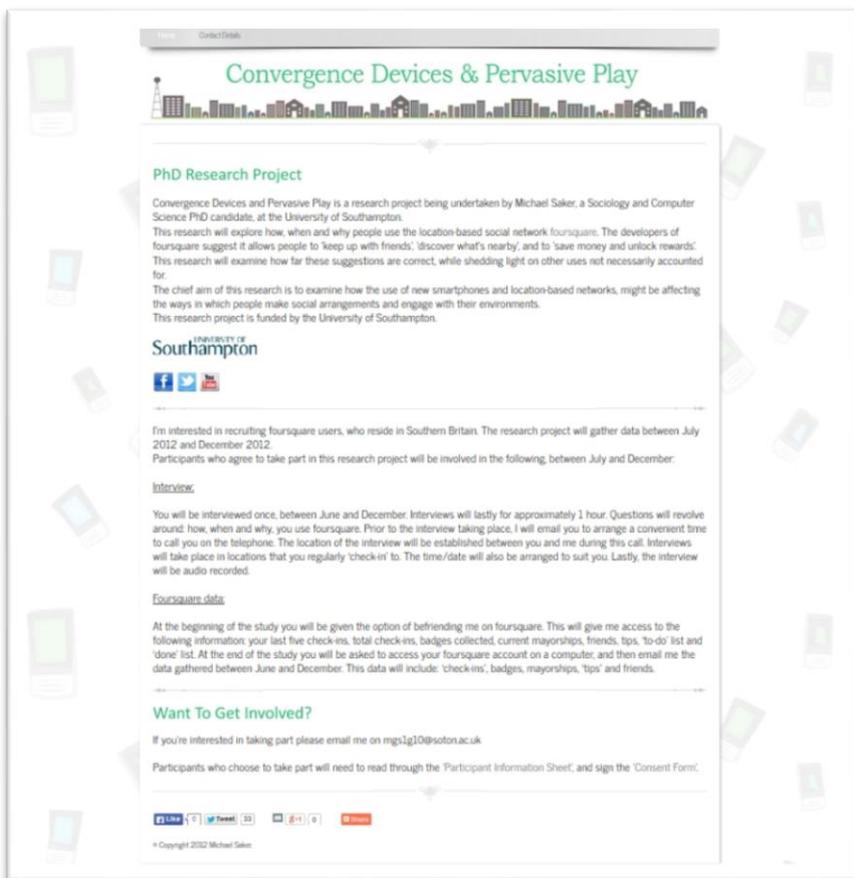


Figure 3 Website

4.3.3 Facebook

Initial Plan:

Facebook was employed to message friends details of my study, as well as to ask for the ensuing project information to be passed on to, or 'shared' with, others friends. As foursquare can be linked to Facebook accounts, and thus status updates can include foursquare 'check-in' information, it was therefore relatively easy to identify Facebook users who also use foursquare. In such cases, foursquare users could be directly approached through Facebook.

Outcome:

This method also proved reasonably successful. I found that the friends I have acquired on Facebook were extremely helpful in terms of putting me in contact with other friends they knew used foursquare.

4.3.4 Gumtree

Initial Plan:

An advert (Figure 4) was placed in Gumtree giving information on the research. Every 10 days the advert was removed and placed again.

Outcome:

Gumtree proved to be extremely unsuccessful. In sum, thirty people looked at my advert, but no one replied.



Figure 4 Study Advert/Leaflet

4.3.5 Leaflets

Initial Plan:

Leaflets (Figure 4) were put around several universities (Greenwich University, Southampton University, Southampton Solent University, Sussex University and Colchester University) giving information on the research. These universities were chosen, as the researcher had contacts in each. Furthermore, universities can provide access to a wide range of people in terms of age and background.

Outcome:

As with my Gumtree advert, leaflets were unsuccessful.

4.3.6 Email

Initial Plan:

The following universities were emailed (see appendix A.2) asking if I could send out details of my research to their students: Birkbeck, Brighton, Brunel, Chichester, City, Essex, Goldsmiths, Greenwich, Kingston, London, Met, Middlesex, Portsmouth, Queen Mary, Solent, Southampton, Southbank, Surrey, Sussex and Westminster. On the whole, these universities were chosen as the majority of them are located in and around London. As noted above, the Southern focus was chosen as I wanted to make sure there wouldn't be any travel related difficulties in terms of me not being able to reach participants.

Outcome:

Having emailed all of the universities noted above, I did receive several replies confirming that my message had been sent out to students. One university then required I went through their 'ethics' committee, before they sent out the details of my project. Ultimately, however, this method was also unsuccessful, as it didn't lead me to making contact with any foursquare users.

4.4 Data Collection

4.4.1 Interviews

Interviews are widely used in social research (Robson, 2002: 269), and appropriate 'where a study focuses on the meaning of particular phenomena to the participants' (King, 1994: 16-17), which is of course the case here. As Berger (2011: 138) suggests, '[you] can observe a person ... but you can't know what the people you are observing think about what they are doing or what they know from observing them'. However, by engaging the person in an interview, 'their thoughts, their opinions, their attitudes, and what motivates them' (Ibid) are given the opportunity to be expressed, and in their own terms,

which is why such an approach was adopted in this instance. Here a qualitative interview is tantamount to a conversation 'in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent. Ideally, the respondent does most of the talking.' (Babbie, 2010: 340). For Shotter (1993: vi) 'conversation is not just *one* of our many activities in *the* world ... we constitute both ourselves and our worlds in our conversational activity'; resonating with the qualitative character of this study, and thus its relativist leaning, in terms of appreciating the importance of subjective experience in understanding or making sense of the world (Horrocks & King, 2010). Indeed, '[qualitative] research regards the social world as too complex to be represented by fixed questions, so that establishing a rapport is needed to access the informant's 'world'' (Payne & Payne, 2004: 131). As a result of this, a semi-structured interview approach was accordingly employed to produce such a 'rapport', as well as to cast a light on the participants' understanding of foursquare and its effects, 'allowing ... access to material of considerable importance' (Berger, 2011: 151).

'The aim of *in-depth interview* is to obtain an in-depth account of particular topics, but that account has to be the informant's and not simply a projection of the researcher's preconceptions' (Payne & Payne, 2004: 131). Such interviews 'contrast with structured interviews, in which there is a predetermined list of questions that are covered in the same order for each person' (Gilbert & Miles, 2005: 66). Indeed, here the ordering of questions 'can be modified based upon the interviewers perception of what seems most appropriate' (Robson, 2002: 270), allowing a greater degree of flexibility in terms of the response. Semi-structured interviews therefore revolve around more open-ended questions, in this instance, allowing me to actively explore interesting areas as and when they emerged, by way of linguistic probes 'intended to elicit greater detail. Probes are used to deepen the response, increase the richness and depths of responses' (Klenke, 2008: 129). As Becker (1998) and Lofland et al. (2006) note, such open-ended methods are useful when wanting participants to discuss things in their own language, which was the case in this instance. That being said, 'the interviewer usually has a written list of questions to ask the informant but tries, to the extent possible, to maintain the casual quality found in unstructured interviews' (Berger, 2011: 136). Finding the correct balance between a conversational tone, that was still

appropriately structured enough to allow the ensuing data to be properly analysed, and in a coherent and connected fashion, was of the utmost importance. The development of an interview guide (see appendix A.3) here established the degree of open-endedness that I adhered to. The questions used revolved around the following themes: play, identity, location and social, as established as areas of interest in previous chapters.

Prior to the interview, participants were emailed a 'participant information' sheet, detailing the nature and purpose of the study (see appendix A.4). If participants were still keen to take part, a time and place to meet was then arranged. Before any interview took place, all participants completed and signed a 'consent form' (see appendix A.5). Participant anonymity and confidentiality was maintained using pseudonyms, unless specifically requested otherwise, while the ensuing data was securely stored, to ensure that it was not disclosed to public/unauthorised individuals. On the whole interviews lasted approximately one hour, sometimes just under and sometimes just over. This is because half an hour or more is arguably needed in order for the information to be valuable, whereas 'anything going much over an hour may be making unreasonable demands on busy interviewees, and could have the effect of reducing the number of persons willing to participate' (Robson, 2002: 273). In terms of location, interviews were conducted, whenever possible, within venues that participants regularly 'checked-in to'. Interview venues in turn included:

- Café/Coffee shop
- Place of work
- Pub/bar
- restaurant
- University

As Neuman (2011: 455) notes, '[often] interviews take place in the informant's environments so that he or she is comfortable'. However, this wasn't the only reason such locations were chosen, as this environmental decision was made with two further considerations in mind. Firstly, it provided a sense of locational congruence and alignment, which was important here, as the subject of location, and its experiential understanding, is evidently significant to the study. Indeed, I wanted the participants to think about their connection to a certain check-ins, and thus their check-ins more generally, while experiencing

that connection. It was my hope that this would then feed into and perhaps enrich their discussions of how foursquare makes them feel and so on. Secondly, it permitted a viable means of retrospective participant observation, itself not possible following the usual understanding of participant observation, as participants were effectively verbally and non-verbally observed within the environments they chose to digitally inscribe themselves within, while reflecting upon the decision to do so. As Robson (2002: 187) suggests, '[*participant*] *observation* is very closely associated with the process of an ethnographic study', with the etymology of 'ethnography' having its roots in cultural anthropology. '*Ethno* means people or folk, and *graphy* refers to writing or describing something' (Neuman, 2011: 423). 'Thus, by using ethnography, we describe people's lives and behaviour but also try to infer meaning of behaviour (i.e., the thoughts or beliefs that reside behind it)' (Ibid; p.423-424). It should be noted here that I was, however, unable to meet with two participants owing to their health. In this situation I interviewed both participants using Skype. This of course was not ideal, as it would have been perhaps more fruitful to speak with each participant in person, given my reasons stated above. Nonetheless, this did allow me to visually and audibly engage with them.

Just as the employment of semi-structured interviews enabled this study to deeply explore the meanings participants build around foursquare, this method doesn't come without its costs. Firstly, interviews can be extremely time consuming and difficult, 'and the information gained is always suspect' (Berger, 2011: 151). For instance, participants don't always remember the specific reason why they checked-in at this or that location, and can also feel they should tell the interviewer what they think he or she wants to hear. Following on from this the ensuing data '[can also] seem less anonymous, and may be inferior to self-written accounts on sensitive issues' (Payne & Payne, 2004: 132), while another difficulty emerges in terms of analysis. As Klenke (2008: 130) notes, '[because] of the more subjective nature of in-depth interviewing, analysing and interpreting the data are more complex than analysing and interpreting structured surveys'. However, fortunately '[some] of these problems are less pressing in interviewing for qualitative research, because conventionally the numbers of people interviewed, and therefore the number of interviews needed, are much smaller' (Payne & Payne, 2004: 131).

Indeed, this is certainly the case for this study, precisely because of the kind of information being sought. Since the actuality of 'pure experience' is discarded by the theoretical base of this study, the research here was ultimately more interested in what participants felt the meanings were. In other words, it explored the stories that surround the use of smartphones and LBSNs in terms of their meaningfulness to the users in question. Lastly, the interviewer is of course a significant factor vis-à-vis how the interview proceeds. As someone with an obvious interest in LBSNs, I had to refrain from leading participants to make the kind of comments I wanted to hear; instead holding back and providing them with the time needed to articulate their points in their own words. Let me now move on to discuss in more detail how said foursquare data was gathered, and what this information allowed in terms of the information gained.

4.4.2 Foursquare Data

At the beginning of this project, participants were given the option of befriending me on foursquare, allowing the diachronic tracking of the last five check-ins, total check-ins, badges, mayorships, friends, tips, 'to-do' list and 'done' list. All of the foursquare users I interviewed in turn befriended me. This allowed each interview to be conducted with an additional layer of information, which I could then be drawn on, as and when appropriate, augmenting the information thus gleaned. Indeed, by having this kind of information at hand, I could bring up the issue of recent check-ins with the participant during the course of the interview, as a means to further probe meaningful lines of enquiry along specific locational lines, enriching the data, real-time. For instance, if a participant's check-ins were in close proximity to one another I could probe as to why the participant had chosen to check in so many times on this or that day, and how this perhaps fitted in with his or her sense of self-identity and expression, just as I could equally enquire as to why a participant hadn't checked-in at all that day, and so on. In turn I could also see what mayorships the participant held, as well as the tips they had recently inscribed or completed. Again, this permitted me to explore not only how their use of foursquare made this or that participant *feel*, and in their own words, but also direct such lines of enquiry towards specific things, such as recently gained mayorships or a recently inscribed tip. Ultimately by having this information at

hand, my primary method of gathering data, semi-structured interviews, was deepened by a level of locational, social and playful information that assisted me in the immanent development of focused cues and probes to expand on as the interview unfolded.

4.5 Analytical Framework

As Klandermans and Staggenborg (2002: 110) note, '[in] semi-structured interviewing, *analysis and interpretation are ongoing processes* [in contrast] to quantitative research [which] depends on the completion of data collection to begin analysis'. As a result of this, the 'interpretation of initial interviews can ... reshape the direction of the study' (Ibid). The first five interviews of this study were piloted as a means to experiment and develop the various verbal probes used to explore the interesting paths and angles emerging amidst the assorted uses of foursquare, and its physical, spatial and social effects. This, in and of itself, was a very important, as it helped illuminate what kind of questions allowed me to get the information of was seeking. For instance, some participants found it hard to articulate how their use of foursquare impacted their sense of identity, when I asked them this question outright. However, getting users to discuss their subsequent engagements with space and place, by way of foursquare, oftentimes led to discussions about how foursquare made them feel about themselves and so on. Following this, the ensuing interview data was then read and reread as a means to begin the process of data analysis, identifying interpretive systems along the way, and confirming overarching themes from which to understand the findings. Indeed, '[by] interpreting and analysing these initial interviews, the range and topics of successive waves on interviewing and analysis can be narrowed to focus on particular themes or topics that emerge as central or critical' (Ibid.), just as the themes can already be established through prior research (Boyatzis, 1998). As Horrocks and King (2010: 142) state, '[when] considering the many different forms of analysis available, one distinction that is often made is between approaches that are strongly focused on language and those that are more concerned with the content of what the participant has to say'. Congruently here, and as evident in terms of the data sought, this research is principally interested in comprehending how participants use and understand foursquare from their own perspective, and in their own words, stemming from its

relativist base. As Bryman and Hardy (2009: 563) suggest, '[thematic] analysis is ideally suited to getting a clear picture of the basic content of a text. It allows you to answer such questions as: What's in the mind of your interviewees?'

Thematic analysis 'refers to the process of analysing data according to commonalities, relationships and differences across a data set' (Brown & Gibson, 2009: 127). 'There are many different styles ... each with their own distinctive procedure' (Horrocks & King, 2010: 149), just as there are many different understandings of what exactly qualifies as being a 'theme'. For Manen (1998: 90) themes are 'like knots in the webs of our experiences, around which certain lived experiences are spun'. In terms of this study, the following definition was adopted: '[themes] are recurrent and distinctive features of participants' accounts, characterising particular perceptions and/or experiences, which the researcher sees as relevant to the research question' (Horrocks & King, 2010: 150), established by prior research, as well as the understanding of foursquare stemming from its suggested uses. Following this, and as detailed above, the overarching themes were as follows: play, identity, location and social. As Horrocks and King (2010: 158) state, '[you] would normally try to restrict the number of overarching themes as far as the data will allow - between two and five is probably the norm', which is the case in this instance. It should be also noted, that computer programs 'written specifically for managing an analysing qualitative data such as that generated by semi-structured interviewing' (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002: 112), were not employed. Instead I adopted a more manual approach; becoming more tangibly engaged in the material at hand. Analysis commenced with the careful reading of full interview transcriptions, highlighting material that was of interest in terms of exploring the underlining research questions as outlined above, while trying not to be overly restricted by the themes already established (Langdridge, 2007). Following on from this, an interpretive stage was employed to draw out *meaning* from the material marked accordingly. Indeed, 'in analysing the data, qualitative researchers make every effort to anchor their interpretations in the everyday understandings and language of their subjects' (Klandermans & Staggenborg, 2002: 111-112). Lastly, said interpretations were then variously understood, and hierarchically ordered, using the established themes detailed above.

4.6 Summary

The chief aim of this research is to examine the effect foursquare might have on the physical, spatial and social practices of my participants. The notion of the self, and with it self-identity, have been included here as part of the physical impact of LBSNs, as my interest in identity revolves around its embodied engagement with space, place and smartphones. Symptomatic of the kind of information I am interested in gathering, namely 'rich' information about how users employ foursquare and experience its effects, from their own point-of-view, a qualitative methodology was devised, entailing a semi-structured interview, as justified above. This in turn saw me interviewing 22 foursquare users. All participants were selected with a focus on diversity, so as to explore the different ways this particular LBSN might be employed. Fortunately, the majority of the individuals I made contact with were themselves relatively diverse with regard to their age and occupation. It should be noted, however, that, comparatively speaking, I spoke to more male foursquare users than female users, owing to the fact it was seemingly more difficult to make connect with female users. Indeed, male users were more willing to respond to my various methods of recruitment, as well as being more likely to put me in touch with other male users. Interviews revolved around the following themes: play, identity, location and social; themes developed to help me glean the kind of information I was interested in unveiling. Moving forwards then, chapter five addresses the explicitly playful side of foursquare, by firstly examining how points and badges make users approach their engagements, as well as how it affects their desire to go out and explore their surroundings. Mayorships, and their acquisition, are then examined, with a focus on how they make users feel about, and engage with, certain places. Lastly, the social implications of foursquare's gamified elements are considered; examining both the continuation of existing social connections, as well as the creation of new ones. Chapter six then addresses foursquare's impact on identity, examining how it can be seen as a 'material' which users employ to continue their sense of 'self'. Following this, the extent to which foursquare leads to users becoming more aware of their environments and what they might suggest about their identity is examined, as well as its impact on the places they choose to frequent. Lastly, user generated locational information is explored in terms of how it makes users approach their

environment, as well as feel about themselves. Chapter seven then addresses the social and spatial impact of checking-in; both to share these movements with friends as well as to document movements through space and place. More specifically, the social effect of sharing space and place in this manner is examined, before the impact of locational archives and their use is explored. In sum, each chapter will help build a better picture of the impact foursquare may be having on the physical, spatial and social practices of my participants. Let me begin then, by addressing the explicitly playful side of foursquare.

Chapter 5: Pervasive Play & its Impact

In the previous chapter, the methodological framework for my research was established and justified. The aim of this chapter is thus to examine the explicitly playful facets of foursquare, such as points, badges and mayorships, and their physical, spatial and social impact. The chapter thus begins by examining the effect points and badges are presently having on some users, in terms of how they subsequently approach their environment. Here I am interested in the extent to which these gamified elements may lead users to engaging with their day-to-day lives, and thus 'ordinary' space, differently. The chapter then addresses mayorships and their impact on spatial relationships. I am interested here in exploring the relationships pervasive play can create, or perhaps underline, between people and places; familiar or otherwise. Do users find, for instance, that a desire to keep this or that mayorship effects the places they choose to frequent. Lastly, the chapter will explore the social implications of foursquare regarding the pervasive play it enables. I am interested here in examining whether engagements in this kind of play, between users, correlatively impacts their relationships and the like. As a symptom of this exploration, the chapter develops an updated understanding of play, and with it an updated position on Huizinga's (1938/1992) concept of the 'magic circle', one more suited to approaching the kind of play endemic of foursquare, and of course LBSNs; whereby the division between 'ordinary' life and play is effectively blurred, in terms of effect, while felt, regarding its qualitative difference. This is an important caveat that casts a more balanced light on the talismanic and duplicitous quality of play.

5.1 Points, Badges & Exploration

The *kind* of play foursquare permits has been discussed in preceding chapters as contributing to the ways in which users perceive and orientate themselves towards their locations, as well as how they experience them. Significantly here, smartphones are employed to playfully engage with the digital space that now overlays 'real' world environments. This is a situation described by Moore

(2011: 374) as ‘the overlapping of ludic governance on existing environments with established accoutrements of cultural conventions’. As noted, ‘[play] has been conceptualized in many different but overlapping ways ... [with one] of the earliest and most popular definitions of play [coming] from Johan Huizinga (1938/1955)’ (de Souza e Silva & Hjorth, 2009: 605). For Huizinga (1938/1992), the chief characteristics of play can be summarised in the following way:

- It occurs within its own ‘magic circle’, distinct from ‘ordinary’ life concerning both time and space
- It absorbs the player completely
- It is a free activity
- It revolves around some kind of rules

Importantly then, my research challenges this first proposition: that play is somehow separate from ‘ordinary’ life. For some of the users I spoke with, especially those in their 20s and 30s, as well as those already involved with media technologies as a result of their occupation, the play of foursquare intermingles with precisely this, their ‘ordinary’ lives. A rigid distinction between play and ‘ordinary’ life or ‘real’ world environments, such as Huizinga’s (1938/1992) ‘magic circle’, is thus problematized, or rather built upon, by the kind of play stemming from foursquare, a game which imbues the ‘real’ world with the digital and locational potential for ludic engagement, free from durational or spatial restrictions and leading to aspects of ‘ordinary’ life penetrating play’s ‘protective *frame*’ (Apter, 1999: 15). This point is illustrated by Sarah, whose desire to acquire new mayorships is at the same time intertwined with her desire to overcome M.E., and thus intertwined with her ‘ordinary’ life:

Interviewer: Would you mind if we went back a step now and picked up where we began: your backstory. You said lots of people find your story interesting, so could you tell me a bit about your story before foursquare?

Sarah: Before foursquare, I’m registered disabled with the M.E. and I’m mainly housebound; I’m more housebound than I’m not. My M.E. sort of fluctuates up and down. I liked the look of foursquare, and started using it as a sort of incentive to get out; like a pedometer makes you want to

walk more steps, using foursquare made me want to break my boundaries a bit; try and go out a bit more than what I did. That's sort of my main reason for using it at the beginning.

Interviewer: So foursquare was a motivational tool then?

Sarah: Absolutely, yeah, 100%. Like I say, when you've got a pedometer on you, you want to walk more steps, you know, you find yourself doing it unconsciously because you like seeing the numbers go up. So foursquare was just an incentive to get out and get mayorships, and to tell friends and family that I'm out, rather than having to ring them and say I'm at such and such a place today, they can instantly see, when I published my check-ins, where I was and that I was getting out.

Here the playfulness of foursquare explicitly fuses with Sarah's 'ordinary' life, as the attainment of various mayorships through the accumulation of myriad check-ins symbolises something beyond the 'intrinsic meaning' (Caillois, 1958/2001: 7) of the game; it becomes significant outside of its structure, while still inextricably connected to play nonetheless. Put differently, these two different assemblages, or mind-sets, coexist both separately and together; much like the bite and not-bite bitten (Bateson, 1972), the signifier is doubled. Engaging in the 'ordinary' space of day-to-day life is thus at the same time an engagement in the space of play. The ethereal line between play and the 'ordinary' life is effectively blurred, with the former no longer assimilated as an appurtenance to the latter, but rather balanced through reciprocal interplay. This vantage-point significantly diverges from Huizinga's dichotomous definition, concerning play's abstraction from more 'serious' pastimes. For Sarah, the effects of foursquare transcend the magic circle, as well as Apter's (1999: 15) suggested 'frame' standing between 'the "real" world ... its problems' and play, as her problems within the 'real' world are themselves eased precisely through said ludic engagement. This point is further demonstrated in the following extract:

Interviewer: Have you got any specific examples of times when you haven't wanted to go out and you've thought I will because I want to check in on foursquare?

Sarah: That's pretty much every day [laughs] but I'm so tired and so exhausted all the time with my M.E. I just can't be arsed, you know, I'll save my energy, but then I think, no, I'm nearly the mayor of this place or I'm close to getting one hundred check-ins at that place. Like my local pub, I recently got my hundredth check-in there; I knew I was getting close and I would think I'll just go for a quick drink, so it is every day. So it is so easy to stay at home, but then I think about foursquare and ousting my fiancé or something.

In this instance, the play of foursquare seemingly circumvents any sense of absolute containment, as it is evidently not 'distinct from' Sarah's "ordinary life" (Huizinga, 1938/1992: 10), but rather significantly coincides with it, regarding both duration and location. Following in this vein, the play of foursquare can be seen as tantamount to a kind of motivating force, pushing certain users to go out and engage with their environments more often. This sense of locational incentive is similarly illuminated by Emily in the next extract:

Emily: I have thought maybe more about, like if I have been thinking about going for a drink, but thinking I'm too busy, but then thinking actually if I went I'd get more points. It has only been once or twice.

Interviewer: That is what interested me about location-based applications, whether they changed what people did?

Emily: Obviously there is that element of I'm such a loser, I don't do anything apart from travel into work, maybe pop out at lunch, and then go home, so actually maybe it would be good to be pushed .

Interviewer: So it can be a motivation to do more things?

Emily: Yeah, because obviously by doing that and going to different places, then you will ultimately get more points, and then I am ultimately still winning. I'm not allowed to play board games with some of my friends because I'm too competitive.

For Emily, the playful side of foursquare, alongside her desire to win, has thus led to her going out more than she otherwise would; even if this has only happened 'once or twice'. What my research thus shows here is that LBSNs can affect how some users engage with their environment. A comparable sense of locational motivation is similarly experienced by Samantha:

Interviewer: So does the gaming side of foursquare affect the way you use it? We've probably touched on this already to a certain extent. Would it push you to go to a place that you hadn't gone to before?

Samantha: Yes possibly, if I know I'm going to get more points and things like that. It is definitely something that I would want to tweet about if it was somewhere new.

More explicitly Mark also finds that foursquare, and its explicit sense of play, has led to him going out more:

Mark: Well I noticed when I started using it more; I started wanting to go out more, to check in to places and to get like points and things like that. I think it's made me want to go out a lot more for some reason. It's quite strange.

Interviewer: So does foursquare make you go out more?

Mark: Yeah, as Dennis said, close the laptop and get outside.

This kind of spatial disruption importantly problematizes any rigid distinction established between the space of 'ordinary' life and the space of play, as the play of foursquare evidently interweaves the spaces of 'ordinary' life. 'Ordinary' life isn't cordoned off from play. When examining play through the lens of foursquare then, there is no longer a designated 'place for play' (Caillois, 1958/2001: 6), instead every place has the potential for precipitating play, just as play can take place at *any* time. This is itself important given Huizinga's (1991: 10) postulation that '[all] play moves and has its being within a play-ground marked off beforehand either materially or ideally, deliberately or as a matter of course', as Caillois (1958/2001: 6) concurringly suggests, 'play is

essentially a separate occupation, carefully isolated from the rest of life, and generally ... engaged in with precise limits of time and place'. In turn, the effect of foursquare illuminates the need for updating this limited understanding of play; a position built upon by my research.

Importantly, however, this does not mean *all* urban environments are automatically transformed into playful spaces, for all foursquare users, but rather they can be. To suggest this would be an embellishment tantamount to positing all play *must* occur within a sacred space, or that 'Mogi ... transformed the city of Tokyo into a playful space' (de Souza e Silva & Hjorth, 2009: 603) for *everyone*. Instead, for those who choose to engage with it, what foursquare enables is a different understanding of play and with it a different relationship with magic circles, one that is more mobile, malleable and mollified, while predicated on the active character of space (de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1974/1991). As de Souza e Silva & Hjorth (2009: 604) importantly note, 'following Lefebvre, we might conceive spaces not only as social but also as playful, since play is an intrinsic social movement emergent by the relationships between people'. Indeed, it is precisely through the active and constructed character of 'lived spaces' (Lefebvre, 1974/1991) that foursquare produces this new understanding of play, whereby the overlapping of 'real' world environments and their concomitant cultural conventions with digital space effectively allows users to dexterously oscillate between both 'real' and playful symbolic assemblages attached to any given location, 'hallowed' or not, in a manner that leaves a trace of play on the fabric of 'ordinary' life. As Nieuwdorp (2005: 5) explains, 'what happens in pervasive games is a change in the relationship between an object and its accepted conventional meaning that has been constructed in a specific cultural discourse'.

What my research illuminates then is that foursquare can, and it is this possibility that is significant, deracinate 'ordinary' environmental mind-sets; allowing them to take on different, and in this instance more playful, meanings, simultaneously, with said playful meanings then potentially affecting more 'conventional' spatial understandings in the process, and vice versa. For example, the significance assigned to the acquisition of any given mayorship for Sarah signifies two different, while contemporaneous, structures, that are, paradoxically, "apart together" (Huizinga, 1938/1992:

106); much like the bite and the not-bite bitten (Bateson, 1972). The magic circle then, is not only more pervious concerning its association with the ‘real’ world, through symbolic alteration and oscillation, but also more mobile as a result of the boundless potential digital space exhibits apropos location. As a means to explore this relationship further, let me now move on to how the ludic character of foursquare is presently affecting fleshly approaches to day-to-day life for certain users.

‘One method for conceptualizing the role of play in contemporary urbanity, as mirrored by all-pervasive mobile technologies, is vis-à-vis the rise and transformation of the icon of late 19th and early 20th century modernity, the *flâneur*’ (de Souza e Silva & Hjorth, 2009: 606). This is itself established in previous chapters. Certainly, the municipal perambulations of the *flâneur*, where the urban environment was voyeuristically reimagined along scopophilic lines (White, 2008; Gleber, 1999; Shields, 1994; Tester, 1994), provides a valuable lens through which the mobility of foursquare can be re-examined in terms of travel and exploration, as well as how spaces are actively constructed through engagement. For Luke (2005: 4) the rise of new mobile technologies sees the *flâneur* importantly remediated as the ‘phoneur’, as he explains: ‘[the] phoneur is the postmodern flâneur: a mobile phone user strolling the cityscape’. Significantly for my purposes this reimagining underlines that mobile phones are now incorporated into ‘looking at everyday life’ (Myerson, 2001: 9). Indeed, it is apparent that alongside its transformative potential, foursquare also serve as a motivational tool to nudge users or ‘phoneurs’ to get out more and engage with ‘real’ world environments, as demonstrated above, just as the ocular allure of the Arcades seduced *the flâneur* to wander the city of nineteenth-century Paris, producing different ways of seeing and engaging with said environment, as well as forging alternative trails and pathways through it. The effective character of foursquare and its ability to alter the places, as well as the routes chosen to get to these places, stemming from the playfulness it enables, is highlighted in the following extract by Amy’s desire to collect new badges:

Interviewer: Do you specifically try to get badges?

Amy: As I said, there is that website ‘About foursquare’ that

announces badges. We have driven out of our way once, to go past Wembley Stadium, so I can get a football one.

In this example, Amy went 'out of' her 'way' to gain a certain badge, illustrating that the more playful side of foursquare can lead some users to following different pathways through the city. In other words, foursquare does affect how users move through space. For Ryan, it is precisely this potentiality that has led to him questioning the route his friend now takes to work, as he explains:

Interviewer: Do you use foursquare to compete against your friends?

Ryan: Yes. So, for quite a while I have just been competing, but not actually knowing if I am competing, sort of thing, seeing other people with high scores and thinking I really need to check in more and get some more points.

Interviewer: So does that push you to check in more?

Ryan: Yeah, definitely. I kind of tried to persuade some friends to try it and most of them just haven't been interested, or have done it and have stopped very quickly, or will only check in very occasionally, whereas I've got a friend now who is actually competing with me, and actively, and we're talking to one another about it and I'll say damn it how do you get so many points.

Interviewer: So who is winning?

Ryan: I think she is.

Interviewer: And how is she getting so many points?

Ryan: I don't know. She seems to take a much more convoluted route to work than me.

A similar point is also demonstrated in the next extract, as Paul discusses how his original desire for points led to him and his friends spending a day

checking-into places they wouldn't have gone to, and thus moving through the city in a modified manner:

Interviewer: Do you use foursquare to compete against people you know?

Paul: Yes, back in the day we did.

Interviewer: What was the main form of that competition?

Paul: It was all about the points; we would check in, even though we were all going to the same places, you'd see someone get their phone out, you'd see them checking in, because you get extra points for being the first of your friends to check in, so if we went somewhere new, they were all like right, I'm going to get those extra points, to climb up the leader board.

Interviewer: So was this like a routine? Something you'd just do?

Paul: I remember there was one specific day, where it went mental. We went on a massive walk around the city, checking-in at the parks as we walked through them, we would specifically go to place, extra shops just to check in to. That was a particularly slow day that allowed us to do that, but it was a good laugh.

Interviewer: So was the game aspect of foursquare changing the way you approached your environment that day?

Paul: I think it encouraged us to go to extra places; places that we hadn't been before, just to get that check-in, to see if there were any deals for checking-in, you know, check in here and get a free coffee.

In this example Paul details how foursquare 'encouraged' him and his friends to go to 'extra places'; places they hadn't been to before, with a corollary to this being the pathways thus forged were themselves correspondingly different. This thus echoes the exploratory footsteps of the *flâneur*. In following extract Ryan details an analogous situation

Ryan: The most obsessive thing I have done is Gowalla had this thing that was highlights or top places, and they had London, and one day I decided to check in at all of the top-twenty or something. So it was like the London Eye and the Houses of Parliament. So I just walked around London checking-into these places. So that was partly just being a bit obsessed with the game and also just exploring it a bit.

Following in this vein so too does Samantha:

Samantha: There was one day when we went to town, we went shopping, and literally every shop we went into we checked-in. We checked-in to West Quay, we checked-in to every shop, then we went for food, we went for lunch, and then we went to a bar, checked-in there, it was just constant; trying to get the points.

Interviewer: How big was the group?

Samantha: There was about four or five of us, but I think only three of us had the app, so there was actually only three of us that were competing.

Interviewer: So were you purposefully going to more places just to check in?

Samantha: I don't know if it was purposeful? Possibly. It was silly things like we'd go into somewhere for literally five minutes and some of us would forget to check in and they'd be like oh no. We'd also check in to train stations. We'd literally just be walking through and we'd check in.

Interviewer: What was the initial impetus to do this?

Samantha: I don't know really, it's just because it is a game. It brought out the competitive side. It probably drove our Twitter followers mad, seeing where we were going all the time.

At the same time what is significant here is that Paul, Ryan and Samantha found this kind of spatial engagement to be more pronounced when they initially began using both foursquare and Gowalla; suggesting that perhaps such playful spatial engagement might be rooted in a certain sense of novelty

stemming from its qualitative difference. It is also interesting that Paul and Samantha are, relatively speaking, two of the younger users I spoke with, and thus might be more willing and able to engage in this kind of play. In other words, although foursquare can dramatically alter how this or that user engages with their environment, and the pathways they choose, for a certain time, it is unlikely that this level of modification would be maintained indefinitely. Henry makes this point in the following extract:

Interviewer: So what do you use foursquare to share with your friends?

Henry: Well at the beginning, it is because it's a game. You get the points and the badges. So in the beginning I was quite hooked on the game, so I wanted to be the first one of my friends to get the most points, so I was checking-in everywhere that I went. I got over that. It was only really the first few months I used it like that. Now I really only check in to places that are interesting or exciting, or if something exciting is happening like, for example, when I'm going on holiday I'll check in at the airport and say I'm going to Spain tomorrow, and if I'm on holiday and I'm in a really nice restaurant or a good place then I'll check in to those places, but I wouldn't just check-in to Starbucks, today, without you here.

Paul makes a parallel point, while explaining why he would now classify himself as a 'casual' user:

Paul: I would say that I would be a casual user. There was a time when, probably not straight after I joined, but the time when me and a couple of friends, all got heavily into it for a period of about a week or two, and we would check in everywhere; we would deliberately go to different places to check in, to get the points. We were having a battle for the leader board, but now it's like a casual thing. I'll use it when I want to say something specific about a place, and I use it more as a tool for Facebook and Twitter, rather than in itself.

In the following extract Samantha details a comparable correlation, as her use of foursquare has also reduced over time:

Interviewer: So when you first started using it, did you check in more

frequently?

Samantha: Yeah. It has reduced for a number of reasons: I'm not a student anymore so I don't go to as many different places, and I'm not going to check in to work every single day or something like that. When I first started using it there was a lot of competition in our group of friends; who could get the most points, trying to get each other's mayorships and things like that, so that's what made us use it a lot more. Now not so much.

Nonetheless, what is important for my purposes is that in either case, both Paul and Samantha's use of foursquare evidently saw them engaging with their surroundings in a modified manner; evading predetermined routes and going to venues and locations they wouldn't have otherwise visited, just as the *flâneur* would drift through the city without a pre-set path, appropriating the sprawling streets as a visual canvas upon which to create and comprehend the urban environment. Significantly then, foursquare can affect how some users engage with their environment, as both Paul and Samantha evidently constructed a different kind of environmental experience; one rooted in playful locational engagement rather than a defined sense of spatial purpose.

Whereas the *flâneur's* environmental interaction was notably rooted in a mode of ocular appropriation, however, the 'phoneur's interaction with space and place is subtly different, as it is simultaneously marked by the touch and sight of smartphones. Just as play splits and synthesises multiple mind-sets, so too does the play of foursquare split and synthesise different fleshly forms of environmental interaction. 'Unlike the *flâneur* that was ordered by the visual, the 'phoneur' is structured by the information city's ambience, whereby modes such as haptic and aural override the dominance of visual' (de Souza e Silva & Hjorth, 2011: 608), which consequently produces new pathways through the city centre. Users of foursquare thus engage with their environment in a manner that is evidently less visually biased, as a result of their somatic connection to smartphones and the way in which this relationship intersects two different, while coexisting, spaces or structures, requiring a binary conjunction in terms of both the corporeal and the cerebral. This point is revealed in Paul and Samantha's experience of space, following the rhizomatic

routes thus forged, with the performance of place synchronously underlined by a techno-social form of governance and physicality, as well as a sense of brevity - 'we'd go into somewhere for literally five minutes' - itself at odds with the art of *flânerie*. Whereas '[the] visual could be said to be the *primum mobile* of the *flâneur's* being' (Tester, 1994: 65) evidently a different understanding of physical environmental engagement is evoked by the 'phoneur'. However and importantly here, while Luke's (2005) postmodern phoneur provides a helpful way of understanding the spatial effects of foursquare, it still doesn't go far enough in terms of tackling the topic of play. Indeed, just as Luke (2005) adapted the *flâneur* in order to incorporate the rise of mobile media and its effect on space and place, so too does the phoneur need to be reworked in order to fully acknowledge the explicitly playful quality of foursquare, with the 'playeur', in this instance, being this remediation.

I would accordingly suggest then, that the *playeur* is the phoneur who not only uses his or her smartphone to alter how he or she traverses the urban terrain, itself a ubiquitous symbol, but does so under the auspices of location-based pervasive play, thus acknowledging the playful undergirding of this kind of spatial engagement, stemming from multiple mind-sets. It is precisely through the pervasive play of foursquare that new connections to space and place, as well as perhaps new understandings of 'ordinary' life, are presently being forged and experienced, and not simply because of the employment of smartphones and their social potential. In this instance the urban meanderings of Paul and Samantha explicitly annexed themselves to the gamified desire for an accumulation of points and the acquisition of digital symbols, nestled in digital space and accessed through haptic engagements, as opposed to simply revolving around visual appropriation. In sum, this difference is significantly acknowledged by the *playeur*, as his or her use of foursquare effectively blends the seriousness of 'ordinary' life with the potentiality of play - the bite and not-bite bitten (Bateson, 1972) - by way of a process of urban and digital exploration, alongside symbolic modification, mollification and vacillation.

However, I should again stress at this juncture, that I am not suggesting this is the case for *all* users, as it is apparent from my research that it is predominately the younger users, those in their 20s and 30s, as well as those already involved with media technologies, stemming from their occupation,

that want to engage with the more playful side of foursquare. The following extract with John who is 65 illuminates how the oldest user I spoke with felt about the more playful side of foursquare:

Interviewer: Do you compete against yourself in terms of the points you collect, or 'check-ins', or collecting badges, or so on?

John: No. I don't understand it. The first time I heard you got points for checking-in at restaurants or, or, coffee bars or something, I was amazed. I mean I laughed out loud when I found you could become the mayor of somewhere. I just cannot get my head around, at all; the game aspect of it. I'd like to, because I'd like to understand why people would do it. I cannot understand why you would, you know, treat it as a game. I'm actually useless at computer games. I've tried and I've tried and I just cannot do them. I haven't got the patience or the understanding. So, that side of things are a total anathema to me. I do get points, and I do get a little chuckle when it says this is the third time you've checked in so you are the mayor. So again, maybe this is something in the future I'll come to understand it. You know, again, it is just something which I don't understand and I never learnt how to use.

Interviewer: When you say you 'chuckled' at the mayorship, in what respect?

John: It's a strange thing. I thought how can I be the mayor? I've only been here twice. What if someone else and comes along and has been three times? Sorry, you're no longer the mayor? Or can we have lots of mayors? Why would you be the mayor? I mean, the mayor is someone who is an important dignitary in a town. I mean why would you become the mayor of a coffee house or something?

Interviewer: So did you not want to be the mayor of this coffee house?

John: Well I didn't see the point. It is like coming along to me and saying the queen is going to give you a knighthood, you are now Sir John, but don't tell anyone. I mean there is no point, you know?

For John then, the idea of playfully engaging with space and place in this manner is something he simply cannot ‘get his head around’ or ‘understand’. From his vantage-point it is ‘anathema’ to him. I would suggest this is in part symptomatic of his age, or at least symptomatic of what John *feels* his age represents, which in turn prohibits him from engaging with foursquare in this way. This is itself revealed by his reasoning for not ‘understanding’ the playful side of foursquare, being that he ‘never learnt to use it’. Here John implicitly suggests that it isn’t something he would have ‘learnt’ to do. In other words, John seems to me positing that ‘understanding’ this kind of play is a generational thing. That being said, John does go on to acknowledge that the idea of it does amuse him nonetheless:

Interviewer: Sum up how you feel the gaming aspect of foursquare affects your life, if it does?

John: It gives me slight amusement, when I see, you know, you gain points for doing this or points for that, or you become mayor for that. So the gaming really doesn’t affect me very much, although I am aware it exists, and it is something, that I might, you know, get more interested in, when I understand it in the future.

This sense of amusement, that foursquare can ‘brighten’ a person’s day, in the words of Amy, is something that many of the users I spoke with mentioned. For Ryan, it makes things more interesting:

Ryan: It makes things a bit more interesting. That’s it really. It is this kind of thing that you do and you’re not that sure why you do it, or why you enjoy it so much, which is why it is difficult to discuss.

Nigel further explains what this ‘interestingness’ might mean, and how it can revolve around a sense of connectedness:

Nigel: I think that is what keeps it a little more interesting. It is a layer on top of the whole check-in thing. I like it when I’m at a concert or something, and you check in and you see there’s like forty-five other people. You kind of feel part of a

collective, and that goes back to that elite feeling; that elite club. You go to the o2 and you go see some band and you check in, and see that 55 people have checked-in, or 140 people have checked-in, and you think hang on a minute there's like 20,000 people here, I'm like 1% of these people. Imagine if you checked-in and then found out that the people that have checked-in were getting invited to the after-party. That would be amazing.

For Emily, the play of foursquare makes an otherwise 'rubbish' day better:

Emily: It's quite simply to do, you don't have to put much effort into it, and obviously if you are having a bit of a rubbish day, it is nice to know that you are still winning in that. It is like being a child, almost, being attracted to the shiny little badges and stuff like that.

In each example then, it is apparent that foursquare can make life more fun; they can make, as Ryan explains, the mundane more interesting, by overlaying 'ordinary' life with a sense of ludic adventure. It is also apparent that it was more often the younger users I spoke to that engaged in this side of foursquare. Moving forwards then, let me examine the experiences of space and place importantly engendered because of this playful relationship with the urban environment, for those who employ foursquare in this manner, in more detail. Accordingly, let me now turn to mayorships and examine what new spatial relationships are currently being produced by way of this nexus. To do this I will begin with a brief exploration of how city life has previously been theorised and applied to other mobile social networks.

5.2 Mayorships, Familiarity & Significance

For Hunter (1985) city life can be divided into three kinds of constructed spaces: public, private and parochial; a triadic position subsequently used by Lofland (1998) to examine the 'public realm'. These spaces are defined as follows: '[public] spaces are territories characterized by strangers ... private spaces are territories characterized by intimate and personal networks' (Humphreys, 2010: 768), and parochial spaces are territories '*characterised by a sense of commonality among acquaintances and neighbors who are involved*

in interpersonal networks that are located within “communities” (Lofland, 1998: 10; italics in original). ‘Parochial realms’ are the ‘world of the neighborhood, workplace, or acquaintance networks’ (Ibid). It is important to note that while ‘the parochial social order is often defined as but another variant of the public order over and against the private social order’; it is nonetheless understood as being ‘qualitatively distinct from the public order’ (Hunter, 1985: 235). Lofland (1998) intentionally employs the term ‘realm’ here, to bring the social and thus constructed character of ‘parochial space’ to the fore. As Humphreys, (2008: 127) explains, ‘[since] realms are social, there is nothing inherent in the physical (or virtual) spaces that make them public or parochial’, with a corollary to this being ‘parochial realms’ are themselves contextually contingent, stemming from the constructed character of space and the ‘*urban fact*’ (de Certeau, 1984: 94). In other words, what one person comprehends as a ‘parochial realm’ may very well be interpreted as a ‘public realm’ by the next person. Parenthetically, such a comprehension of space and place is at the same time redolent of my revised understanding of magic circles, itself developed above, whereby the use of foursquare doesn’t mean all places are instantly playful for everyone, but rather they can be, contextually speaking, stemming from a change of mind-set, just as all ‘public realms’ can be parochialized. In either case, ‘existence precedes essence’ (Sartre).

Following this, Humphreys (2010: 768) adopts Lofland’s (1998) modified vantage-point to unpick the physical and spatial effects of the mobile social network Dodgeball, concluding that Dodgeball helped transform ‘public realms’ into ‘parochial realms’ through a process of ‘parochialization’, which she defines as ‘creating, sharing and exchanging information, social and locational, to contribute to a sense of community among a group of people in a public space’. An important symptom of this is that users then felt their environments to be more familiar, even if, tangibly speaking, they weren’t: ‘[despite] not knowing the venues or city as well as they knew their home city, an unfamiliar place could become a parochial realm by sharing locational and social information through Dodgeball’ (Ibid; p.773). Indeed, by sharing such information, users were able to develop a different kind of relationship with their environment, one importantly built on a sense of social and locational ‘familiarity’, and it is precisely this sense of familiarity in terms of parochialization that I want to draw on now, as a means to help me explore the

effect foursquare is having for some users on their approaches to space and place, as it is apparent from my research that the *playeur* similarly uses his or her smartphone to develop a *feeling* of locational familiarity, stemming from play and the attainment of mayorships. However, whereas the environmental familiarity procured by Dodgeball was pre-eminently social, with various social nodes transforming space and place, foursquare is notably more locational, in that its effects aren't necessarily tethered to relationships between people and their spatial correlation, although they can be, as I will demonstrate, but rather the relationship between people and places, through play. In sum, and as demonstrated by my research, this kind of parochialization is 'qualitatively distinct' (Hunter, 1985: 235) from the parochialization of Dodgeball, producing new forms of playful spatial engagement, predicated on loyalty, repetition and possession, as opposed to a physical awareness of nearby social connections.

For the *playeur* then, mayorships serve to underline familiarity, which accordingly serves to underline loyalty to a specific place. This is revealed in the ensuing extract:

Interviewer: So going back to the mayorships, you had three. Were there any benefits to having these mayorships?

Samantha: No, not really; not that I was aware of; nothing happened. I was just the mayor of these places.

Interviewer: This is the intriguing thing about mayorships. Did you feel differently when you were in either Chaos or the library when you knew you were mayor?

Samantha: Yeah!

Interviewer: So how would it feel different?

Samantha: I don't know; I don't know what it is really. You just feel like you're loyal to that place, and, I don't know, it's more you realise how much you liked it when you've lost it; when you get that email saying so-and-so is now mayor, and they've taken your mayorship, and you're like oh no, that's mine.

For Samantha then, both her mayorships signified that she was the habitu  of these venues. Likewise, Richard echoes a similar position while discussing how it feels to be the mayor of a local caf , Brewed Awakening:

Interviewer: So when you are the mayor, does it make you feel differently about the place when you are in it?

Richard: Yeah, you kind of have a sort of smug feeling of yep I am the regular; I am customer number one. How true it is varies. Having the mayorship here and being on first name terms with the people you know and having a good relationship, whereas having the mayorship for the pub across the way, there's kind of a warm glow, but it is a hollow victory when no one else is really competing for it.

For Paul, the 'loyalty' that certain mayorships represent is at the same time wrapped up in its connection to a specific period of time. This is particular true of a pub that used to be his local while he was at University, a place he was proud to be the mayor of:

Interviewer: So is the 'game' aspect of foursquare the most important part for you?

Paul: At the start it was. We used to go to a bar called Varsity, very regularly, back at university, and I was lucky enough to become the mayor. There weren't any discounts or prizes, or things like that. I guess it's more that it is somewhere you go quite often and it's nice to have that recognition, to see yourself with that little crown. It was a shame when I finally lost it, because we'd finished university; we weren't that close anymore, so that was like the passing of an era, losing that mayorship.

Interviewer: Do you mean this mayorship signified that period?

Paul: It was the end of an era, yeah. That was the end of university.

Whereas Dodgeball parochialized the environment for its users through an awareness of social-spatial connections, foursquare, with its digital symbolism,

in the form of mayorships, evidently allows *playeurs* to develop perhaps deeper more explicit connections to specific places; venues they still frequent or otherwise. As a symptom of this, users then feel differently about this or that place, with these feeling being strengthened in some way, as is the case in the examples detailed above. In contrast, the process of parochialization for Dodgeball is evidently less rooted in a specific site, as the physical place of said connection isn't itself as important as the social nodes that overlay it. Following this, *playeurs* then desire the repetition of this process, underlining their connection and loyalty to this or that place. This is highlighted by Paul's actions in the following extract, when he was informed by foursquare that he was close to losing his favourite mayorship:

Interviewer: Did checking-in get you to go back to these locations?

Paul: Yes. Going back to Varsity, checking-in, I think at one point I got a message saying someone has almost taken over as the mayor and I thought right, that's it, walked down, checked-in and had a drink, that'll show them

Interviewer: It is interesting in that you actually walked there, walked in, and bought a drink. Were there any points when you just pretended to be at any given location?

Paul: Well the funny thing is, is varsity was so close to my house that I could check in from my house, but out of some unknown, weird morals, I felt like that would be cheating, so I felt like I should actually go there to check in. Good moral character.

Interviewer: Does the gaming side of foursquare affect the way you user it? The points, the badges?

Paul: The gaming side was the biggest draw to using it, for getting into it, using the app.

This again signifies the importance Paul placed on this particular place, as well as his symbolic connection to it; one that saw him not wanting to 'cheat' and check in from his flat, but actually make the effort to physically enter Varsity, purchase a drink and then check in properly. In other words, Paul's mayorship

signified a relationship that was in some way felt to be authentic. Following in this vein, Richard experiences a similar situation revolving around his desire to 'hang on' to his Brewed Awakening mayorship:

Interviewer: So you wanted to experiment with foursquare, to see if you liked it?

Richard: That was largely the reason for starting out. There's also the element of gamification, okay. I think it must be human instinct to be point scoring and stuff. The number of times I have come here to just hang on to the mayorship. I got the mayorship here because I was using foursquare before a friend, and then he took it from me and I was genuinely disappointed.

Interviewer: So when you are the mayor, does it make you feel differently about the place when you are in it?

Richard: Yeah, you kind of have a sort of smug feeling of yep I am the regular; I am customer number one. How true it is varies. Having the mayorship here and being on first name terms with the people you know and having a good relationship, whereas having the mayorship for the pub across the way, there's kind of a warm glow, but it is a hollow victory when no one else is really competing for it.

Interviewer: Does the 'gaming' side of foursquare affect the way you use it, in terms of the social and locational aspects?

Richard: There will be slight biases and some of the times it has been if the mayorship is close I need to get here before Ben, so I will come slightly earlier lunch, or on the one occasion when you check in at lunchtime on a Friday and it says you are one day away from being the mayor so I claimed in on Monday morning. There are one or two occasions where I've thought if I do this now I'll get that, but most of the time the gaming aspect doesn't influence what I do.

Interviewer: So it nudges you slightly?

Richard: That's exactly it, it nudges me slightly, if I'm going to come here anyway maybe I'll come a little bit earlier, you know, maybe I'd be quite happy to come here for breakfast, but other mornings I might have breakfast at home. It might nudge me one way or another. It adds some small amount of utility to the decision that there is this minor perk. When everything else is equal, which it quite often is, I could have breakfast here, I could have breakfast there, what am I going to do, am I going to go to the chip shop or am I going to go to Brewed Awakening, I really don't have a preference. All things being equal I'll do the one that gives me the most points, or if it gets the mayorships or maintains it.

In the following extract Adrian likewise touches on a comparable sense of locational repetition, while explaining how his use of foursquare has changed from being a tool to update his wife of his whereabouts, to a playful activity that in part revolves around his desire to regain the mayorship of Waterloo Station:

Interviewer: So I suppose now, you are no longer simply doing this for your wife's benefit?

Adrian: No, partly it is just a routine I have clicked into, and partly I want pretty badges, and I'd quite like to be mayor of Waterloo again to be honest.

Interviewer: That must have been a really difficult mayorship to obtain?

Adrian: I don't take holidays all that often; I don't tend to take a fortnight off to go away to somewhere sunny or that sort of thing. So across the summer when everyone is taking lots of holidays, the mayorships change a lot at commuter places, and that's how I became mayor of Woking station, and I have been on and off ever since, and briefly, for

about a week, I was mayor of Waterloo. I was very pleased with that!

From these examples then, it is clear to see that foursquare *can* effectively intensify or strengthen the relationship some *playeurs* experience between themselves and the physical places they regularly inhabit, by way of the spatial and symbolic interactions noted above, thus accentuating this or that fleshly connection and nudging users to check in once more. This process then produces a different understanding of parochialization, one that isn't so much marked by a sense of locational familiarity stemming from people, but rather places, with the places in question being symbolically transformed in the process, and then repeated. For some users, the attainment of this or that mayorship seemingly confirms that they are the real habitu  of this or that venue, with their symbolic and digital loyalty, as well as its authenticity, producing a desire to maintain this status through repetition. As Benjamin notes (2005: 120), '[we] know that for a child repetition is the soul of play, that nothing gives him greater pleasure than to "Do it again!"'. Here, the need to 'do it again' signifies the implicit want to reappropriate the experience in some way, to reduce it, with the 'rhythms' of play being the first way 'we ... gain possession of ourselves' (ibid.). Interestingly, this form of playful parochialization, with its need for repetition, leads users to not only experience a deeper sense of connection and relationship with the places they are mayor of, but also some degree of possession over them. This again illuminates the blurred boundaries of play and 'ordinary' life, stemming from the use of foursquare. This sense of ownership is highlighted in the next extract, as Adrian discusses how he got a certain badge as well as a collection of London-based mayorships:

Adrian: I like getting the badges. I definitely like collecting mayorships. I got a 'Super Mayor' badge a while ago, because I had however many mayorships it is that you need to get that.

Interviewer: It must have been quite a few.

Adrian: It will tell me I think. 'Super Mayor' is ten.

Interviewer: Are a lot of your mayorships in London?

Adrian: Probably, I'm mayor of the office; I'm mayor of home; I'm mayor of Woking station and the M&S at it, so that's four. Presumably I got it while I was mayor of Waterloo. I don't know what the other ones are offhand.

Interviewer: So are these mayorships that you then try and keep?

Adrian: Oh yeah, because, you know, I've got it now, it's mine, I want to keep it. They gamify that relatively well in the app. They tell you if you have been ousted as mayor, and tell you what you'll need to do to get it back.

Amy details a similar situation while discussing her favourite bakery:

Interviewer: So does foursquare change the way you feel about the environments/locations you frequent?

Amy: Yeah like I say, that was my hidden gem that I found. It's things like, I've got a little bakery around the corner from us, and when I lost that mayorship I was actually a little bit upset, because I always thought that was *my* place. I'm in there quite often. It's *my* place.

Interviewer: So do you find the mayorships make you feel differently about the places you're mayor of?

Amy: Yeah, I feel like it is my place; it is my *special* little place!

In both instances then, the attainment of said mayorships leads to both Adrian and Amy not only feeling more loyal to a certain place, but also precipitates a form of ownership, stemming from the digital possession their respective mayorships indicate. This is further confirmed in their language: 'it's mine', 'it is my place' and so on. Accordingly this feeling of spatial ownership can then lead users to experiencing a sense of longing, or perhaps loss, when their

mayorships are subsequently stolen from them by another user; meaning they experience space and place differently. The following extract with Samantha highlights this point:

Interviewer: On the gaming side of things, do you use foursquare to save money, or unlock badges?

Samantha: Yes, when we first started using it, badges were definitely a thing; I did try and unlock as many badges as possible. I think I've got about fifteen. Saving, I don't know, because I haven't been anywhere that does that.

Interviewer: So it wasn't that you didn't want to do this *per se* but rather you weren't checking-in at any places that allowed you to make use of such offers. If you were at a place that gave the mayor, say, a free refill, would you be comfortable in saying I'm the mayor?

Samantha: Yeah! I think I had three mayorships before, when I was at university. The library was one, the tea room was another, and Chaos.

Interviewer: So how many check-ins were needed to get the mayorship at Chaos?

Samantha: I don't think it was actually that many. I think I got it in maybe three or four, but then I'd lose it quite quickly, so I'd have to get it back.

Interviewer: So when you did lose the mayorship, how did you feel?

Samantha: Oh not very good!

Interviewer: Would you be annoyed?

Samantha: Yes!

Interviewer: So what would you then do to rectify the situation?

Samantha: Well when I was still here, obviously, I'd just try and go more, but then when it became summer and we weren't

living in Southampton we gave it up.

Interviewer: It's probably a bit too far to travel down just to check in?

Samantha: Yes but I do miss my mayorships.

For Samantha, losing her mayorships left her feeling 'annoyed' and wanting them back. This example evidently underlines how foursquare can strengthen certain spatial relationships through pervasive play. At the same time what is also significant here is that Samantha's mayorships, much like Paul's, were mayorships she had acquired while she was at university. Consequently, I would suggest that the significance of them is again wrapped up in the significance of a certain time period, as well as, perhaps, a desire to have it back. Indeed, not all users experienced this same need to keep hold of their mayorships. This point is explicitly made clear by Nigel in the following extract:

Interviewer: So what mayorships have you got?

Nigel: I don't think I've got any at the moment. I was mayor of the Odeon in Beckenham, which I was fucking proud of.

Interviewer: That's a good mayorship.

Nigel: I've got two mayorships: the High Taste Café and a place in Tenerife.

Interviewer: Do you maintain these mayorships?

Nigel: Not actively. I don't sit there looking at my phone and think damn my mayorship has gone; I've got to get it back.

Interviewer: So you just *enjoy* the mayorships when you have them?

Nigel: Yeah, they are just like a layer on top of the already strange world of foursquare.

For Nigel then, his mayorships clearly aren't as significant to him. They are merely a bit of fun, 'a layer on top of the already strange world of foursquare'. As a result of this he doesn't actively seek to gain new mayorships or attempt to reclaim them when they are stolen. I would suggest, in this instance, that this is because neither the 'High Taste Café' nor the 'place in Tenerife' were ever that significant to Nigel in the first place. This is evidently not the case for users whose mayorships seemingly deepen an already established relationship, as demonstrated by Amy, Paul and Samantha above. Indeed, for such users the transformative potency of LBSN-based play can be seen as effectively accentuating 'ordinary' life and connoting a sense of spatial ownership. At the same time, however, it is apparent that just as mayorships can evoke feeling of proprietorship, so too can this playful-parochialization lead some *playeurs* to feeling similarly possessed by the places they have taken digital ownership of. This point is illuminated by Jane in the following extract:

Interviewer: So are you the mayor of any venues now?

Jane: I don't think so because I stopped sort of using it, and also there's an interesting twist in my story, which if you publish this you should anonymise.

Interviewer: Of course.

Jane: Obviously you will anyway. I didn't really like living in Newcastle at all, but I was using foursquare quite a lot when I was up there, and then I moved south, and then after like three weeks I started to lose the mayorships in various places in Newcastle, and I thought, oh that is good [laughs]. So that was the first time for me, and I would look and think, some other sucker is going there [laughs].

Interviewer: So did it compound your departure; emotionally and physically?

Jane: It really did, it was like look I've definitely left, because I'm not mayor of anywhere now.

Interviewer: That's really interesting.

Jane: It just sort of confirmed the change in my life choices, or whatever.

Here Jane's physical desire to leave Newcastle is effectively annexed to a similar yearning to see the removal of her digital self from this particular place, as a way of confirming, or perhaps underlining, her departure from this space, as well as time, both tangibly and intangibly speaking, with either side of this divide being correspondingly effective in the process. For my purposes this again demonstrates how foursquare can, for some users at least, become entangled in 'ordinary' life, with the playful symbolic assemblages coming to stand for something beyond the intrinsic meaning of the game, and vice versa. In other words, and much like Korzybski (1933) 'map-territory' relationship, neither side of this divide can be completely totalised.

In sum, the playful-parochialization of foursquare, which affects the relationships produced between people and places, revolves around: loyalty, repetition and possession. The transformative potentiality of LBSNs are explicitly brought to the fore by my research, as it is again precisely through foursquare that certain users evidently developed a different kind of connection and familiarity, or a different kind of mind-set, with the places they most often frequented. Following this, '[transformative] play is a special case of play that occurs when the free movement of play alters the more rigid structure in which it takes shape' (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004: 305), with the rigid structures of quotidian conventions revolving around space and place being replaced, or overlaid, if only temporally, with something more playful. The magic circle is thus illuminated as being more pervious in terms of its connection to the 'real' world, and the ways in which its effects pierce the supposed carapace of 'ordinary' life, potentially eliciting a different conception of 'ordinary' in the process. From Humphreys's (2010: 775) point of view, '[perhaps] then one of the roles of mobile social media is to make the urban environment seems less cold and anonymous'. I would suggest that foursquare achieves this sense of spatial softening by deepening the fleshly relationships some *playeurs* experience with the places they most often frequent, through play, as evidenced by my research. However, it is also apparent that the deepening of spatial relations was most explicitly felt by the younger users I

spoke with, those in their 20s and early 30s, who already held certain venues in high regard, or associated them with a significant period of their life and the like. In other words, the acquisition of this or that mayorship seemingly isn't enough to deepen a spatial relationship with this or that place, if there isn't already the impetus for such a deepening in the first place, as Nigel demonstrates above. Moving forwards, what this understanding has yet to detail is the social interactions symptomatic of said form of spatial engagement, interactions that my research shows produce banter, bragging and social separation.

5.3 Banter, Bragging & Social Bonds

As Salen & Zimmerman (2006: 83) put it, while '[games] create play: of that there is no doubt ... there is much more to this relationship'. For Huizinga's (1938/1992: 13) another purpose of play is to encourage 'the formation of social groups which tend to surround themselves with secrecy ... to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means'. This is a position confirmed in terms of foursquare by my research. This additional function provides another way of approaching how *playeurs* use this LBSN, concerning the attainment of points and especially the acquisition of mayorships, as they not only transform how the city is experienced, physically and spatially, forging deeper somatic connections with the places most often frequented, at the same time they elicit different and perhaps deeper social bonds with other *playeurs*. This deepening of social bonds is itself importantly realised within the qualitatively distinct realm of play, through the banter and bragging that surrounds this form of engagement. Indeed, such social ties are precisely accentuated by way of the secrecy or separation that *playeurs* experience concerning 'ordinary' life and its difference from the 'make-believe' (Caillois, 1958/2011) world of foursquare; a realm closed off from those outside of the game. Interestingly, foursquare, and the play of foursquare, is here contradictorily predicated on the social separation such interactions produce in terms of 'ordinary' life, which is a significant position given what has already been suggested about play and its mollified borders. This importantly illuminates a more complex perspective on magic circles, one that notably recognises the paradoxical character of play. Although play has been demonstrated as intermingling with 'ordinary' life, *playeurs* nonetheless

implicitly acknowledge its symbolic and qualitative distinction from more quotidian uses of space and place, which is a significant point if this pastime is to be better understood.

For *playeurs*, being the mayor of this or that place, or scoring highly on the leader board, provides a form of competition with other foursquare users. This kind of competition is evidently important to some users, a point confirmed in the next extract by Adrian:

Interviewer: Do you use foursquare to compete against people you don't know?

Adrian: On mayorships, kind of, Dennis I only know because he and I were vying for the mayorship of Woking station for a while. I have not met him in person, because we just keep on not getting around to it, and literally the only reason we know each other at all is because for about a period of two months, we would alternate mayorship about once or twice a week.

Interviewer: So how did you then get in contact?

Adrian: I think we probably both had it set to tweet when we gained a mayorship, and so we started chatting on Twitter as a result, just a ha-ha better luck next time kind of thing, and then he sent me a foursquare friend request at some point and I thought why not?

In a similar vein, the competition of foursquare is likewise important to Samantha:

Interviewer: So do you still use foursquare?

Samantha: Yeah, it is more now something that if I remember to do it, I'll do it. We went to Bath at the weekend, and we went to the pubs in Paul's hometown, which I've been to them before, and I remembered to check in, and his friends apparently saw that I had checked in first and he was like she beat me, and then there was that sense of competition.

For Emily it isn't just the competition that is important to her, but the social interaction this in turn produces:

Interviewer: So do you use foursquare to compete against yourself, in terms of points, check-ins, badges and so on?

Emily: Yeah.

Interviewer: Are they all as important as each other?

Emily: I think the thing that has sustained me just at the moment is the points, the scores, the winning! Every now and then I'll get a snarky text, or I'll send one back. He text me yesterday and said he realized you can only be successful at this if you leave the house, so I said what's wrong, and he said well I've been working at home, and I was like well I haven't. But I have had quite a few days off recently, so he was winning. I think when he mentioned foursquare to me, he didn't think I would actually do it, because he had got another one of our friends to do it a while, she has actually started to do it a little bit in the past week. I don't believe he thought I would actually do it.

In this example, Emily's higher score led to her 'bragging', as well as the exchange of 'snarky' text message. In the following extract Paul more explicitly clarifies the 'bragging rights' that foursquare can produce:

Interviewer: When you were mayor of Varsity, did you see it as having any benefits?

Paul: It had just bragging rights.

Interviewer: Can you give any examples when you would brag?

Paul: Well, within this select group, we'd always go there after university. We'd all be checking-in, but I must have always had the edge, and I was always mayor so I was like I'm the mayor, which is a really lame bragging right [laughs].

From Paul's point of view then, being the mayor of Varsity evidently signifies a deeper fleshly connection to his local bar, an environmental ranking not reached by his foursquare friends. Consequently, this particular achievement is playfully and socially used as a 'bragging right', which is itself an important element of play (Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). Adrian details a similar kind of 'banter' in the following extract, while discussing the competition that goes on between himself and Dennis for the mayorship of Woking station:

Interviewer: So back to the mayorships, what benefits do they bring?

Adrian: I know there are places where mayorships bring concrete real world benefits. I'm not sure if they still do, but certainly Dominoes used to give a free small pizza to whoever was mayor on a Wednesday, which is kind of cool, except I never go to Dominoes, because I'm too lazy to go to the shop. I don't think I have ever been mayor of somewhere that has brought me a real world benefit. It is just about the bragging rights really.

Interviewer: So would you and Dennis banter over the mayorship?

Adrian: Oh completely, yeah. I've been mayor of Woking station since he took a holiday or something. I have a feeling his commute pattern may have changed as he mentioned it wasn't going to be as easy for him to get it. It's the geek kudos really.

Significantly, and as one might imagine, *playeurs* are thus implicitly aware of the playful quality of being the mayor of this or that environment, which in turn resonates with the symbolic difference felt between these two intersecting mind-sets that inhabit one space; the bite and not-bite bitten (Bateson, 1972). In other words, it is precisely through this difference that the ludic side of foursquare is galvanised, and the banter produced, just as it is through the blurred separation between play and 'ordinary' life that the social interactions elicited are heightened and accentuated by way of separation. The magic circle is thus used to create a further bond between *playeurs*; a spatial and symbolic connection rooted in both digital and 'real' space, stemming from a sense of familiarity and its distinction. It is also significant that this kind of engagement

isn't only reserved for younger users, as it would seem older users are willing to engage in the more playful side of foursquare if it involves a more explicit social component, rather than simply moving through the city with a view to gaining more points and the like

Another way this 'extra-ordinary' situation of feeling 'apart together' (Huizinga, 1938/1992: 106) can be approached, is through the status associated with the accumulation of points and mayorships. As Adrian explains, there is no 'real' world benefit *per se* of being the mayor of Woking station; it doesn't come with any form of monetary gain. However, what it does signify is a certain eminence that differentiates him from other *playeurs*, as well as people outside of the game. Indeed, the acquisition of any given mayorships, as demonstrated above, underlines a sense of loyalty to a specific place, with a symptom of this being that said digital symbols are assimilated by *playeurs* as illuminating, in the words of Richard, that they are 'customer number one'. This awareness of being 'customer number one' carries with it a particular status, visually recognised by foursquare with the image of the mayor of any given environment being available for all users to see. Alongside this the mayor importantly has a golden crown next to his or her name, which further establishes their prestige. As Huizinga (1938/1992: 107) posits, '[the] "differentness" and secrecy of play are most vividly expressed in "dressing up." Here the "extra-ordinary" nature of play reaches perfection'. Concurringly, in this instance, my research demonstrates that some *playeurs* bond through a locational game of concealed familiarity, with the person who frequents a specific place the most having the authenticity of his or her connection visually acknowledged by a crown: itself a form of 'dressing up'. Again, and much like the banter and bragging that surrounds play, this becomes another means of signifying the 'extra-ordinary' quality of said relationship, both socially and spatially speaking, leading to a different approach to 'ordinary' life and its day-to-day activities for some users. This is demonstrated in the next extract, when Richard discusses his reasons, or perhaps rationalisations, for trying to go to Brewed Awakening more often:

Interviewer: Do you use foursquare to compete against your friends?

Richard: It was largely the mayorship for this place [laughs] and

that got personal to be honest. I don't think either of us was particularly serious about it, but there was this thing where both of us would want to check in because we wouldn't want to lose it. It is kinds of like if I have lunch somewhere else, so be it; if I decide not to come here one day, that's fine; I'm not going to start changing my dinning plans, but there is that whole, I went to Brewed Awakening and forgot to check in: damn! There was this one time when I was sent a message to say I was one day away from the mayorship, so I thought why wait until lunch, why not have breakfast here as well? I'm going to have to beat him at this one. So there was one morning where I actively decided to have breakfast at Brewed Awakening, so that has happened.

Interviewer: So when you say it became 'personal', what do you mean?

Richard: It's largely banter, but the comments one posts, yeah. Particularly the message foursquare sends you, like: 'No, Ben just stole the mayorship from you, from Brewed Awakening, you're not going to let that stand?!' So I took it from him and wrote, in your face Ben. It's just healthy banter, you know, because I will get out my phone, I will check in and so will Ben.

Correspondingly, Ben echoes a similar sentiment:

Interviewer: So are you the mayor of any venues?

Ben: I am mayor of somewhere. So I am mayor of Building 37, which is the building I work in, because I created the place and nobody else bothers checking-in there.

Interviewer: So do you check in every day?

Ben: No, because there isn't any need. I started off doing it, but then thought this is pointless. The other place is Café [inaudible], which is the café on the street near my house.

Interviewer: So a couple of places. So would you be upset if you lost these mayorships?

Ben: So there are a few places where it probably does bother me a little bit. So I want to get the mayorship back here [Brewed Awakening], just because I can't let it stand with Richard, but that's a personal thing.

In this respect, it would seem that the competition foursquare can produce, as well as the sociality that follows in the form of bragging, is important and effective for some *playeurs*. Following in an analogous vein, Dennis details how the competition between himself and his wife to be the mayor of their local gym has altered when he goes:

Interviewer: So regarding mayorships, you would be competing with people you don't know?

Dennis: Yeah, me and my wife have a bit of banter over the gym near where we live and things like that. She always tries to steal it from me, but I'm a bit more eager than she is. She sat there going: one day, one day, why am I always one day away? So she accuses me of cheating because she thinks I know insider tips.

Interviewer: Does foursquare make you go to the gym more?

Dennis: Not all the time, but, for example, I was out on a Wednesday, and my wife was out on a Thursday, and she stole it from me on the Wednesday, and I knew if I went Thursday I'd get it back, so I was like, I don't really feel like it because I was out on Wednesday, but I'm going to go anyway, just to get it back.

In this instance the playful-parochialization of foursquare evidently has an important social component to it, chiming with Humphreys's (2007, 2010) findings concerning Dodgeball, in that the familiarity engendered through mayorships, which signify a different kind of spatial relationship, can at the same time interact with the social associations that revolve around this or that environment, and are thus '*characterised by a sense of commonality among acquaintances and neighbors who are involved in interpersonal networks that are located within "communities"*' (Lofland, 1998: 10; italic in original). That is to say, through this kind of play, *playeurs* become aware of the other users

that also frequent this or that environment, and on a regular basis. That said the sociality of foursquare is itself more playful than Dodgeball, undergirded by banter and bragging, as opposed to arranging ‘real’ social interactions. Competition is thus produced in terms of who is the most ‘loyal’ patron and whose digital possession is most warranted. As a by-product of said rivalry, *playeurs* then go back to these places again and again, strategically modifying both the frequency and time said trips are undertaken, with a view to either keeping or regaining their mayorships, immersing themselves in their corporeal day-to-day activities, while simultaneously immersing themselves in LBSN-based play space. This point is itself made in the next extract, as Richard questions why he frequents Brewed Awakening as often as he does:

Richard: That’s me and the travel. That’s me and the railway stations that is. Railways, pubs, Indian restaurants. It’s my lifestyle. Checking-into pubs and restaurants appeals to me far more than checking-into the supermarket, because that is not tremendously useful; and I don’t think I would make such a big deal of checking-in here if it wasn’t for Ben and the mayorship. I would probably check in now and then but it probably wouldn’t feature too highly; I wouldn’t worry about. In fact, I would probably eat elsewhere if I wasn’t competing for the mayorship. It is hard to actually judge it, because I do frequently come here, and I think I would frequently come here, but I cannot be entirely sure whether it has coloured my perception at a lower level. I’m going here because I want to go here, but I haven’t really thought if at a lower level I want to come here because of foursquare.

Following this, another form of competition that can seemingly emerge between *playeurs* checking-in together, at the same time, is which one of them can be the first to digitally inscribe their location. This is a game that doesn’t only lead to more points, but can also serve to differentiate *playeurs* from those outside of foursquare. In the following extract Amy explains what often happens when she and her husband are in the same place at the same time:

Interviewer: So can you sum up how you feel the gaming aspect of foursquare affects (if it does) your day-to-day life?

Amy: It is a lot of fun when you get a badge. If you’re the first of your friends to check in somewhere as well, that’s quite

cool, because you get a little bonus that comes up and you get like five extra points, or something. I love that. Quite often when me and my husband are in the same place we'll both try and check in the fastest.

Sarah outlines a similar situation with her partner:

Interviewer: Are you the mayor of any venues? If so, how many?

Sarah: Let me just have a look. I think it's about twenty or something, but my fiancé keeps nicking them off me. I think that's his main reason for playing it. He just likes to oust me as mayor. That's him all over. I've got thirty.

Interviewer: Right lets finish up with the game aspect of foursquare. Do you use foursquare to compete against yourself, in terms of points, check-ins, badges and so on?

Sarah: No.

Interviewer: I thought you may say that.

Sarah: The only one is my fiancé, because he is fierce on the game side, so when I oust him it is so much more satisfying with him than it would be with anyone else, because that is his favourite bit. We have been known to tussle over it in the pub, because we check in at the same time - we must look bananas - so we load it up and then say, three, two, one, go and then hit check-in to make it fair. People must think we are bonkers. So he is fierce with it.

Interviewer: So this becomes a jovial point that you discuss?

Sarah: Oh yes, when one of us ousts the other the taunting can go on for hours.

Through play then, the social side of foursquare evidently elicits a different kind of engagement and spatial sentience; one stemming from the want of each *playeur* to be the first to check in at a specific location. Interestingly,

what is again apparent is an awareness of difference, only this time with the difference in question being more physically explicit, as the ritualistic performance of checking-in can potentially be witnessed by 'Others'. As Sarah notes, 'we must look bananas'; 'people must think we are bonkers. Certainly, and resonating with Huizinga's (1938/1992) suggestion of play precipitating a situation where people are paradoxically 'apart together', Sarah understands that the techno-somatic performance of both herself and her boyfriend could appear abnormal to those outside of foursquare. Indeed, it is apparent that this form of competition only occurred between those users in a relationship with another foursquare *playeur*. In turn, this symbolic transformation of place is then exploited, concerning its blurred separation, to emphasize the connection felt between partners; a relationship abstracted from more 'ordinary' approaches to space, while heightened through this secrecy. For some users then, foursquare not only stresses the familiarity felt between people and places, but also between people and *playeurs*, precisely through their locational familiarity, social separation and differentiation.

In sum then, the play of foursquare can encourage 'the formation of social groups', that 'promote the feeling of being "apart together" in an exceptional situation, of sharing something important, of mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms' (Ibid; p.106). This is demonstrated by my research as some *playeurs* not only symbolically 'Other' themselves from those outside the game, through the acquisition of points and mayorships, but also physically 'Other' themselves, through the performance of checking-in. Indeed, what this form of separation refulgently signifies then is the paradoxical character of play (Bateson, 1972), as it can both intermingle with, or alter, 'ordinary' life, as explored above, whereby an 'immersion in the play space [can become] an immersion in the physical space of daily activities' (de Souza e Silva & Hjorth, 2009: 606), just as it can simultaneously and symbolically separate itself from 'real' world environments, demonstrated by Sarah and her boyfriend's ritualistic check-ins. In turn this importantly confirms my initial position on magic circles, by way of foursquare, that they don't necessarily mean all spaces are immediately playful, but, significantly, they *can* be, contextually speaking, if the *playeurs* in question choose to engage with this symbolic and digital mind-set. Put differently, it is evident that *some* form of distinction between play and 'ordinary' life is needed, for the *play* of play to

function as it does, as to do away with this abstraction, on a theoretical plane, would be to do away with the dual symbolism that this *kind* of practice splits and synthesises and the active character of ‘lived space’ (Lefebvre, 1974/1991); a vacillation that produces figurative possibilities. At the same time, however, this doesn’t mean that play is secondary to ‘ordinary’ life; rather what it means is that ‘ordinary’ life can be experienced differently. Correlatively speaking, this affirms the need for an updated understanding of ‘magic circles’, one acknowledging that metaphors of containment can themselves *still* be useful, as long as there is a caveat in place that states either side of this blurred dialectic *can* trickle over and leave its mark, just as their separation *can* be accentuated. In short, the circle that surrounds play is duplicitous, and necessarily so.

5.4 Summary

In this chapter it was my intention to explore the explicitly playful side of foursquare, so as to build a better understanding of the physical, spatial and social impact of LBSNs; an exploration that has effectively problematized the magic circle, leading to a more mobile and spontaneous understanding of play. Accordingly the delineation between ‘ordinary’ life and play is no longer as rigid as it once was, as the softening of spaces stemming from the digital space now overlaying ‘real’ world environments enables users to symbolically rework quotidian structures, as demonstrated by my research. The spatial effect of foursquare was then examined in terms of how it led users to navigate and traverse different pathways through the city centre, rooted in a gamified desire for more points and the acquisition of mayorships. The ‘playeur’ was subsequently introduced as a more suitable term to understand this practice through; as a way of acknowledging the sense of play now overlaying ‘real’ world environments. To explore the spatial effect of foursquare on place, as well as the experience of place, the spatial relationships produced through mayorships were in turn examined, and approached by way of playful-parochialization, whereby *playeurs* developed different and perhaps deeper relationships with the spaces and places they most often frequented, through the playful symbolism realised by digital space, confirming that spaces are themselves constructed through physical and social engagement. Lastly, the social side of this form of pervasive play

was explored, significantly casting a light on the 'secrecy' and 'separation' felt by users who engaged in this kind of play; heightening their social bonds through the banter and bragging this kind of competition procured. In conclusion, and in line with my initial position on the magic circle, an understanding of play was developed that appreciates that while play is evidently able to alter 'ordinary' life, and vice versa, it is nonetheless still qualitatively distinct from 'ordinary' life - comparatively speaking - as it is precisely through this distinction that the talismanic quality of play is produced. In other words, play is interminably paradoxical. However, and to be clear, this doesn't mean that 'ordinary' life is any less constructed, but rather what is deemed 'ordinary' can be changed through play. Having examined the more playful side of foursquare then, what I will now address is the effect foursquare might presently be having on identity, and its relationship to space and place.

Chapter 6: Location-Based Identities

In the previous chapter I examined what impact the explicitly playful facets of foursquare - points, badges and mayorships - are having on users, in terms of how they then approach environment, as well as their relationship with other foursquare friends. Moving forwards, the aim of this chapter is to examine how foursquare impacts identity. The chapter begins by investigating what lifestyle foursquare seemingly revolves around, the social connections produced in the process, and how this reflexively feeds back into understandings of the self and vice versa. This opening question is designed to help cast a light on the users I spoke to, which may then feed into subsequent questions revolving around foursquare and identity. Following this, the chapter examines how check-ins impact ongoing narratives of the self. What I am interested in here is whether this kind of interaction with space and place alters the places users either choose to share or indeed go, and if so, what this suggests about the relationship between location and identity foursquare enables. Lastly the chapter explores how foursquare is employed by some users as a means of discovering various spatial experiences that seemingly stem from authentic sources owing to their user-generated status, and how this in turn affects their sense of self and so on.

6.1 New Mobile Technologies & Lifestyle

To briefly reiterate, Giddens (1991) suggests identity in post-traditional societies is no longer something that is simply given or handed down, but is instead reflexively constructed by the individual. A person's identity can thus be found in their '*capacity to keep a particular narrative going*' (Giddens, 1991: 54; italics in original). This can be achieved through the construction of a biography that explains the 'self' in a way that makes sense to the individual. For Giddens, one way identity is created in post-traditional societies is through lifestyle. As Gauntlett (2008: 111) explains, '[lifestyle] is not only about fancy jobs and conspicuous consumption though; the term applies to wider choices, behaviours and (to greater or lesser degrees) attitudes and beliefs'. It is

evident from my research that for some foursquare users, their connection to this LBSN is understood as being representative of a certain lifestyle revolving around new technologies; a lifestyle which accordingly enables them to continue a particular identity and so on. This point is made by Adrian in the following extract, as he explains how both he and his wife became involved with foursquare:

Adrian: We're both very much internet people. I've got Tweet Deck running on my phone; I've got Tweet Deck running on my laptop in the office; it is also running on my laptop at home. When I go for a cigarette I am probably reading foursquare or Twitter.

For Adrian then, he and his wife are 'internet people'. In other words, they can be defined, at least partially, by their engagement with new technologies, and thus the lifestyle that this connects to. Nigel makes a similar point in the following extract:

Nigel: I think I just read about it somewhere, and thought that sounds like something I'd be interested in. I'm into all of this kind of stuff anyway; new gadgets, technologies and apps; I'm all over it anyway, so I'll hear about something and think that sounds cool, let's try it out.

Here Nigel's interest in foursquare is similarly tethered to a broader interest in 'new gadgets, technologies and apps', as well as a desire to try said technologies out; a penchant many users I spoke with shared. Correspondingly, Paul mentions this interest while explaining why he began using foursquare:

Paul: Okay, so at university I studied television production, I now work with Apple, the retail store, and I've always been very 'techie' and into your kind of social media and sort of web technologies in a way. I dabbled in web design myself. So yeah, it's always been something that has attracted me really.

By describing himself in this fashion, as a 'techie', Paul highlights that his use of foursquare effectively folds into an ongoing 'story' of the self, one that

involves the use of new technologies. Ryan's verbalises a comparable narrative of the self in the following extract:

Ryan: Well I originally used Gowalla, and I used that up until it closed down, and then missed it and moved to foursquare. I guess I've been interested in it before phones had GPSs. So while I was at Southampton I was quite interested in the idea of checking-in or some kind of location-based game. I tried very hard with a friend at Southampton to make something like that. It was in the days of smartphones running Java and things like that - before Android - and trying to get it to talk to a Bluetooth GPS, and all kinds of crazy things like that. So I was quite excited when the technology caught up. So yeah, initially I was playing Gowalla, and then moved onto foursquare.

Interviewer: Do you see foursquare or the use of foursquare, as forming a part of your identity?

Ryan: Yeah, I think so.

Interviewer: In what respect?

Ryan: I guess it does kind of highlight my interests. I'm interested in maps and location and things. I'm interested in technology and gadgets and things.

It is significant that Nigel, an IT Support Team Manager, Paul, and Apple Store Genius, and Ryan, a Technical Architect for the BBC, all have occupations that revolve around technology, and that they reference these connections when discussing their link to foursquare. This casts a light on why they might share this particular interest and how they got into it in the first place, as well as the way in which lifestyle connects to work, as Giddens (1991: 81-82) suggests, '[it] would be wrong to suppose that lifestyle only relates to activities outside of work', as work of course influences lifestyle choices, which in turn impacts the issue of identity, and so on. This is also the case with John, whose job in the IT industry meant he grew up with new technologies, and thus this lifestyle, which in his mind, goes some way to explaining his use of foursquare:

John: Well, probably the most pertinent fact would be that I worked for IBM for thirty-seven years, and working in the IT industry, with computers as an emerging industry, I started work obviously before there were any PCs or mobile phones, or anything like that, so I sort of grew up with that technology and really developed an interest in the new technologies as they emerged. I tended to work with younger people. I was probably old enough to be their dad. In later life I worked in IT support, and the people I worked with were very young, and I think that influenced me a great deal because they were always very keen on new technologies, and I tended to go along with them. When the new mobile phones came out I was quite interested in them. I didn't get one for a very long because, sorry, I mean I haven't had one for very long, because I just never got around to getting one. But then I was bought one for my birthday and I've been using it for well over a year and a half, and yeah, I'm interested in all technologies really: computers, cameras, mobile phones; anything of that ilk.

For Doug too, it is his role as a Senior Teaching Fellow in Digital Media, as well as the *kind* of connections and commitments this entails that eventually led to him signing up to foursquare:

Doug: Well it is because I got into Gowalla basically. Gowalla has now shut down. I found Gowalla through the South by Southwest announcement and I just thought that sounds interesting. I tend to sign up to every social network going, because of my job. Gowalla sounded a little more interesting because I quite like the idea of reality and the social network coming together. So unlike Twitter where it doesn't really have any impact, this was focused on merging these two aspects, which I thought was quite interesting. Some of it is off of the back of this old Carnegie Mellon talk by this guy, I can't remember his name, about gamifying a lot of general process, like going on a bus and getting points etcetera, he goes in to this whole thing, a lot of it is about Facebook, and I was kind of interested in this just generally, so it was just a service that I thought sounded interesting, so I joined Gowalla, which was pretty cool. Obviously foursquare was coming along at the same time. I just didn't think foursquare was as good.

It is apparent then, for certain users it is precisely their desire to stay up-to-date with various new media developments, to stay immersed in this lifestyle, stemming from their professions, that consequently sees them engaging with foursquare, as opposed to their age. Indeed users here range from 19 to 65. As Mark, a Computer Science student, puts it, 'I like to be in touch with different social media things that are going on, and I saw that [foursquare] and thought I'd give it a try'. Likewise, it was Amy's job as a web designer that led to her discovering foursquare:

Interviewer: So where did you initially hear about foursquare?

Amy: It was online. Obviously I read a lot of blogs about things like social media and things like that. I think it was around the time of South by Southwest, and obviously they have big pushes at South by Southwest.

In a similar, but perhaps more explicit, vein, Dennis also understands his job as being connected to his employment of foursquare. This point is made while detailing why he wanted to become a Super User:

Interviewer: So what was it that made you want to move from a normal user to a Super User? In your current job you obviously deal with data. Was it that you wanted to iron out any data issues?

Dennis: Yeah, it was more to sort my world out, and not everyone else's at the time. There were just a few places I went that were incorrect and I had no idea how to fix them, and thought that they might be like Facebook, as in when they're done, you can't change them.

Interviewer: Okay, so does this *now* tie in with how you view yourself and how you *now* use foursquare?

Dennis: Yeah, now it does, definitely.

Interviewer: How?

Dennis: Well, I think I've touched on it really. Data is my job. It's my job to make sure the data people are using is correct.

Because I can, I feel that want and need to fix it for other people. You're never going to fix the world, but you can fix the areas you live in and make it better for the people around you, like my friends and people like that.

In short, each user understands their individual 'story' as being connected, in some way or another, and of course to varying degrees, to a way of life rooted in new technologies, with lifestyle being important in terms of identity and its construction. This is established by the fact that said information arose after users were asked to tell me something about themselves, with this being one of the first things they decided to divulge. For the users detailed above, an interest in technology, gadgets and applications then, is not a new thing, nor is it at odds with surrounding interests; rather their association with this kind of lifestyle is part of an unfolding story, one rooted in both work and leisure. Just as Paul sees himself as always being a 'techie', John worked in the IT industry, and as a symptom of such an environment, developed an interest in this field, and so on. '[Such] practices' not only 'fulfil utilitarian needs', as users evidently employ foursquare to playfully explore space and place, as demonstrated throughout, but also 'give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity' (Giddens, 1991: 81). From my research I would thus suggest that such users don't simply employ foursquare because they like it per se, although this is of course part of it, but at the same time *like* it because of how it feeds into their ongoing narratives, with the ongoing part of this equation being significant. Let me explore this further.

Continuity is important when it comes to identity, as it is precisely through this that the past is explained 'and ... orientated towards an anticipated future' (Gauntlett, 2008: 108). In terms of the extracts detailed above, an 'anticipated' future can significantly be recognised, as users clearly comprehend their connection to foursquare as being a natural progression regarding their individual biographies. This point is made by Mark in the following extract:

Mark: Yeah I think so. All my friends know I like to be in touch with up-and-coming things like that, and foursquare is a very up-and-coming thing. I've thought so for the past two and a half years. So far so good. I think if I didn't know about foursquare I don't think that would be right, because foursquare has been a big thing, and it's been up-and-

coming for a while, and I think it is something people will think: he'll know about foursquare.

In a similar vein, John's use of foursquare also stems from the expectations he feels his friends have of him as the 'person with a smartphone', which then becomes reflexively intertwined with his own sense of self, as well a feature that effectively marks him out from his retired peers:

John: Yes, it probably does, yes, I mean, when we're out and about, you know, and I'm using my phone and I'm using it in a social media situation that to my friends is a pain; when they say to me we need a restaurant, can you go on your mobile phone and find a local restaurant, or we need petrol where is the nearest garage, then suddenly the smartphone becomes a useful tool, so that is my sort of my identity: the person with the smartphone.

In either case, both Mark and John demonstrate a reflexive awareness of their biographies. At the same time this manifests itself in the form of external expectations. 'To be a 'person' is not just to be a reflexive actor, but to have a concept of a person (as applied both to the self and others)' (Giddens, 1991: 53). For Mark this means that he feels it would be 'wrong' if he didn't use foursquare, as he understands himself as being 'known' for an association with up-and-coming technologies. In turn my research demonstrates that foursquare provides such users with another means of extending, or perhaps affirming, themselves, precisely through these expectations. Similarly, John posits that his friends in part identify him through his smartphone, which likewise becomes a significant facet of his story, especially given the unusualness felt by his peers regarding both having a smartphone and understanding how to use it. As Giddens (1991: 54) suggests, '[the] individual's biography, if she is to maintain regular interaction with others in the day-to-day world, cannot be wholly fictive. It must continually integrate events which occur in the external world, and sort them into the ongoing 'story' about the self'. Certainly, for both Mark and John then, the expectations they experience vis-à-vis their friends are explicitly integrated into their ongoing stories, which then allows them to further reinforce their respective selves and the like.

Alongside the perpetuation of this or that narrative, my research also illustrates that foursquare can provide users with the opportunity to connect with communities of people who share their way of life, stemming from this lifestyle, which in turn impacts their identities on a social plane. This is particular true of foursquare Super Users, who outwardly spend more time engaging with other Super Users, many of whom they haven't met before, through online forums, as well as other various social media networks. As Dennis explains:

Dennis: I've met some really interesting people online. I wouldn't say they'd all be my best friends or my drinking buddies, but they're good to have a chat to when you're bored late at night and there is nothing on television, or you can't be bother to read that night; there's always someone on Twitter or someone in the forum that you can have some banter and a laugh and a joke with. There's just a small group of us and we get on really well.

For Sarah, foursquare has significantly allowed her to 'socialise' with a 'circle of people' that understand and appreciate her obsession with this particular LBSN. This point is made in the following extract, as she explains how foursquare has affected her day-to-day life:

Sarah: Oh, immensely, as I say, it's the UK super users; there's a chap called Chris Thompson and he runs the About Foursquare blog, I get on really well with him, so speak to him a lot, but yeah, I've definitely made some friends that I would meet up with in real-life if I was well enough. It's just nice. There are a lot of my friends online that sort of don't understand it, don't get, not particularly interested in it, so it is nice to have that little circle of people that I can literally rabbit about foursquare with, all day. I am bonkers about foursquare. I don't know why I've got the enthusiasm that I have? I just appreciate it so much, as it has changed my life; it has got me out the house so much more than what I used to. So I've just got this big appreciation for it.

Interestingly, the 'circle' of friends Sarah mentions is geographically dispersed, which is a situation that many Super Users seemingly experience. Mark touches on this point, when asked if he'd met any Super Users face to face:

Mark: Well, no, because a lot of them are based all over England. There's not really many near me. The closet would be Dennis, because he lives in Woking. So we've crossed paths many times. I've had a few close misses with him. I was there to see Derren Brown and he was checked-in at a pub nearby and I didn't notice, I wasn't paying attention you see, and he was like, I could have seen you then, and I was like, poor me.

However, this isn't to suggest that foursquare can't or doesn't lead to physical encounters, as Dennis explains:

Dennis: I have in the sense of, like this guy Ian, I had no idea who he was, then I got a message saying he'd stolen my mayorship, and then I saw his Twitter, and tweeted him to say, give that back, and then you just get chatting, and it has got to the point where we've gone for one drink. I wouldn't say we were going to be best friends.

For some users then, by associating with this particular lifestyle, foursquare not only confirms their identity through the perpetuation of this or that story, at the same time they provide new social opportunities, which similarly feed back into their ongoing narratives and vice versa. In short, my research illustrates that foursquare can provide certain users with another way of reflexively mediating their identity, while also allowing them to forge new social connections along the way. This is itself significant, as '[while] television, telephone, and internet research have shown the importance of media to build new social connections ... there has been relatively little research exploring how mobile technology may also serve this function' (Humphreys, 2008: 115). Accordingly my research adds to this field. Let me now move on to examine in more detail how foursquare and its connection to questions of identity might presently be affecting the spaces and places some users subsequently choose to either share or frequent, as well as their reasoning behind such decisions.

6.2 Location-Based 'Technologies of the Self'

As I have demonstrated, foursquare can affect how users physically, spatially and socially relate to their location. This is itself symptomatic of 'real' world environments being playfully overlaid with digital space, which in turn allows

users to subsequently engage with singular spaces in multiple ways. A corollary to this shift is that users of foursquare are now interminably mindful that simply by checking-in at this or that venue, their location has the potential to be shared with a defined but dislocated group of friends. In short, users no longer have to be physically present with friends, for their friends to know where they are, or what they are contemporaneously doing, nor do they have to address specific individuals. The sharing of location in this fashion has consequences for identity. 'It positions the user within a network: not just as a member of an online community, but in relation to the network more generally' (de Souza e Silva & Gordon, 2011: 12). At the same time, it isn't simply the sharing of locational information *per se* that is effective apropos identity, but also the constructed meanings attached to any given space, as the self is accordingly forged through the places it inhabits, just as space is itself constructed through social engagements (Soja, 1996; de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1974/1990). Indeed, what my research demonstrates is that for some users the practice of checking-in and sharing their location through foursquare in turn affects their identity in various ways. For Robbie, the association between his identity and his check-ins is made explicitly clear in the following extract:

Robbie: I think it is. You choose what places you want to check in, what places you don't want to check in, and this is like a creation of yourself; your identity.

Indeed, for Robbie, letting his friends know that he is at this or that place, is understood as being a way of expressing himself in terms of his identity. In a similar vein, Doug also understands the inscription of locational information as being self-expressive:

Doug: Yeah, because if you are going to a gig or whatever, you want to show off that you like that band, or you went to that gallery.

What is of importance here, isn't simply that Robbie and Doug are sharing locational information with friends *per se*, although this is of course part of it, and does produce its own spatial and social effects; what is important is the places they choose to share, as this information is evidently expressive of who

they reflexively understand themselves as being (Giddens, 1991). For Robbie, check-ins are ‘like a creation of yourself; your identity’, they are a way of continuing his ‘story’. Significantly then, and while confirming the constructed nature of the self, whereas other social networking sites ‘provide opportunities to create an identity vis-à-vis others through digital objects like photos, videos, and self-descriptions’ (Belk & Ruvio, 2013: 87), foursquare evidently enables identity to be forged through the sharing of locational information. More specifically, foursquare enables identity to be forged through the connotations associated with this or that place. An important element of this process is therefore an awareness that said check-ins have the potential to be *seen* by others. This point is made by Jane in the following extract, as she explains the extent to which the likes of foursquare form part of her identity:

Jane: So here is an interesting one between the policy and the practice. My main motivation was keep a map, tracking where I had been in 2012, you know, I went to these countries, and in England I went to these cities, and stuff like that, but then I found myself checking-into places that I was going to pretty much a couple of times each week and stuff like that. I was in Newcastle, so I checked-in to a lot of places in Newcastle, repeatedly. So, sometimes my work place, not every day. I’d quite often check into going to the swimming pool, probably because it is good to be seen going swimming. People will check in to the gym but won’t check in to McDonalds.

A corollary to Jane’s proposition then, that ‘it is good to be seen going swimming’, is the expectation, or at least the possibility, of being seen, with her locational choices subsequently being understood as suggesting something about her identity and the lifestyle it connects to; in this instance a lifestyle revolving around health and fitness. This position is further cemented by her next observation that people will check in to the gym but won’t check in to McDonalds. This, again, underlines the reflexive use of location qua identity. Accordingly, my research illuminates that just as location increasingly, ‘provides the context from which information is interpreted and used’ (de Souza e Silva & Gordon, 2011: 12), so too does the sharing of location become a means of interpreting this or that person, as well as a viable way for this or that person to importantly construct the *kind* of person they understand themselves to be.

This practice consequently contrasts with the municipal meanderings of Baudelaire's (1972/1981: 399) *flâneur*, whose 'passion and ... profession [was] to merge with the crowd' and in so doing, lose himself. Contra this, users of foursquare employ this LBSN to effectively stand out from the crowd, digitally speaking, ceaselessly allowing themselves to be spatially identified and thus separated from the pack. Following this, foursquare can be understood as providing a digital platform of observation; a position from which users can readily be found, even if the onlookers are themselves far removed from the locations inscribed. My research therefore illustrates that for some foursquare users, the places that they frequent, and subsequently share, reciprocally and experientially take on an additional layer of meaning, one rooted in identity - or perhaps this 'layer' is itself heightened - as users are evidently cognisant of the nexus between person, place and the dislocated audience, stemming from said paradigmatic shift, as highlighted above. In other words, a different kind of experiential interaction with space and place is at work here, one rooted in the employment of Foursquare and the different spaces it engages. The ensuing extract with Ben further expands on this point:

Interviewer: Does foursquare allow you to be self-expressive?

Ben: Expressive enough.

Interviewer: In what respect?

Ben: I can post what I like when I do the check-in and I can post the check-in as well, so that works fairly well.

Interviewer: There are people that like to check in at the kind of places they like to be associated with.

Ben: That's what I do to be fair.

Interviewer: So what are the places that you check in to during the week? What are your key places?

Ben: It'll mostly be cafes and pubs that I like, maybe cinema as well, but then interestingly I probably wouldn't check in at

the Odeon.

Interviewer: Why not?

Ben: Because I don't like the Odeon. If I end up being there I wouldn't want other people to know I was at the Odeon.

Interviewer: Can you expand on that?

Ben: Another one might be Starbucks. I actually got berated by my sister for this as well, because I've always been quite vocal in my opposition to Starbucks. I hate the fact that it is so omnipresent. So I made the mistake of checking-in at Starbucks. I just ended up going there because a friend wanted to go there and then got berated by my sister because of it.

What is of interest here then, is that Ben 'probably wouldn't check in at the Odeon', even if he was there, because he 'wouldn't want other people to know' he was 'at the Odeon', just as he wouldn't want to be 'seen' at Starbucks. Much like Jane, Robbie and Doug, he recognises that foursquare locationally connects to identity, which in turn leads to him engaging with space and place perhaps differently than he would outside of foursquare. This is because he is evidently wary of checking-in at certain places stemming from what they may signify about him; what they might say about his identity. Such a position is demonstrated by his check-in at Starbucks, which he pointedly refers to as a 'mistake'; a vantage-point confirmed by the sequential berating he receives from his sister. This highlights that the locational expectations of others are exacerbated by way of Foursquare and its engagement with space and place. By engaging with space and place in this fashion, as a tool for presenting a certain identity, my research demonstrates that foursquare not only has the potential to affect the places users *choose* to digitally inscribe, as established by Ben above, feeding into ongoing narrative of the self, at the same time they importantly have the potential to affect the places users choose to somatically frequent. As Siapera (2012: 173) notes, 'the materials we use' to construct our identities, 'as well as circumstances under which this construction takes place, acquire an increased significance'.

Moving forwards then, I would suggest the effective role of foursquare vis-à-vis identity can be approached through one of Foucault's later works, 'technologies of the self' (1988). To reiterate, Foucault argues 'that identity, especially subjectivity, that is, the ways in which we become unique individuals and selves, is constructed through certain techniques, or practices' (Siapera, 2012: 172-173); through, 'the multiplicity of ways in which individuals constitute their identities in a creative and constructive fashion' (Elliot, 2013: 110). As Foucault (1988: 18) suggests:

technologies of the self ... permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality.

In its turn, my research shows that the likes of foursquare can accordingly be comprehended as location-based 'technologies of the self', as it is precisely through the sharing of locational information that identities are contemporaneously constructed, continued and altered, as demonstrated above. The mode of construction is thus of the utmost importance, as it is effectively intertwined with the identities fashioned. This is established by the fact some users subsequently *felt* compelled to go to this or that place, as a result of seeing the locational movements of others. Drew demonstrates this point in the ensuing extract:

Drew: I'm just thinking of this one person I'm friends with on foursquare; he's friends with Katie and added me on Facebook, then added me on foursquare. I know he probably looks at my account, and whenever I look at the news feed I see that he's been to the gym, and it makes me think, if he's going to the gym, I should probably go to the gym. So there are certain examples where yeah it would influence me and I would look at other people and see what they are doing, but only if I was to check in to a place. I'm never on foursquare unless I'm checking-into a place. I never sit at home and browse through the newsfeed.

Certainly, by sharing his location with friends, while being privy to their location, Drew evidently feels that he should also go to the gym, that he should

be the kind of person who engages with this pastime, much like his partner's friend. This importantly illuminates the effective character of foursquare as a location-based 'technology of the self', as by becoming more aware of the movements of certain friends, Drew consequently becomes aware of what these movements might mean, and importantly what they might mean in terms of his identity. In the following extract, Paul builds upon this point:

Paul: Yeah. I had a friend who would always check-in at the gym, while I wasn't going, and it would make me feel a bit rubbish, you know, he's at the gym again, I can't believe it, he's working out a lot! So I've taken that experience and now I'm checking-in, so I feel better.

Interviewer: Did it make you feel differently about the gym, in terms of the environment?

Paul: I guess for some reason checking-in on it made it feel a bit more like I'd actually been, because people knew I'd been, rather than just going on my own. You know, people could go four or five times a week, not check in, and you'd never know. For some reason, if I check in and everyone sees he's at the gym again, it feels a bit more like I've done something.

Interviewer: So you're very aware of being observed?

Paul: Yeah. You'll get the odd like, or something.

For both Drew and Paul then, foursquare doesn't simply present this or that identity, stemming from the symbolism attached to any given place, although this is of course part of it, contemporaneously it has the potential to modify the locations frequented, which in turn has the potential to importantly modify their identities and so on. Interestingly here both Drew and Paul are in their mid-20s, and thus might presently be more concerned about how they look and so on. Foursquare works here to both exacerbate and appease this anxiety. In a McLuhanite vein then, the medium is interminably entangled in the message. Furthermore, as a by-product of this technique, Paul details a desire for his 'gym' check-ins to be witnessed by others, in order for him to feel like he's 'actually been'. This again provides another thought-provoking

vantage-point on the effective character of any given 'technology of self', as by employing foursquare in this fashion, as a digital platform of potential observation, Paul not only adapts his spatial movements, but also yearns for a certain degree of affirmation through surveillance, or the possibility thereof. This want, isn't so much to be seen *per se*, but rather Paul's desire for his locational movements to be affirmed, and in so doing, his identity asserted. In a similar vein, as well as an extract used in the previous chapter, Sarah finds that she is comparably motivated to leave her house precisely because she can 'easily' share this information with 'friends and family', which is important for her sense of self:

Sarah: Before foursquare, I'm registered disabled, with the M.E. and I'm mainly housebound; I'm more housebound than I'm not. My M.E. sort of fluctuates up and down. I liked the look of foursquare, and started using it as a sort of incentive to get out; like a pedometer makes you want to walk more steps, using foursquare made me want to break my boundaries a bit; try and go out a bit more than what I did. That's sort of my main reason for using it at the beginning.

Interviewer: That's really interesting! So foursquare was a motivational tool then?

Sarah: Absolutely, yeah, 100%. Like I say, when you've got a pedometer on you, you want to walk more steps, you know, you find yourself doing it unconsciously because you like seeing the numbers go up. So foursquare was just an incentive to get out and get mayorships, and to tell friends and family that I'm out, rather than having to ring them and say I'm at such and such a place today, they can instantly see, when I published my check-ins, where I was and that I was getting out.

Interviewer: So when you first saw your friend using this on Facebook, did you think this is something I can use to motivate me to get out more?

Sarah: Yes, definitely. It was just such an easy way of publishing my check-ins to friends and family, as they were checking up on me. It was just a really simply way of saying I'm out and I could take pictures as well. It kept them happy

because they were concerned I wasn't getting out, you know, cabin fever and just wasting away in the house. It's really brightened them up to see that I'm getting out and about. It has benefited more than just me as well.

Aside from the allure of the more playful side of foursquare then, wrapped up in points, badges and mayorships, a significant part of this LBSN for Sarah is evidently the provision of an 'easy way of publishing' her check-ins, which then lets her 'friends and family' know that she isn't just 'wasting away in the house'. Both of these motivations are woven into her use of foursquare. Furthermore, and meaningfully, Sarah also understands foursquare as being effective in terms of her identity, as newthe following extract attests:

Sarah: Yeah it is a big part of my identity, which is why I particularly wanted something about it at the wedding, because foursquare is me, it's such a big part of my life, it's made such a big impact on my life, I felt that if I had something foursquare involved, it would be more personal.

Interviewer: When you say foursquare is you, what do you mean by that?

Sarah: I just spend so much time with it. If I'm not checking-in on it and doing stuff at home. I've got every single t-shirts they've made, I've got three hoodies, I've got stickers all over my car, I've got a little case filled with pin badges, and then when I see people checking-in, and if I can find them, I go over and give them some foursquare badges and stickers and stuff.

Indeed, by identifying herself with foursquare in this fashion, through her movements, Sarah is effectively able to distance herself from the illness that prevents her from engaging with the 'real' world, and from being the kind of person she wants to be; in other words, foursquare effectively enables her to distance herself from this identity. Accordingly, it isn't simply the observation of her spatial meanderings vis-à-vis others that is important *per se*, at the same time it is equally the objectification of herself, as detailed through her check-ins, that is noteworthy, as by observing herself in this manner, the reality of

her identity, much like the reality of Paul's gym sessions, is similarly strengthened, and thus feels more 'real'. Symptomatic of this process Sarah then becomes closer to the self presented by foursquare, which conversely means she is further away from the self she sees as tethered to her illness. This is demonstrated in the next extract when she explains how foursquare allows her to be self-expressive:

Sarah: I think so, because it gives me something to talk about that isn't my M.E. Sometimes I just get bored of saying, I didn't go out yesterday and I didn't go out the day before, you know, I was stuck in bed the day before that. It is just something different to talk about. I'll tell my friends what badges I unlocked, or something like that. Some of them aren't remotely interested. If I could talk about it all day I know I would.

What my research establishes then is that the sharing of locational information in these examples, is pointedly different from other mobile social networks, such as Dodgeball, as said information isn't necessarily shared to elicit an actual encounter *per se* (Humphreys, 2007, 2010), but rather to continue an identity project, through the perpetuation of this or that ongoing biography; a 'story' that is locationally extended with every check-in. Following in this vein, as a location-based 'technology of the self', foursquare can evidently lead certain users to engaging with the spaces and places they frequent differently than they would outside of this practice, as a result of a heightened cognisance of the nexus between place and identity. For some users, such as Paul and Sarah, this means modifying their spatial movements, to project the 'self' they wish to identify with, to become that person if you will, while observing themselves being observed. This is a process that then allows their presented selves to feel more legitimate in their representation. Following on from this, Let me now examine how foursquare may also be employed by some users to discover spatial experiences that seemingly stem from authentic sources owing to their user-generated status, as well as what this might mean to their identity projects.

6.3 Authenticity & Feeling Local

As my research has established, foursquare can make users feel differently about the environments they frequent. This difference stems from the potential for dislocated observation it allows, as well as the multiple meanings subsequently attached to this or that place. Take the ‘mobile massively multiplayer location-based Role-Playing Game (RPG)’ (Joffe, 2007) Mogi, for instance. This involved users navigating ‘an actual geographical city - in this case, Tokyo - at the same time as they navigate the game space’ (Richardson & Wilken 2009: 30). Players thus experienced the city differently, as a result of this interaction. It changed ‘going on an errand into a piece of game’ (Hall, 2004), with ‘[the] players of Mogi and other LBGs [(location-based games)] ... quite often [altering] their trajectories through the city, dynamically reworking the spatial order and ‘ensemble of possibilities’” (Richardson, 2007: 213). In terms of foursquare then, and as outlined above, locational information isn’t always shared with a view to either continuing a game, or to produce ‘real’ social encounters, but is also undertaken with other perhaps less playful ends in mind, such as the continuation of a certain identity through its concomitant lifestyle and spatial movements, or as a tool for discovering new places to experience. For Robbie, foursquare importantly gives him an insight into ‘exciting places’ he should go, as he explains:

Interviewer: So does it give you more knowledge of your environment?

Robbie: Yeah.

Interviewer: And that makes it easier?

Robbie: It is not like it has helped me to navigate around the cities; it has just given me an insight into exciting places I should go.

Terry details a similar experience, while illuminating how foursquare has changed the way he approaches going out:

Terry: Yeah definitely, as corny as this may sound when me and Lucy are thinking where we shall go for lunch or dinner, I don’t have that problem anymore; I’m guided by foursquare.

You can look at what is around you and go here, here and here, and I think that's great. I don't have that thing where you end up going to the same place over and over again. If you do it, it is because you get value for money, not because you are just bored.

This kind of use is similarly demonstrated by Henry in the following extract, as he explains how his attitude to foursquare has gradually changed:

Henry: I don't use foursquare with the intention of letting people know where I am right now, so they can find me, nor do I use it to see where people are. That's not the reason why I use it. I like to use it when I check in so I can learn about new places to go for dinner, and stuff like that, but not to stalk people.

Indeed, Henry's use of foursquare mainly revolves around a desire to explore London, owing to his recent move to London. That is to say, foursquare has helped him orientate himself towards an otherwise unfamiliar environment. Mark makes a similar point while discussing his use of foursquare during a physics trip to Geneva. Again, it should be noted here that Mark's reflexive awareness of his own identity, as well as the expectations this outwardly brings in its wake is evident in his exclamation that 'this is a job for me then':

Mark: I haven't really used the 'explore' feature that much. That's because I haven't really been to many busy cities, where I've had a lot of WI-FI. Like London, I've been coming to London for years, so I know my way around. When I was in New York, it wasn't really easy to use the explore feature, because I didn't have WI-FI where I was. I have used it though! Actually, I had a physics trip to Geneva to see LHC, and we were there and everyone was like I don't know where we should go to night and I was like, this is a job for me then, and found a really good *crêperie* nearby, and we went there, and everyone had about five *crêpe* because they were so good. So that was good!

Interviewer: So had you been to this *crêperie* before?

Mark: No, I just looked it up on foursquare.

For Drew, foursquare allow him to gain more information on areas he doesn't know that well:

Drew: Yeah, so when I was around the Strand I know the normal places like Covent Garden; you can get food in Covent Garden, and you can get food in the Strand, but I didn't know any of the side streets, so that when I used it.

Following this, foursquare allows Henry to observe the kind of places certain friends frequent, with a view to then making use of this information at a later date.

Henry: I think it's a really good tool to explore the city that you are in with your friends. For example, my friend Shana, like my friend Tracey, is a foodie, so when she checks-in at a restaurant I want to pay attention to it, because I know she likes to eat food, and if it sounds good then it will make it to the list. I have a list of places I want to go to.

By observing his friends in this manner, friends that he has identified as having an interest in food, Henry is then able to make a list of the interesting places he wants to experience, which are then ticked off according to check-ins, places he perhaps otherwise wouldn't have known about:

Henry: For example, my friend, she checked-in at this fish market in Docklands at like 7.30am in the morning, so then I was like, what is this place you've checked-in to, and now I know it's one of the biggest fish markets in London that opens from 5am every Saturday, and I want to go there. I would never have known about this place if it wasn't for her check-in.

Ben similarly uses foursquare to help him find noteworthy places:

Ben: I found in Brighton there's a café in the Lanes called the Naked Tea and Coffee Company, and I think I found that through foursquare, and it was saying that it is really cool and that you can sit on the floors, and I thought that sounds cool and so went there. It's got this room with like Japanese

style seating, where you can sit on cushions. It's actually quite surprising because all the places in the South Lanes are really tiny, but this is actually quite a big building. It's got this little entrance, and then it just spans out and spans out.

In this instance it is interesting that Brighton isn't in actual fact unfamiliar to Ben, as he explains, 'I use it for London; I use it for Brighton. I am familiar with both. It is quite useful for finding new places and places that you know, if that makes sense?' What my research shows then is that foursquare can function as a way of introducing users to places that they hadn't previously experienced, within both familiar and unfamiliar environments, just as Mogi saw users employing different routes through the city and Dodgeball led to impromptu social arrangements. However, at the same time I would suggest there is more to this process; more than simply introducing users to places they haven't previously experienced, as this could easily be achieved without the likes of foursquare. Indeed, embedded within these examples is the implicit suggestion that foursquare enables users to discover places that they perhaps wouldn't have found, were it not for foursquare. Put differently, foursquare lets some users physically and social experience a different city, stemming from this mode of exploration. This is a point made by Henry above when he notes, 'I would never have known about this place if it wasn't for her check-in', and subsequently fleshed out by David in the following extract:

Interviewer: Do you use foursquare to explore your surroundings?

David: Yes I do.

Interviewer: Any examples?

David: When I was in New York, I was following a couple of people and I just created a list of places I should check in to. So I guess that would be considered exploring.

Interviewer: Were there any specific places that stand out, places that you have got from foursquare?

David: In London there was a completely hidden, random dim sum restaurant that I found. It was down a small street in

China Town that you wouldn't know about because the back entrance is where the restaurant is, and there's just a small door, and there it is.

Interviewer: So do you think that foursquare gives you an added insight into places that you otherwise wouldn't know about?

David: Oh yeah it does, definitely.

What is seemingly important to David in this example, is that foursquare led to him going to a 'random dim sum restaurant' that he probably wouldn't have experienced, were it not for this LBSN, as it was ostensibly 'hidden' from him. Following in this vein, Amy also details a time that foursquare led to her finding an 'amazing tapas' restaurant that she otherwise wouldn't have gone to, or may have perhaps avoided:

Interviewer: So if you were, say, looking for somewhere to eat, you'd use foursquare?

Amy: Yeah.

Interviewer: Does it usually come up trumps?

Amy: During the Olympics I was over in South London, I tend not to go south of the river very often, I hate to say it, and literally opened the 'explore' feature and just started searching for restaurants, within a mile, and found the most amazing tapas restaurant I have been to in my life, just based on the fact so many people had recommended it.

Interviewer: What was it called?

Amy: José in Bermondsey. I tweeted about that and @Dens tweeted me back and said that this is why he invented it.

Interviewer: So does José look nice from the outside? Is it the kind of place you would have gone to?

Amy: No. I probably wouldn't have realised it was a tapas bar. I probably would have thought it was a wine bar.

Interviewer: So foursquare then uncovered this place for you. Do you think it also made the experience of it better as well?

Amy: Yes.

Interviewer: How so?

Amy: Well this is another example, once we got in there, there were loads of tips on what to eat, and as I said before I have ordered in restaurants based on what other people on foursquare have recommended. So I do tend to use it for that sort of thing regularly.

Interviewer: So did it make you feel like you'd discovered a place other people didn't know about?

Amy: Oh yeah, completely, that was my hidden gem.

Importantly then, what my research highlights is that both David and Amy's use of foursquare led to them discovering places that they either wouldn't have happened upon or would have perhaps sidestepped. Consequently this then made their experience of this or that place feel in some way different, perhaps more magical, as a result of them being discovered in this way. In the following extract, and while echoing Amy, Richard verbalises how his experience of Brewed Awakening now feels, owing to it being found through foursquare:

Richard: Yes, in many ways this place is a hidden gem. It is almost as if you are a secret member of the foursquare club.

For David Amy and Richard then, there is the suggestion that the places they each discovered were concealed from common knowledge; that they were in some way hidden from those outside of the 'know'. Ben expands upon point in the next extract:

Ben: I have actually. I used it a lot when I was on holiday recently. I went to Malaga and didn't necessarily know that much about it. For trying to find places to eat that weren't tourist hotspots, foursquare was perfect. So you could do the 'explore' option and say that you wanted somewhere to eat and then it would give me a list of places that are popular on foursquare, and obviously people on foursquare are more likely to be locals than tourists, or so I assumed. So it made it a lot easier to try and find places. I think they must have been local people, because most of the tips were in Spanish and I couldn't understand any of them.

For Ben, foursquare provides him with access to spatial information which feels like it isn't 'touristy'. This point is further underlined by his observation that 'most of the tips were in Spanish'. David makes a similar observation while discussing the 'random dim sum restaurant' foursquare led him to:

Interviewer: Does foursquare change the way you feel about the environments/locations you frequent? Take the dim sum restaurant for instance?

David: I guess in this dim sum restaurant when I didn't understand the menu, obviously it was in Chinese but the translations weren't great, I was checking through some recommendations of what my friend ate, and I saw something, and then I kind of knew what I should order, otherwise I would have had no clue what to have on the menu.

Interviewer: When you find those kinds of restaurants does it feel authentic?

David: Yeah.

Interviewer: Did it make your experience of the restaurant better?

David: I guess in some ways it did. It made the *experience* better of going to that place, but I guess it didn't change much for the venue, I'd say.

I would suggest that both Ben and David articulate what similarly is entrenched in David and Amy's respective experiences, as detailed above; that the use of foursquare can affect how certain users experience this or that place. This is where some of their enjoyment in these places can be found. As Sheller and Urry (2003) suggest that the playfulness of place stems from the pleasure of immersing oneself in a new environment. I would argue here that foursquare can make both unfamiliar and familiar environments feel in some way 'new'. Indeed, I would suggest that for David, Amy and Ben, their enjoyment is equally rooted in foursquare, as it isn't only the exploration of a new locale that is exciting, but also, and importantly, the way in which said locale is itself explored, which then feeds back into the experience experienced, and so on. The pleasure can be found within the mode of discovery employed, and the implicit presumption of the kind of information this source entails. In this instance it is thus precisely through foursquare's 'virtual coimplacement' (Moore, 2006) that their appreciation of place is enriched, just as location-based 'technologies of the self' define the parameters of the self-disseminated. Accordingly, my research demonstrates that the means by which an environment is reconnoitred similarly underpins how that experience is understood.

A way of approaching this process can in turn be found within Humphreys's (2010: 768) examination of the mobile social network Dodgeball, as foursquare users aren't, from this angle, simply sharing locational information 'to contribute to a sense of commonality among a group of friends in a public space', to 'parochialize' this or that environment, to put it in Humphreys's terms, instead they are employing foursquare as a way of experiencing this or that place differently; whether this in an explicit goal or not. Certain users are employing the likes of foursquare to move beyond commonality and into a more rarefied realm of 'local' knowledge. As a result of this, for some users foursquare isn't just a guidebook. In the following extract Ben expands on this point, while explaining how foursquare can uncover places in a manner that is different to the likes of Time Out:

Ben: Probably more so than something like Time Out, because obviously Time Out is a magazine and they are looking to make money, so it is only those people who are big enough to promote themselves who can get in on that kind of a

format, whereas with foursquare the individual establishment doesn't even need to know that it is on foursquare to get promotion for its business; it is the people that go there that promote it for the business. There are a few advantages with check-in deals: I managed to find a café in London, for example, where checking-in for the first time got me a free cake with my coffee. That's the kind of deal you can't beat, you know.

Correlatively, my research shows that foursquare doesn't so much 'parochialize' this or that place for its users, but rather 'localises' it, through the environmental information that is immediately available; information that is at the same time perpetually updated owing to this medium, as well as being, on the surface at least, democratic. By experiencing this or that place in a manner that users believe stems from 'local' sources, and then by emulating their spatial practices accordingly, I would argue users are able to galvanize a sense of self that importantly feels local. In other words, users believe they are privy to esoteric locational information that the majority of people outside of foursquare are cut off from. Furthermore, such users can then employ foursquare to find out what they should be doing or trying within this or that place, through the tips left by other users. For Ben, being privy to this kind of esoteric locational information provides him with an 'insider's view', as he explains:

Ben: Yeah. It feels more like getting the insider's view on the local area because it is the people that live there that are most likely to be checking-in regularly and posting tips for places.

Sarah makes a similar point, as she discusses why she uses the tips left by other users when she eating out:

Sarah: Oh definitely, I think the tips are probably my favourite thing about foursquare. You do just get the inside deal from regular users that go there, that say, don't try this or do try that. It doesn't feel as daunting or scary as when you go somewhere and stare at the menu thinking, oh god what shall I have, and that kind of thing.

Interviewer: So do you use these tips when, say, you're in a restaurant?

Sarah: Yeah I always do; I always give the tips a go first.

Mark also uses foursquare to find out what to eat in restaurants he's not familiar with:

Mark: I was recently on holiday in Central Florida, just off to the side, and was in the Bubble Room, this restaurant, and I know they have really good cakes there because I've been before, but I didn't know what to have, so I looked at the tips and the top tip was for the orange crunch cake, so I thought, fine, I'll have that. So yeah, it was really good. It was probably about 1000 calories. I didn't finish it.

In a similar vein, the incorporation of smartphones and foursquare allows Nigel to more efficiently engage with unfamiliar environments:

Nigel: The standout experience I had was in Paris. We went to one of the museums, and it was the day that we were going home, so time was tight, and it was in the morning. So we got there and the cue was literally zigzagging. So I was standing in the cue and I thought I'll check in and while I was standing there I was reading the tips and one of them said the cue is massive, however, if you go around the corner you'll find the cue for the library, which gets you in the same place, in terms of the ticketing area, and there is hardly anyone in that cue, so go to that cue and you will beat the main cue. I almost felt like we were committing an offence.

Interviewer: So did foursquare change the way you *felt* about your experience in the museum?

Nigel: Absolutely, and this is a prime example of that.

Interviewer: So did that then taint your experience?

Nigel: I think that improved my experience of that location. It makes sense doesn't it? If you go to a restaurant, and you check in on foursquare, and someone says to you, you should try X, Y and Z. If you try it, and it is amazing, your experience of that place is heightened. You have had a

better time. It's like if someone says try the lasagne and you try the lasagne and it is knockout, you go away saying that is the best lasagne!

For Doug, this side of foursquare means he knows where the sushi is hidden in a particular buffet, as well as information on a certain employee at McDonalds:

Doug: Yeah, definitely. A bit of serendipity, maybe. Obviously you are using technology to drive that, but yeah I've been in to restaurants before when the tip has been, when it has been one of those all you can eat buffet bars, they hide the sushi, you know, go to this bit and ask for the sushi and they're like he knows where the sushi is.

Interviewer: Does that make the experience better doesn't it?

Doug: Yeah I love it! Or if it is a bar and there is a tip that says you have to try this beer, because I like that kind of stuff. I mean it isn't often, but if you get that you're like yes!!!

Interviewer: Do you think the pleasure this creates also revolves around authenticity; that it helps you seek out authentic experiences?

Doug: Yeah because you would have had to have been there to check in, and the first person there has had to create the venue. That happens less these days, but it is nice when you find somewhere that has got a venue so you can create it. So yeah, that adds a level, I mean there is of course how good is the crowd sourced data, and you kind of think some of it is going to be a bit wrong. One place I went, now I don't go to McDonalds often, but it was with the kids so it was a treat, so this is a McDonalds based story; the tip on it said that a particular member of staff, who must have had a badge, was like really horrible, and it was kind of a bit weird, because then I knew a secret there, because I'm thinking that member of staff probably isn't on foursquare, they don't know I am here, and I'm now watching them. It does give you a more authentic experience, although 'authentic' is such a terrible word.

In each case then, my research demonstrates that foursquare can make users feel differently about the environments they inhabit, particularly unfamiliar environments. It does this by imbuing these places with a level of locational information that then permits users to experience places in a fashion apparently abstracted from the masses that feels authentic. As a symptom of 'localisation', and much like Baudelaire's *flâneur*, users are henceforth able '[to] be away from home and yet ... feel at home anywhere' (Baudelaire, 1972: 400). In other words, they interminably inhabit a local identity, regardless of their location. Following in this vein, the spatial use of foursquare perhaps more visibly resonates with Benjamin's *flâneur*, as opposed to Baudelaire's, whose 'distinctive heroism ... whether poet or not, resides precisely in his refusal to become part of the crowd' (Gilloch, 1996: 153). As a result, this casts light on an important association, not previously apparent, as users of foursquare avoid the "mass" by digitally abstracting themselves from the "crowd", just as 'the "crowd" is a veil which conceals the "mass" from the *flâneur* (Benjamin, 1974: 421). The difference here then is that the authenticity of place, in this instance, is discovered through a kind of digital *dérive*. In either case, the same sentiment resounds: '[the] man of the crowd is no *flâneur*' (Benjamin, 1983: 128).

Moving forwards, my research also provides a deeper perspective on perhaps why Ben didn't want to be identified with the likes of Starbucks in the extract above, and how foursquare fits in with this identity, as well as the identities of other foursquare users seeking 'authentic' experiences, as it is apparent that for some users, foursquare functions as a way of discovering seemingly 'real' spatial experiences, with Starbucks representing the very antithesis of this. Such users, I would argue, want to keep their individuality, by avoiding the spaces that might be seen as encroaching upon it. Certainly, by using foursquare in this fashion, as a tool for exploring a location, users are effectively able to discover more legitimate places to immerse themselves within. What is of importance here isn't so much the actuality of the authenticity qua the 'authentic' spatial experience experienced, but rather, and significantly, that users feel foursquare provides them with spatial information rooted in authenticity. This feeling of authenticity is itself authentic. By employing foursquare to explore a locale and by unveiling experiences which users believe to be authentic, I would argue certain users are effectively able to

avoid commodified experiences. This is a pursuit Giddens regards as being 'the true quest for self' (Awan, 2007: 103). This again resonates with art of *flânerie*, as '[*flânerie*] is the *doing* through and thanks to which the *flâneur* hopes and believes he will be able to find the truth of his being' (Tester, 1994: 7; italics in original). Furthermore, at the same time this echoes Castells' (2000) suggestion, paraphrased by Siapera (2012: 173-174) that '[in] the network society ... all identities tend to become resistance identities, they seek to defend and safeguard their own position'. Indeed, and while following in this vein, by providing users with immediate locational information that feels like it circumvents commodified consumerism, users are at the same time effectively able to construct ongoing identities that likewise feel authentic; identities that I would argue feel local.

6.4 Summary

In this chapter it was my intention to explore how identity is affected by foursquare. It is apparent that some users reflexively understand the employment of this particular LBSN as implicitly connecting to a lifestyle that revolves around new media technologies, which itself feeds into their ongoing narratives and so on. Foursquare accordingly provides users with another means of continuing their way of life, while perpetuating their selves in the process. The use of foursquare also produces new social connections with likeminded communities, which similarly impacts or perhaps strengthens identity. The employment of foursquare in this fashion is significant, as limited research has been undertaken vis-à-vis smartphones, LBSNs and the new social connections they may be eliciting. Following this I would also suggest that symptomatic of foursquare as well as the paradigmatic shift detailed above, some users now have a different kind of physical awareness of the places they frequent regarding how their movements relate to identity, as spatial information doesn't only reveal the geographical position of people; it also pointedly reveals something about who they are. As a location-based 'technology of the self' then, this leads to users not only editing their check-ins, but also modifying the places they go, symptomatic of a heightened awareness of their movements being observed. At the same time, foursquare also enables users to effectively objectify their own spatial movements, which are subsequently re-assimilated into their ongoing narratives, making this or

that self feel more 'real'. Lastly, it is evident that foursquare is presently employed by some users, as a way of discovering spatial experiences that are, on the surface at least, superficially reserved for locals. Put differently, foursquare provides some users with immediate access to locational information that feels clandestine and authentic. By engaging with foursquare in this fashion, and through a process I term localisation, these users are then able to forge resistant identities that seek out a semblance of localness, over commodified simulations of authenticity, such as Starbucks; simulations that interminably threaten a point of entry back into the crowd and the like. Concurrently this provides a more complex way of examining the art of *flânerie*, as the *flâneur*, much like the user of foursquare, similarly wishes to escape the masses, and discover something more 'real'. However, whereas Benjamin's *flâneur* was unable to unweave himself or herself from that rabble and the alienation this entailed, foursquare contrastingly provides access to a digital derive that seemingly permits an exit from the hordes. What is significant here isn't so much the authenticity of that which seems authentic, but rather how authentic the source of authenticity feels. For some foursquare users, I would thus suggest this source feels 'real', which is what is important here. Having examined foursquare's impact on identity then, I will now move on to explore the effects of checking-in as a means to build a locational archive. At the same time as this I will also investigate how the recording and subsequent sharing of locational information impacts social connections and arrangements. Doing this will again help me to develop a more thorough understanding of how foursquare is presently being used, as well as its effects.

Chapter 7: Social Fluidity, Checking-In & Keeping Track

In the previous chapter I examined the impact foursquare is having on identity. Moving forwards this chapter will examine the social impact of sharing location, by way of check-ins, alongside the spatial effect of using foursquare to build a locational archive. To do this the chapter begins by examining how smartphones and LBSNs differ from older mobile devices, and how the ability to see where friends are can lead to social arrangements being made in a more relaxed fashion, just as it can lead to ‘serenities’ encounters. The chapter then moves on to investigate why it is certain users are choosing to archive their locational past; employing foursquare as a ‘mediated memory object’ (Dijck, 2009). Lastly, the chapter explores the different ways certain users subsequently interact with their preserved spatial pasts, stemming from its mode of preservation, while probing how this functionality differs from older memory related practices, as well as *why* this is significant, spatially speaking, for the individuals that employ them in this manner.

7.1 Social fluidity, Spontaneous Connections & Cursory Relationships

Ling and Yttri (1999, 2002; Ling, 2004) identify two primary categories for mobile phone use: micro-coordination and macro-coordination. ‘Micro-coordination ... is the type of nuanced instrumental coordination typical of a significant part of mobile telephone use’ (De Vries, 2013: 143), where users alter social arrangements on an ad hoc basis. ‘Hyper-coordination brings an expressive layer to this instrumental use, both in the form of mobile etiquettes telling where mobile phones should not be used or which models are in fashion’ (Ibid). For my purposes, what I am interested in here is the former, as it is apparent that mobile phones have allowed social schedules to be mollified, with ‘individuals [using] their mobile phones to overcome traditional restrictions of space and time’ (Campbell & Park, 2008: 374-375). However, whereas older mobile devices required users to contact specific people,

individually, conversely, foursquare allow users to simultaneously inform all friends of their spatial whereabouts, simply by checking-in and thus recording their movements, leading to a new kind of 'real-time' city (Townsend, 2000) predicated on the speed of information and its exchange. This potentially new sociality, where locational information, or 'infolocation', is of central importance, can readily be seen with the likes of foursquare, as my research demonstrates that some users don't only document their spatial movements to playfully preserve or extend their selves *per se*, or to disseminate this or that identity, but at the same time do so to elicit various social encounters. De Souza e Silva & Gordon (2011: 59) suggest '[the] ability to visualise not only the location of information and objects, but also of people nearby, transforms the way traditional social connections are developed, both in public and private spaces'. For Dennis, employing foursquare in this fashion allows him to engage in social gatherings in a more relaxed manner. This is demonstrated in the following extract:

Dennis: We used to do it at work, especially at the media agency, because there are a lot of people using it. People would finish work at different times, depending on what department they were in, so they'd maybe go off to a pub or a restaurant and then say come find us later. So instead of picking up the phone and calling them, you'd just find the person, see where they were at; as long as they'd check in you'd know that they were at that particular place. So if they were going for a drink or to a restaurant, you wouldn't have to worry about rushing out the door or following them, you can just wait until they checked-in, and then meet them there.

Sharing his location in this manner means that Dennis no longer has to 'rush out' after colleagues at the end of the day, but can instead choose when he wants to join them, at a time that is convenient for him; in other words, foursquare provides him with a certain amount of freedom. In a similar vein, David also finds that foursquare allows him to organise certain social encounters in manner that is less pressured:

David: I was going to meet up with a friend and I didn't know where I was going to be and I just said just check where I am on foursquare and you'll know where I am.

What these examples illustrate then is the social impact foursquare can have, as these are evidently a different kind of social arrangement, producing a different kind of spatial experience rooted in social awareness. A corollary to this is that social interactions evidently don't have to be as firmly made, but can rather unfold on a more ad hoc basis, in a fashion that builds upon older mobile devices and their social utility. Indeed, this is a different kind of engagement vis-à-vis older mobile phones, as in this instance Dennis can see where his colleagues are, without having to actively contact them individually. For Adrian, what this means is that he can know when his friends have entered a busy pub, without having to look out for them, as he explains:

Adrian: There's a bunch of us go out for a meal once a month, partly because my wife is fed up of people saying we really must do drinks more often, so she just said right, first Wednesday of the month we will always be in this pub, at this time, come along or don't, that's fine.

Interviewer: That's a nice idea.

Adrian: So we went out for a meal earlier in the week, and because it was Christmas we went somewhere different - the pub we normally go to didn't have any tables left when we got around to booking it - and the place we went to is huge, and really difficult to find people in, so we were using foursquare to work out if people had got there yet, and like I say, I'll use it to see who is out, if I'm out, but beyond that, not particularly.

In both examples then, whereas older mobile devices would allow friends to 'notify others if they [were] running late' (Humphreys, 2008: 115), foursquare socially operates in a fashion ostensibly one stage further removed. Here users don't have to *actively* contact each other, but can instead employ their smartphones to create the *potential* for social encounters, a potential which is then either engaged with or not. An important part of this process is thus the reduced obligation to arrive at this or that place, or at this or that time. Such 'reconfigurations of connectedness' (De Vries, 2013: 143), allow social gatherings to develop in a less determined and more laissez faire fashion, which produces a different kind of spatial experience, one that perhaps feels

more relaxed and more open to chance. Correlatively, as users aren't simply sharing their location with one person, but potentially several, what my research also illustrates is that there is now the increased opportunity to end up socially engaging with people they weren't necessarily planning on meeting at this or that time. As a result of this, I would thus also suggest that for some users their environments subsequently feel more social or rather there is more opportunity for social encounters to occur owing to foursquare. In the following extract Dennis details a spontaneous social encounter brought about by his use of foursquare:

Dennis: A friend Dave, he lives in Woking near me, and he just happened to be in London one day, but he wasn't planning on staying out, he was just going to go straight home, and I'd been out with work colleagues and was walking back to the train station and saw he was there, and it was sort of on the way, so I just popped in.

Indeed, it is precisely through foursquare, and the infolocation this engages with, that Dennis met Dave, as opposed to this encounter being organised beforehand. Following in this vein, Adrian also finds that foursquare can lead to serendipitous social situations, as he explains:

Adrian: I've checked-in to places and noticed that somebody is there and thought, I didn't know they were going to be out this evening, and so have ended up chatting to someone I wouldn't have otherwise seen, and wouldn't have known they were there if foursquare hadn't told me. You don't check every bar you go in to see if your friends are there; frankly I'm not that observant.

Here Adrian suggests that were it not for foursquare this encounter probably wouldn't have happened, even if they were both in the same place, because he isn't that 'observant'. Again, what this demonstrates is that for those who to choose to use it in this manner, foursquare can increase the opportunity for social encounters, which can accordingly produce a different kind of spatial experience; one rooted in sociality. A similar situation is likewise described by Mark in the following extract:

Mark: Well yeah, I've done it a few times. My school was in Petersfield and I saw some old people who used to go to that school live nearby, and sometimes they check in and I'll say hey do you want to come in for a coffee. I did that a few times. In fact I did that pretty much every week [laughs]. People come by and visit. So yeah, that's been really useful. I imagine it will be good at Surrey, as a lot of my friends are quite close to Surrey, so a lot of them will probably be nearby.

Interviewer: So do your friends use it in the same way?

Mark: Yeah, normally the same people that I did that to, because, really, they're the heavy users. One of my friends is involved in a start-up thing in New York, he's out there right now, and he always checks-in everywhere, and he'll say come and meet me for a coffee, so I'll do that.

Interviewer: So foursquare does change who you socialise with?

Mark: Yeah, I probably wouldn't have seen him that much in the past two years if I didn't use foursquare.

Interviewer: So you use foursquare to see what your friends are doing?

Mark: I do, like I said, seeing friends in Petersfield and things like that. I've got a friend who was in London today, and we haven't arranged to meet, I'm meeting someone else, but he might be around, and so I was going to check that out because he always checks-in.

Interviewer: So will you do that just through foursquare?

Mark: Yeah, because if he's far away then I won't bother.

Interviewer: Interesting. So you do you use it in a social way?

Mark: Yeah, I do like to.

For Townsend (2000: 1) mobile communication devices have had a ‘profound effect on our cities as they are woven into the daily routines of urban inhabitants’. They have changed ‘the urban metabolism by accelerating the exchange of information to the point that it can bring about a ‘real-time’ city’ (Humphreys, 2010: 765). This suggestion of a ‘real-time’ city is borne out in examples above, as foursquare effectively ‘parochializes’ (Humphreys, 2010) surrounding milieus, contextually speaking, imbuing them with the potential for extemporaneous social interactions, precisely through the speed of locational information. In each case, the use of foursquare led to Dennis, Adrian and Mark meeting up with acquaintances that they wouldn’t necessarily have met, if it wasn’t for them checking-in. Foursquare thus increase the chances of serendipitous social encounters, altering ‘how people live their lives’ as well as ‘how they see their world’ (Katz & Aakhus, 2002: 1). This kind of engagement is accordingly different to the social interactions produced by older mobile phones, and prior to the advent of foursquare, as the ability to ‘see’ where friends are located beyond one’s own physicality, allows for more impromptu social encounters to transpire, stemming from a different kind of connectedness, which subsequently produces a different kind of physical approach to space and place. However, this isn’t to suggest that all impromptu social encounters are always welcomed, as Doug explains:

Doug: I’ve had a few funny moments in that sense, when I’ve arrived somewhere, checked-in and it has said your friend Ben is here, okay, and I’ve looked up and he’s walked around the corner in the pub. So it has mainly been things like that. It has mainly been randomly bumping into people in the same location. If I check in somewhere now, if there are other people there, I will see if I know them.

Interviewer: So you have had that happen several times?

Doug: Yeah, it was weird; it was bizarre.

Interviewer: Was the experience improved because of foursquare?

Doug: Well I probably wouldn’t have known he was there. I mean, okay, he happened to walk around, but I was saying to my wife it’s really weird, it’s saying a friend of mine is here and when I looked he was checked-in a couple of minutes

ago, and I was like he must still be here, and then he came around the corner

Interviewer: So had he seen on his foursquare that you were there?

Doug: Yeah. So that was kind of weird.

Interviewer: So did you then just say “hi” and carry on with what you were doing?

Doug: Yeah, because I was having dinner with my family, and he was having dinner with his family.

Indeed, this predicament illuminates that just because foursquare can produce spontaneous social situations, it doesn't necessarily follow that these encounters are desirable, or that the user in question knows what social cues apply in these situations. Furthermore, it is also apparent that some users in fact employ foursquare as a means of avoiding social encounters. This point is made by David in the following extract:

Interviewer: So your friends on foursquare are close-friends then? Friends that you feel comfortable in knowing where you are?

David: Yeah, then since the merger with American Express I've had colleagues requesting it and obviously you can't really decline, so now it has changed slightly.

Interviewer: Once you've added one or two colleagues you are almost obligated to accept everyone.

David: But you can get around it, you can check in at all the places you go, but when you don't want to tell certain people you can keep checking-in and it gets missed.

Interviewer: Do you mean you are using the 'private' function?

David: No, what I mean is, you can check in to all the places you've been during the day, but just miss the places out that you don't want them to see. Then those people see

your other check-ins and just assume you are around that area.

Interviewer: That's a new one on me.

David: Yeah it is like using this whole kind of openness to actually be more private.

Just as an increase in the 'metabolism' of the 'real-time' city produces new forms of connectedness then, so too does it produce various social challenges that will need to be worked through. What is interesting in terms of Doug's example above is that he refers to this happenstance as being 'weird'. Outwardly running into a friend at a bar isn't 'weird', but rather common place. In turn, I would suggest that it is the transition from the virtual to the 'real' that Doug finds strange, which at the same time illuminates something about the reason why some people employ foursquare in this way: oftentimes the pleasure of engaging with the likes of foursquare is rooted in its potential, as opposed to the reality of that potential being realised, as explained above in terms of spatial re-enactments. Following this, my findings not only explore what social function smartphones and foursquare might be having, stemming from the recording of day-to-day spatial movements, but also oppose the opinion that mobile phones draw individuals away from the public sphere, by allowing them to publically engage in their own private domains (Kopomaa, 2000; De Gournay, 2002; Fortunati, 2002; Puro, 2002), as this evidently isn't the case concerning newer smartphones and the likes of foursquare. Following in this vein and as a means to make it clear, rather than actually reducing social encounters, foursquare in contrast, actively increases the opportunity for social encounters to occur in the social realm (Hampton & Gupta, 2008), eliciting connections, not simply rooted in space and place, but stemming from the sharing of locational information. As a result of this increased sociality, users accordingly approach their environments differently, as they are now more aware of the opportunity for the emergence of social encounters. In sum, just as I have demonstrated how ludic interactions can deepen a connection to this or that place, so too does the preservation of locational affect how some users subsequently feel and interact with their surrounding environments, as well as how they maintain social connections. Let me now move on to explore

why it is certain users are choosing to use foursquare as a tool to archive their locational past.

7.2 A Digital Memory Lane

Foursquare is evidently used for different reasons; reasons which in turn produce different physical, spatial and social effects. This has been demonstrated in previous chapters. For instance, checking-in at this or that place may lead to the acquisition of this or that mayorship, which may then be employed by certain users as a symbolic way of underlining their connection to the places they most often frequent, or perhaps to confirm the authenticity of their relationship. Alongside this, check-ins may also be used as a way of continuing an identity project, altering the venues certain users choose to either frequent or check in at, according to their own reflexive understanding of themselves, and the places they think they should be associated with. At the same time, however, my research also revealed another reason certain users choose to check in, namely to document, on a locational plane, their day-to-day movements, in terms of where they've been, what they were doing, and at what time. This archive then becomes a digital record which can be further furnished with images and text. Foursquare is here employed as 'mediated memory objects' (Dijck, 2009). They become a way of remembering spatial engagements as well as their significance. For House & Churchill (2008: 300) '[a] visible shift in memory in recent years has been the increasing availability, sophistication, capacity and portability of consumer ... capture/record technologies'. Importantly, these changes have produced what Hoskins (2011) refers to as the 'connective turn', by which 'the formation of memory is increasingly *structured* by digital networks, [with] memory's constituting agency [being] both technological and human' (Dijck, 2011: 402, emphasis added). For Henry, it is evident that his spatial movements, as well as his memory of these movements, are now documented and structured by foursquare; a process which is important to him, owing to his recent move to London:

Henry: Yeah. So for like the last six months to a years I've used it to, one, keep a track of the places I've been to, especially since I moved to London last year, I like to keep track of pubs I really like or restaurants, so I can say in six months'

time, this was that place I went to and liked, so I can go back there.

Interviewer: Have you got any examples when you used it in that way? Any specific places that you can remember?

Henry: When I first arrived to London me and some friends did a little pup crawl with some pubs, and I wanted to go to one of those again a couple of weeks ago, so I looked over my history, which took me a few minutes to figure out, and then I found it.

For Ben, this allows him to keep track of 'cool' places, as the following extract attests:

Ben: I think partly it is kind of record keeping. It is a record of where I have been, which can be quite useful if you find a really cool place and want to look it up later.

In a similar vein, what led to Robbie using foursquare in the first place was the fact it allowed him to collect data on himself, which is something he has always been interested in:

Robbie: How did I get in to foursquare? I can't really remember. I've used it for a long time, because I like to collect data on myself, where I've been or if there is some interesting place that I would like to come back to in the future, so I can check from time to time. That was why I downloaded the app.

Interviewer: So it was the locational side of things that interested you?

Robbie: I want to have the history of my own data; where I have been or what kind of TV programme I've watched. I just like to collect that kind of data on myself.

Paul also posits that his use of foursquare is rooted, in part at least, in a want to keep track of where he's been on a daily basis:

Paul: Yeah, it's got to the point where, if it is anywhere new that I've been, or somewhere kind of nice, like a nice restaurant, or if I want to even just tweet something related to a place, even though you can tag your location in the tweet, I would do it via foursquare. I guess, probably yeah, to keep a track of where you've been. When Facebook launched their places, I thought, I don't want to use that, I'll just keep using foursquare, because I've already got a list of where I've been; I'll keep it all in one place.

Similarly, Ryan too likes the idea of having a record of what he's done and where he's been:

Ryan: Yeah. I do quite like the idea of having a record of what I've done and where I have been, in a kind of diary kind of way, in a digital footprint kind of thing, even though I've never done anything with that, and I'm not even sure how much they store.

For the users detailed above then, foursquare ostensibly allows them to record their daily happenings: where they've been and what they were doing. Henry expands on the reasoning behind this process, by noting it enables him to easily recall places he's been to and enjoyed in the past, places he may wish to go back to in the future. As a result of this functionality, and as implicitly noted above, foursquare has accordingly helped him to get further acquainted with London. For Dennis, using foursquare in this fashion doesn't only mean he can keep a record of his movements, at the same time it also enables him to provide his friends with 'personal' locational recommendations, as he explains:

Interviewer: You alluded to this earlier, but just to clarify, you do use foursquare to keep track of where you've been?

Dennis: Yeah.

Interviewer: So when do you use this information?

Dennis: It's more for when I went somewhere and couldn't quite remember where it was. It's more like if I went to York last year and went to some really cool places, and then my

mate said, I'm going to York where would you recommend, and if I couldn't remember where I'd been but I knew it was somewhere, I'd be able to call that up and say go there, don't go there, you know, give personal recommendations like that. There's also a weekly email from foursquare that just lists everywhere you were a year ago that day. You look through that and more often than not it's the office, the train station, home sort of thing, But then occasionally you'll be on holiday and you'll go, I remember being there. It just jogs your memory. You wouldn't think that was a year ago.

Dennis here touches on another way his locational past returns to him, in this instance a weekly email from foursquare, detailing 'everywhere' he was 'a year ago that day'. In the following extract Mark too mentions this particular service:

Interviewer: Do you use foursquare to keep a track of where you've been?

Mark: Yeah I do, like I said earlier, about having an email every day that tells me where I was last year, and that's interesting. I saw that yesterday, last year, I was going back to school, so that was interesting to see.

For Mark, this email is an interesting way of rediscovering the places he frequented last year. Following in this vein, what is important to Amy about receiving this kind of information is that it 'transports' her 'back there', it helps her to reconnect to her locational past, as the following extract attests:

Amy: Because it will do your tweets and I think your Facebook status as well. I think it does all of them now. But I love that, seeing what you did a year ago. Like this morning I found out this time last year I was shopping for carpet, and there was just a whole list of carpet shops, and it just suddenly does, it just does transport you back there, and you think, God I remember that.

Notably then, what my research shows is that the use of foursquare, as a tool for recording day-to-day spatial movements, can then affect how user engage with their locational history. In these examples, Dennis, Mark and Amy's

locational past can be seen as permeating their present, and thus reminding them of what they were doing at a certain point last year. Accordingly I would argue this provides them with a different kind of locational experience; one where the past, locational speaking, is felt in the present. Just as the acquisition of this or that mayorship can strengthen a user's connection to the places they presently inhabit, so too can foursquare be used to deepen connections to the places they used to frequent. At the same time this also illustrates *how* foursquare perhaps differs from older memory related practices, such as diaries or photographs, as the digital information stored within them can readily be configured in the manner described above, and then delivered back to certain individuals depending on where they are, the date and so on. This isn't of course to suggest users couldn't go through older memory related pastimes on a daily basis, and then uncover where they were on such and such a day - although this would be a laborious task. What my research instead demonstrates is that foursquare make this practice far easier. For the users that employ foursquare in this manner, they don't have to search for their spatial past; rather their past now effectively finds them. Accordingly, and stemming from this illustrated use of the likes of foursquare, 'the boundaries between present and past are no longer given' (Dijck, 2011: 404), but rather constructed along location-based lines.

Moving forwards then, and symptomatic of the kind of past spatial connections foursquare allows, for some users the accuracy of their check-ins are henceforth very important. This point is made in the following extract, as Dennis clarifies why he wants his check-ins to be correct:

Dennis: Most of my check-in history is to see when and what I've done. If I'm sat in my office and I've checked-in to every other office around me, I'm going to look back at that in a year and go, well I wasn't in these offices what's going on?

Interviewer: So you want there to be some authenticity in terms of what you have done?

Dennis: Exactly.

What is seemingly essential for certain users then is the authenticity of the locational information documented. In this example, Dennis evidently keeps a

truthful account of where he's been, on a day-to-day basis, as he wants to be able to look back at this in the future, and reclaim locational memories that did happen, rather than being perplexed by erroneous spatial information that didn't. To this end, Dennis requires 'real' check-ins. Correlatively, foursquare does more than simply record significant locational experiences, but can instead be used to archive all spatial movements, on a day-to-day basis, as and when they occur, intermingling both the significant and the banal, concurrently. As a consequence of this, what my research highlights is that for some users, foursquare can function as a technological form of spatial memory. Paul makes a comparable point in the following extract:

Paul: Yeah, it's just nice to keep a record. I think it is easy. I noticed the other day, when I was looking through it, when I knew I was coming, and I was like I remember when we checked-in there that day. It's kind of like a memory lane; a digital memory lane almost, related to places you've been.

Indeed, from Paul's point of view, foursquare is tantamount to a 'digital memory lane', related to the places he's been. This is an important metaphor, one that effectively emphasises his use of foursquare as a tool for locational retention, recording his day-to-day movements as and when they occur, seemingly with a view to attaining some form of spatial preservation. This kind of use and understanding correspondingly resonates with Doug, as he explains:

Doug: I'm an AFC Wimbledon fan, and so I have travelled to a lot of away games, going to these weird grounds in the middle of nowhere, and I was reading a book recently talking about some of the games, and I did not have any recollection of being at certain games, and as I was reading it I was thinking I wished I'd gone to that. It was only when I spoke to my dad, who seems to have a better memory than me, he'd say you did go, and then I'd do a Google search and find I'd written stuff about the match online. There was one when I'd done a whole report about being somewhere that I didn't even know. So I sort of see foursquare as a way of recovering these lost moments.

Interviewer: As a way of preserving memories that otherwise disappear?

Doug: Yeah. Some people may remember every moment of every game they go to, but I don't; I don't see the need necessarily. But when you forget entire chunks of being somewhere else, that's not good.

Notably then, what these extracts demonstrate is that for some users, foursquare is employed as 'mediated memory objects' (Dijck, 2009). As Dijck (2009: 168) explains, 'memory is not simply triggered by objects, but happens *through* these objects'. Consequently, for some users it is precisely through the likes of foursquare that their spatial past is both stored and can subsequently be recalled. For Doug this is itself extremely important, as he notably explains it allows him to recover experiences that would have otherwise been either forgotten or 'lost'. My research thus illustrates that for some foursquare is seen as being a more secure way of preserving their day-to-day spatial movements; more secure than older less digital memory-related pastimes, as a symptom of its preservation. That said whether foursquare is in actuality a better or more secure means of preserving the past isn't what is necessarily important here, just as whether foursquare provides authentic locational information wasn't in actuality what was important in the previous chapter. What is important for some users is that it feels more secure and enduring, which is where its significance lies in this instance, just as it allows individual to reconnect to the places they once inhabited in new and 'interesting' ways. Hoskins's (2011) suggestion of a 'connective turn' in turn provides a viable way of approaching how memory may be changing as a result of its nascent structuring within digital networks. Let me now move on to examine the impact of documenting the locational past in this manner.

7.3 The locational Past & its Present Potential

New media technologies, such as smartphones and foursquare, enable the self to the drawn-out in innovative and interesting ways (Tian & Belk, 2005). As Hoskins (2011: 26) explains, '[smart phones] and other highly portable devices act as prosthetic nodes that extend the self across an array of communication and consumptions networks, personal and public'. Indeed, I have readily demonstrated this point in the previous chapter regarding location-based identity. This is because foursquare is presently employed by some users as a

way of 'extending' themselves, through the meanings attached to this or that place. However, just as the self can be extended, in terms of its spatiality, in the present, so too can it the self be protracted in the past, through the preservation of its documented movements and the like. This point is borne out in the examples detailed above. What is significant about the way in which foursquare records the past for my purposes, is that it is digital. Accordingly, this allows users to then engage with their locational history in a number of ways, which then affects how they feel about their environment. Indeed, it is evident from research that for some foursquare users, this provides them with different ways of both conceptualising and subsequently approaching their spatial past. This sense of possibility is demonstrated in the next extract, as Jane discusses her plan to visualise her travels, using the LBSN Gowalla:

Jane: So I'd stopped using it by the time Facebook had bought, and I switched to foursquare. So the reason that happened, I guess, it was actually the very start of this year that I stopped using Gowalla and switched to foursquare, and the reason actually was because I didn't know anyone on Gowalla, because it was primarily used in Norway, where I don't really have many friends, and I had been using it, Gowalla, almost as a diary to keep a track of where I'd been, especially as when I first got it in 2010 I was doing loads of travelling and conferences and stuff like that, and I was thinking this is cool, I get to go to all these cities and all these countries, if I check in to each one, I can't remember what the Gowalla term is, then I'll get a little map sort of a thing, and there were various tools where you could export your Gowalla stuff, if you put in your user name and password, to a visualisation, and I thought this is really neat, I'm going to make a 2010 map or a 2011 map, and then do that.

For Jane then, LBSNs like Gowalla and foursquare offer her the possibility of aggregating as well as visualising her spatial movements. Following in this vein, David too expresses an interest in visualising his spatial experiences:

David: Well they have this really cool visualisation where they link this app that is a big map of the world and you see all your check-ins as dots with lines coming out of them; it maps your whole journey.

It is noteworthy that both users are engaged in occupations that revolve around data, which may cast a light on why they may choose to employ LBSNs in this manner, or why they might be interested in the potential for new way of recording the self through the technologies it engages with. For Jane and David then, the digital preservation employed by the likes of Gowalla and foursquare means that their archived memories have the potential to be re-structured and consumed in ways not imaginable in terms of other mediated memory objects. Certainly, it would be extremely hard to achieve the kind of visualisations touched on above, if users were attempting to do this with, say, written diaries. This is established by Jane's desire to digitally envisage her 2010 and 2011 travels, a strategy that would have provided her with a markedly different mode of conceptualising and recalling her locational past, as she could then approach it from a number of different vantage points and so on. Indeed, she might choose to explore which months she attended the most conferences, for instance, as well as how far she'd travelled. Accordingly, what is seemingly important to some users, such as Jane and David, is that LBSNs like foursquare and Gowalla provide them with access to an accumulated locational past, as opposed to fragments, endemic of older memory related practices. From this position the past, in its preserved state, as a '*residual abundance*' (Virilio, 1997: 24), becomes figuratively comparable to a camera raw image file, open to myriad pathways of exploration, much like the Arcades to the *flâneur* (White, 2008; Benjamin, 1999; Gleber, 1999; Shields, 1994; Tester, 1994). Robbie touches on a similar point in the next extract, as he discusses designers and their obsession with visualising data:

Robbie: I think I like it. I don't know, because I am a designer, I think a lot of designers are obsessed with data visualisations. There was this one designer and he tried to make an algorithm of himself [laughs]. So it has got all of the lines, and graphs, with data visualisation of where he has been during the last year, of how many beers he has drank, with the top three places he has been. So that kind of thing.

From my research I would thus suggest that for some users what is significant about LBSNs like foursquare is their ability to record the spatial past in a fashion that can then be approached in fresh and interesting ways. Alongside

this potentiality, and while discussing the reasons he thinks he uses foursquare, Doug details another way his locational past could be reused:

Doug: Well I think I've figured it out; I figured it out for myself when I last went on holiday. Let me give you my answer, because I was like I'm not sure why I'm using this. Initially it was research. My wife is not into social networking at all, Facebook or Twitter, whereas I check in to what beers I'm drinking, what locations I go to, tweet this that and the other, and she doesn't know half of it because she isn't on half of the networks. People often say your wife must know everything you are up to, and I'm like no because she doesn't use any of this stuff. Not that any of it is private. So she's always like what are you doing, why are you checking-in here and whatever, and I'd say it's quite fun you know. So I was trying to think about it, and lots of people would say why do you bother, because it seems quite pointless - on face value it does seem quite pointless - and then we went on holiday and we were checking-in at places; now I'm not very sentimental, but she is, so we went back, and we tried to stay in the place she went as a kid, and we took our kids, and we went to a lot of locations she had been to, and she had the whole lot, a photo album, and what we tried to do was find those places again and take up-to-date photos of the same locations, and at the same time I'm checking-into these various locations, and then it sort of dawned on me that if this data is public and my ancestors can see it, that same experience could be revisited by me fifty years later, or my family, fifty years later, with reference to the exact moments I was in those locations. I then started to think it is more about looking back; it isn't the checking-in process.

Here Doug's understanding of foursquare, as well as his motives for using it in this manner, revolves around how his locational past could be re-experienced, spatially speaking, at a later date. At the same time this perhaps illustrates another way foursquare might correspondingly appease his fear of losing 'entire chunks' of his life, as Doug isn't simply preserving his day-to-day movements for himself *per se*, he is also doing so for future generations to come, so that they won't forget his locational past either. Again, this highlights that for some users, foursquare is seen as being a secure way of preserving their past, underlined by Doug's suggestion that his past could be re-visited in 'fifty years'. A corollary to this *desire* for personal preservation is likewise

rooted in the precise details foursquare archives. This point is made in the following extract:

Doug: Now if I check in to somewhere I've checked-in to before, I'm interested in the exact details, like how long ago was it that I last checked-in, what photos did I take of that moment.

In a similar vein, Robbie too exhibits an interest in the level of information foursquare can seemingly document:

Robbie: I don't know. I don't know how I got that obsessed. I wanted to know when I had been to certain places; when was the last time. I like to take photos, so I like to keep data on the photos, the date and the location. I'm always keeping track of time.

The precision with which foursquare can evidently record Robbie's locational past is an important factor. For users like Doug then, users who exhibit a desire to spatially document their movements, foursquare's potential isn't simply rooted in the forging of an accumulative past that can then be visualised in a number of different ways *per se*, but is also rooted in how this or that experience may be shared with others on a durational plane, permitting '[the] very distant past [to be] projected into the present and the future' (Urry, 2002: 116). In this sense, the locational past isn't simply preserved in one form, but is at the same time open to being relived through various simulations. Put differently, foursquare '[represent] a convergence of past experiences, current life, and future possibilities' (Raine et al, 2012: 285). At the same time I would also suggest that this could then affect how individuals engage with space and place, as the employment of someone else's locational past, in the present, would create a different experience of this or that place; an experience perhaps deepened or accentuated in the process. Following on from this, whether said re-enactments do in actuality take place, again, isn't where the meaningfulness of foursquare lies, rather its significance can be found in the simple fact they enable certain users to record details of their life that could be re-experienced at a later date, which is, as Doug puts it, 'fun'. It is precisely this connective potential, as well as the playfulness of engaging with technology in this way, that I would propose is important here.

Alongside foursquare's capacity to spatially record daily events, it is of course also employed to provide alternative ways of exploring this or that location. Indeed, for some foursquare users this means 'localising' their surrounding environments, as well as their sense of self, by engaging with locational information that *feels* in some way authentic owing to its user-generated status. However, this isn't the only way foursquare can be employed to gain locational advice. From my research it is evident that some users also check in as a means of then gaining personalised locational suggestions; suggestions that are algorithmically realised through the computational employment of recorded check-ins and the like. Indeed, for Doug, above and beyond any desire to use his own locational history, is a desire for foursquare to 'get better' at applying the movements of his past to the movements of his future, as he explains:

Doug: I'm kind of hoping that the 'explore' feature will get better as it looks at my history for me, and then starts to give me better and better recommendations. I don't want it to be too much at the forefront because it can narrow you. There are lots of studies that talk about how it narrows your field of vision. So I don't want it too much in my face, but if I go to a few places and somewhere similar clicks, because of the data they have collected, it would be good to see a little more of that. So I would probably like foursquare to use my history more than me. When I review it is more that I need to recall something: did I do this or whatever. Maybe I *am* being sentimental and when I look at this in twenty-year's time I won't be bothered.

Interviewer: So are you building a sense of your own history?

Doug: Yeah I think so.

Here Doug's mounting spatial past is effectively folded back into foursquare, before then being framed by its present potentiality, in the form of locational suggestions. For Amy, this makes foursquare feel like an 'organism':

Amy: It is almost like an organism, it learns from what you do, you know, if you use the top picks, it will always come up with the nearest Starbucks; always, whether I like it or not

[laughs].

My research here highlights another reason why some users, like Doug and Amy, presently employ foursquare to preserve their locational past, as it thus allows them to have an augmented relationship with their locational present, by way of bespoke locational suggestions rooted in their past. It is again noteworthy that both Doug and Amy are similarly involved in new media technologies, as well as in their mid-30s. Indeed, this kind of usage wasn't itself touched on by younger users. Perhaps this is more significant to older users who have inhabited this or that space for longer. Following this, I would suggest users who employ foursquare in this manner then feel that the locational recommendations foursquare provides are in some way more valid, or perhaps more pertinent, than what they would receive from other less personalised services, such as a guide book, for instance; because said recommendation stem from their accumulated check-ins and so on. It is precisely this relationship that is significant for some users, as foursquare is outwardly more than just a locational service abstracted from the individuality of the guided individual, but is rather a personalised service ostensibly rooted in the locational 'memories' of the individual guided. In short, this position resonates with the point I made in the previous chapter, in terms of foursquare allowing users to inhabit a locationally authentic identity, as the locational information in this example is imbued with a deeper sense of authenticity as a result of the past it taps into. Moving forwards, alongside the spatial effects detailed above, the preservation of check-ins, by way of foursquare, also impacts on the social realm, as locational information of course has the potential to be seen by friends and vice versa. That is to say, and as noted above, users now inhabit a realm where they can visualise where their friends are, stemming from their check-ins.

7.4 Summary

In this chapter it was my intention to explore the social and spatial impact of check-ins, both as a form of locational archive and as a way of sharing location with others. It was established that for some users the sharing of location, by way of check-ins, allowed them to approach social encounters in a more relaxed, and less obligated manner, as Dennis explains above. At the same

time, sharing locational information with a collection of users also meant that impromptu social encounters became a more common occurrence, altering how certain users approached space and place, symptomatic of this potential, as well as how they felt within these environments. These effects are themselves significant, as mobile telephony is often discussed as reducing social interactions in the public realm, a position that my research evidently shows is incorrect. Following this, the chapter demonstrated that for some users, foursquare does indeed function as a form of technological memory, with the locational past then permeating their present on a daily basis. Alongside this, for some users, foursquare also preserve the past in a manner that feels more secure and enduring, as a symptom of its digital preservation. A corollary to this is that the spatial past can subsequently be approached in various ways, which again is where its significance lies. Firstly, gathered memories can be considered accumulatively, as a '*residual abundance*' (Virilio, 1997: 24), through various applications, enabling users to effectively visualise periods of their past, before interrogating them from various vantage-points, in line with the information required, as demonstrated by Jane above. Secondly, the past in its collective and spatially detailed form has the potential to be shared with others, and thus re-enacted at a later date, with this potentiality being the source of its significance, as opposed to the reality of said re-enactments taking place. Thirdly, the spatial past is algorithmically employed by foursquare itself, as a means of then delivering personalised locational information. For certain users this in its turn provided environmental suggestions that felt more pertinent, personalised and authentic than it would had it come a guide book, for instance. In other words foursquare can affect how some users experience their engagements with space and place. In the final chapter then, I will draw all of my finding together to form a more detailed understanding of the physical, spatial and social impact of foursquare.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Focusing on foursquare, and stemming from an interest in the effect location-based social networks (LBSNs) might be having on physical, spatial and social practices, my thesis has addressed the following questions:

- (1) How do the playful elements of foursquare - points, badges, mayorships - affect how users spatially and socially approach their environment?
Are relationships with familiar environments strengthened? Does the playful engagement with space and place see users wanting to go out more, or lead to them moving through their environment following modified routes? What impact does this form of pervasive play have on existing friendships?
- (2) How does the sharing of location, as well as the use of user-generated locational suggestions, impact identity?
Does it make users feel differently about the spaces they choose to share, as a result of what they think this or that place might signify about them, or does it actually lead them to go to or perhaps avoid certain places? How does the use of user-generated locational suggestions make users feel about themselves when they employ such information?
- (3) How does foursquare affect social practices?
Does it change how users make social arrangement? Does it lead to unexpected or 'serendipitous' encounters? Does it create new social connections?
- (4) Is foursquare used as a locational archive, and if so, how does this impact engagements with space and place?

In order to answer these questions, my first three chapters developed the anti-essentialist position that undergirds this thesis; detailing contributions my research will make as well as identifying gaps in the existing literature it will address. Chapter two explored identity, embodiment and space, as well as the need for empirical research, underlining that in each case, there are no givens but rather embodied engagements in space and place, as well as

understandings of identity, are constructed through physical, spatial and social practices, rather than being predetermined. Consequently, identity, embodiment and experiences of space can be modified, which is significant in light of emerging physical engagements with LBSNs in space and place, and the questions I address. Chapter three explored play, focusing on Huizinga's notion of the 'magic circle' (1938/1992) where 'ordinary' life is perennially theorised as somehow separate from play, before problematizing it with foursquare and the playful engagements with 'ordinary' space it enables. Alongside this, the playful character of all structures was examined, with the argument made that the play of foursquare isn't simply an addition to 'ordinary' space, but more importantly, a new way of approaching 'ordinary' space in terms of its potential. The following four chapters then focused on my data. Chapter four explained my chosen methodology, before justifying its appropriateness apropos the anti-essentialist position developed in my first three chapters, as well as its congruence in getting at the kind of information I have been interested in throughout. Chapter five, the first of my three data analysis chapters, addressed my first research question: How the playful elements of foursquare - points, badges, mayorships - affect how users spatially and socially approach their environment. Chapter six addressed my second research question: how the sharing of location, as well as the use of user-generated locational suggestions, impacted identity. Chapter seven addressed my third and fourth research question: How foursquare affects social practices, and the spatial impact of foursquare being used as a locational archive. In sum then, all three data analysis chapters functioned to develop an understanding of the effect foursquare, as one of the more prominent and popular LBSNs, is having on physical, spatial and social practices of my participants.

In this concluding chapter, I will firstly outline the important findings of this thesis, before detailing contributions my research has made. I will then consider my project's limitations as well as how these limitations might be addressed. Finally, I will conclude with some reflections on future projects exploring LBSNs.

8.1 Findings

Within my opening chapter I discussed what contributions my research will make, as well as gaps within the literature that it will address. I will now outline my findings so as to make these contributions clear.

- **Foursquare problematized the ‘magic circle’:**

For some of my participants the play of foursquare intermingled with their ‘ordinary’ lives. For these participants, play wasn’t so much separate from their ‘ordinary’ but rather intermingled with it, as ‘their ordinary’ lives took on an additional layer of meaning, both tangibly and intangibly speaking; much like the bite and not-bite bitten (Bateson, 1972). The ethereal line between play and ‘ordinary’ life was effectively blurred, as their ‘ordinary’ movements through space and place were simultaneously wrapped up in a desire for points, badges and the attainment of mayorships. This is itself significant given the suggestion that play is always separate from ‘ordinary’ space (Huizinga, 1938/1992; Apter, 1999; Caillois, 1958/2001), as the pervasive play of foursquare evidently isn’t as separate as this distinction might suggest. Accordingly, and in line with the conceptual base developed in chapter three, theories of play should be adapted to accommodate this kind of digitally mediated play. Furthermore, and again in line with chapter three, for some of my participants foursquare didn’t simply offer them a different take on ‘ordinary’ life, but more significantly allowed them to experience ‘ordinary’ life differently. I appreciate that this is a subtle difference, but would nonetheless argue it is a necessary difference to make, for the significance thus felt to be realised. To prioritise ‘ordinary’ conceptions of space as somehow more ‘real’ than playful interactions with this or that space is to overlook the constructed character of all spaces (de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1974/1991), as well as the potential of play.

- **The playful elements of foursquare led to some of my participants going out more, as well as following different routes through the city:**

The flâneur, or rather the practice of *flânerie*, is pertinent here (Benjamin, 1999; Baudelaire, 1964). Just as the Arcades saw the *flâneur* appropriate space and place in a poetic manner, the digital information now overlaying

'real' world environments led some of my participants to explore their environments in a modified fashion. Digital space and its playful possibilities can be likened here to a digital arcade, one that leads to new pathways being written throughout the city, often revolving around a desire for points, badges and the like. For instance, I spoke to several participants who cited specific days when they moved through their environments in a non-destination orientated manner; going to new places on an *ad hoc* basis, so as to check in and gain points. For these participants, or *playeurs* as I referred to them in chapter five, their movements through space, as well as their check-ins saw them going to places that they otherwise wouldn't have, just as they followed routes that they otherwise wouldn't have. For these participants, not only did they find their use of foursquare led to them going out more, they also found their day-to-day lives felt more 'fun'. In other words, the physical, spatial and social practices of their day-to-day lives were affected by foursquare. What is also interesting about these examples is that the spatial engagements that took place were seemingly undertaken in a rather detached fashion. Indeed, the participants who used foursquare in this way, discussed their check-ins as being done quite quickly, as well as a subsequent desire to move on to the next place. For these participants, it wasn't so much an engagement with place they were interested in, but rather the acquisition of points and badges these engagements allowed.

- **Mayorships strengthened existing relationships with familiar locations:**

For several of my participants, mayorships symbolised their relationships with existing places; places that they already frequented and were thus familiar with. For these participants, their mayorships underlined that they were the 'real' habitué. It should be noted that the 'existing' nature of spatial relationships was particularly important here, as the acquisition of mayorships weren't enough on their own to create new spatial relationships. This point was demonstrated by various participants who were clearly uninterested in the mayorships they had acquired by chance, in unfamiliar environments. Nonetheless, for existing spatial relationships, and for some participants, mayorships became a way of legitimatising or confirming their spatial association to certain places. This process was itself

twofold. Firstly, participants would know that they were the mayor of this or that place. Secondly, participants would be aware that other users could see that they were the mayor and so on. The strengthening of existing spatial relationships thus revolved around the status attached to mayorships. For these participants, mayorships also symbolised their loyalty to a place. This loyalty could itself develop for any number of reasons. For instance, I spoke to one participant who associated a particular mayorship with his time at university. His desire to maintain this mayorship in turn stemmed from a desire to remain connected to this period of life. Likewise I spoke to another participant whose mayorship for a local bakery served to remind her that this was one of her favourite places to get food, as well as her place in the community and surrounding area. These individuals would then go back to these places again and again, as a way of maintaining their mayorships; while interestingly limiting the extent to which they explored their environment, which is ostensibly one of the reasons foursquare was designed. Following this, participants experienced these places differently. Some then felt these places were in some way theirs; leading to feelings of sadness when mayorships were 'stolen' by other users. However, the loss of mayorships weren't always seen as being negative. For instance, I spoke with one participant who discussed a period of time when she lived in an area that she grew to dislike, and that when she left she enjoyed seeing her mayorships being taken, as it symbolised her move away from this environment. In sum then, mayorships made participants more aware of significant places, as well as their relationship to these places.

- **The pervasive play of foursquare, and the banter and bragging it entailed, strengthened the social bonds of some participants:**

For some of my participants, an important feature of foursquare was that its playful elements allowed them to effectively strengthen existing social relationships with other foursquare friends. From my interviews, this was particularly the case for those who engaged with foursquare in the same environments. Indeed, the play of foursquare - points, badges, mayorships - provided these participants with a form of competition which they could then socialise over. It isn't just the play of foursquare that keeps some participants playing them, but also the social encounters this form of play can lead to; encounters which take on a double sense of meaning: play and

the sociality experienced through play. Going back to the status surrounding mayorships, as detailed above, for some participants it was precisely this that provided them with ‘bragging rights’, to laud over friends if they became the mayor of a venue they were both competing for. From this position, mayorships, and the status they conferred, could be seen as being tantamount to a form of dressing up, which is where Huizinga (1938/1992: 107) suggests, ‘[the] “differentness” and secrecy of play reaches perfection’. As a symptom of this kind of competition, some participants would then attempt to go to these places more often, to ‘steal’ mayorships from their friends; again illuminating the impact this kind of play had on spatial practices. The strengthening of social ties by foursquare at the same time moved beyond points, badges and mayorships, and also revolved around the physical performance of checking-in. Several participants I spoke with excitedly discussed competing with their partners to see who could be the first person to check in; with one jovially commenting on how strange her and her fiancé must have looked to those outside of the game. I would accordingly suggest that what also helped participants bond here was their feeling of being a part of the game, in the context of those outside of the game, or as Huizinga (Huizinga, 1938/1992: 106) would put it, being ‘apart together’. What should be underlined is that foursquare, and the pervasive play it allows, as peculiar as it may seem to those outside of the game, is simply another way of users deepening and continuing existing social and spatial connections; just as it is another way of experiencing ‘ordinary’ life and its potential.

- **Some participants used check-ins, and therefore location, to represent their identity:**

For some of my participants foursquare allowed them to extend a sense of themselves; it formed part of their ‘story’, one rooted in the use of, and association with, new media technologies. Several of my participants identified themselves as being ‘techies’ and that their connection to foursquare made sense in terms of their constructed bibliography (Giddens, 1991); discussing the expectations their friends had of them, and that these expectations revolved around them employing smartphones and the likes of foursquare. However, foursquare and its impact on identity also moved beyond this, and revolved around the sharing of location through

check-ins, and what these locations subsequently signified about the participants checking-in. For example, some of the younger participants I spoke with wanted to be seen going to the gym and thus associated with a lifestyle revolving around health and fitness, as opposed to being seen at a fast-food restaurant. It was this awareness, that their check-ins might be seen by others, that then made participants think more critically about their check-ins; about what these places might say about them as people. Importantly then, a significant effect of foursquare is that it made some participants consider their spatial movements in relation to their identity; a consideration that could modify the places they chose to go. I would suggest that the sharing of location through foursquare is different to the sharing of location through older mobile social networks like Dodgeball (Humphreys, 2010), as locations weren't always shared with a social encounter in mind, but were also shared as a way for participants to associate themselves with a certain place, and thus to suggest something about their identity in the process. Whereas other social networking sites (SNSs) allow the self to be represented through comments, pictures, videos and the like (Warburton & Hatzipanagos, 2013; Donath & Boyd, 2011; Gauntlett, 2002), foursquare evidently allows the self to be constructed through the places frequented and the significance or connotations these places have for the individuals checking-in. This isn't to suggest that prior to foursquare space and place didn't impact identity and its construction, but rather to acknowledge that foursquare might now make this relationship more explicit in the minds of those engaging with it. Accordingly, this suggests a different kind of approach to identity and its representation through spatial practices.

- **User-generated locational suggestions can make unfamiliar environments feel more familiar, and identities feel more local:**

As my research has demonstrated, foursquare made some participants feel differently about their environment, which then impacted how they moved through them, as well as the places they would check in. At the same time, foursquare also impacted participants' identity, with the sharing of location, and the symbolism of place, used as tools to further a sense of self. However, this isn't the only way foursquare and its engagement with location impacted spatial engagements, or indeed understandings of

identity. Some of my participants used foursquare to explore their environment; employing user-generated locational information, or ‘tips’, as they are referred. From my interviews, there were many examples of this, in both familiar and unfamiliar environments. In familiar environments participants would use foursquare to uncover places they hadn’t experienced before. In unfamiliar environments, foursquare was used to make these places feel more familiar. For the participants who used foursquare in this way, oftentimes the pleasure it gave them revolved around the subsequent feeling that foursquare was providing them with access to spatial information that was written by locals, and as such not accessible to those outside of foursquare, or those who were not local. Participants then not only felt these unfamiliar places were more familiar, but also that they had discovered ‘hidden’ places. For these participants, foursquare was markedly different to more conventional travel guides, like Time Out, for instance, owing to the user-generated nature of ‘tips’, and thus a belief in the authenticity of the information provided. To be clear, and owing to this belief, for some participants, and by way of a process I have termed ‘localisation’ in chapter six, foursquare effectively ‘localised’ their connection to this or that place. Participants felt themselves to be ‘local’, owing to their use of foursquare. Interestingly, the participants I spoke to who used foursquare in this way, did so to avoid commercial simulation of authenticity, such as the likes of Starbucks. Much like the practice of *flânerie* then foursquare was employed by these participants to avoid becoming consumed by the crowd, as well as to unveil ‘local’ spots. Whether or not said experiences stemmed from local sources wasn’t what was at stake; what was important is that that said sources felt authentic, which enabled participants to construct spatial experiences, as well as resistant identities, that similarly felt authentic. This then had a knock on effect on consumption, as these participants then spent more time in smaller, less commercial venues, as opposed to the likes of Starbucks.

- **For some participants foursquare enabled social arrangements to unfold in a more relaxed manner, and led to unexpected social encounters:**

Foursquare can of course be used to see where friends are. For some of my participants, this ability allowed them to subsequently approach social

arrangements in a more relaxed manner. For example, I spoke to several participants who would, when making arrangements to meet up with friends on a certain date, suggest they looked on foursquare to see where they were, as opposed to ringing them to find out. Accordingly, this meant that, on the surface at least, participants were then freer to relax, without having to check their phone to check if anyone was trying to find them: foursquare allowed these social gatherings to unfold in a less determined manner. A corollary to this is that participants were, again on the surface at least, less distracted from their environments. Likewise, I also spoke to participants who discussed the other side of this situation; that the ability to see where friends were meant they were no longer as worried about being left out of social gathering after work, say, if they decided to stay late and finish something off, as they could then use foursquare to catch up with these people at their own pace: foursquare meant that these participants could arrive at a convenient time as opposed to it being prearranged. Foursquare can be seen here as building upon the changes to social coordination allowed by mobile phones (Ling, 2004; Ling & Yttri, 1999, 2002), vis-à-vis them being more open to modification. Moving beyond such research, some of my participants also found that their use of foursquare, and the sharing of location it entailed, led to them engaging in social encounters that they hadn't planned for; leading to them meeting friends that they otherwise wouldn't have. Indeed, I spoke to participants who would see that a friend was nearby, and would then move through the city using a different route, so as to meet up with this person. Likewise, and as identified by Humphreys (2010) regarding the mobile social network Dodgeball, for these participants their environments consequently felt more social, owing to the increased opportunity to connect with others. This doesn't mean, however, that all social encounters were welcomed. Indeed, I spoke to one participant who used false check-ins to avoid certain people, just as I spoke to another participant whose check-in at a pub led to a rather awkward 'serendipitous' encounter. This alludes to another interesting point. The social success of foursquare, regarding the participants I spoke with, more often than not related to social encounters being prearranged, in terms of a specific date, if not a certain time. This accordingly addressed the problem of 'serendipitous' encounters, where their success was more contingent on a complex series of factors: who

participants were with, where they were, and how open they were to engaging in an impromptu encounter.

- **Some of my participants used foursquare to archive their locational movements; to build a 'digital memory lane':**

For some of my participants, their interest in foursquare moved beyond points, badges and mayorships, and instead revolved around the recording of location, through check-ins, and thus the ability to document their day-to-day spatial movements. For these participants, foursquare effectively became a 'mediated memory objects' (Dijck, 2009), which they could then use at any point in the future, to ascertain where they were on this or that day. Accordingly, this use of foursquare can be seen as perhaps a more mainstream example of lifelogging (Raine et al., 2012), where individuals record myriad data on themselves. The level of locational information participants wished to document differed, with some participants only recording certain places they had been, in contrast to other participants who recorded all places. Likewise, the specific reasoning behind this desire to build a locational archive of sorts differed from participant to participant. One element that did link all participants, however, was an interest in the future potential these locational archives might have. For instance, one participant discussed the possibility of reliving their past spatial movements, by re-experiencing the locational movements of a recorded holiday at a later date. Another participant enthusiastically discussed the possibility of sharing his archive with members of his family, and the connection this would allow. Alongside this, a slightly different take on the locational possibilities of this kind of archive also emerged: namely being that foursquare employs check-ins to algorithmically make personalised locational suggestions. For participants with an interest in this, their recorded movements meant that their past could be folded back into their present, spatially speaking. In other words, much like the doubling of space pervasive play allows, their spatial practices were imbued with another layer of information. Some of my participants then discussed foursquare as effectively getting to 'know' them. In either case, participants felt that their locational past could be relived, or re-experienced by others, or themselves,

at different point in time; it was this possibility that excited them, as well as impacted their spatial practices.

8.2 Contributions of My Research

My research contributes to a number of areas revolving around LBSNs and pervasive forms of play, as well as filling gaps in the literature as identified in my opening chapter. I will now outline its significant contributions.

- **My research focuses on a specific LBSN, and the people using it:**

The topic of location-based applications is an increasingly popular area of research that has been written about from a number of different vantage-points (Richardson & Wilken, 2009; Hjorth, 2008a, 2008b; Richardson, 2007). Indeed, smartphones have been discussed in terms of their effect on walking and the making of place (Richardson & Wilkinson, 2009), the body's incorporation of these devices (Richardson, 2007; lasen, 2004), as well as the physical attention mobile screens necessitate (Introna & Ilharco, 2004), and their impact on our 'corporeal schematic' (MacColl and Richardson, 2008: 106). However, such research oftentimes isn't undertaken in relation to one specific LBSN, or one specific pervasive game, nor are the participants involved mentioned, or the methodologies discussed. Of course there are examples that differ (Humphreys, 2007, 2010; Licoppe & Inada, 2008). Nonetheless, these examples weren't exploring foursquare - an established LBSN, with over 50 million users worldwide, and over 6 billion check-ins (foursquare, 2014) - and therefore my study contributes to research revolving around LBSNs, and their impact on physical, spatial and social practices.

- **My research contributes to understandings of play and the impact of overlaying 'real' world environments with digital information:**

As established in chapters three and five, play has traditionally been theorised as somehow separate from 'ordinary' life (Huizinga, 1938/1992; Caillois, 1958/2001); a position popularised by Huizinga's (1938/1991) conception of a 'magic circle', which appears in literature around gaming (Apter, 1991; Bogost, 2006; Caillois, 1958/2001; Salen & Zimmerman,

2004) just as it now appears in literature revolving around new mobile devices and pervasive forms of play (Moore, 2011; de Souza e Silva & Hjorth, 2009; de Souza e Silva & Sutko, 2009; Montola, 2005). What is noteworthy about my research is that I have explored how play can be seen as impacting the lives of various foursquare users, by engaging with those presently using foursquare; illuminating that play can intermingle with 'ordinary' life. This is significant given the enduring suggestion that play is interminably separate from 'ordinary' lives (Apter, 1991; Caillois, 1958/2001; Salen & Zimmerman, 2004). My research also goes further than this, as I have argued that this intermingling shouldn't be understood as simply an addition to 'ordinary' life, but rather a different way of approaching 'ordinary' life in terms of its potential. This difference is itself borne out by my finding and the impact foursquare had on the 'ordinary' lives of my participants. Accordingly, my research contributes to discussions revolving play, and its development in areas such as location-based play and LBSNs, just as it contributes to understandings of foursquare.

- **My research contributes to understandings of the representation of identity through LBSNs and the sharing of location:**

When I began this project in October 2010, there was a marked gap in the literature surrounding LBSNs, the sharing of location and its impact on identity. Since then, there have been examples of research that examine foursquare, while addressing the idea of identity being represented through engagements with space and place (Schwartz & Halegoua, 2014; Cramer et al., 2011). However, my research differs from these examples, as I not only address the sharing of location in relation to identity, but I also examine the use of locational suggestions, in the form of tips, and their impact on how participants then felt about themselves and so on. Following this, my research effectively adds to discussions revolving around the use of location-based application and their effect on identity.

- **My research contributes to understandings of how LBSNs are used to make social arrangements:**

As previously detailed, there have been significant piece of research exploring the social and spatial impact of mobile social networks, such as Humphreys's (2007, 2010) important and revealing examination of Dodgeball. Alongside this there has been other examples of research that have specifically explored the spatial and social impact of pervasive games, such as Licoppe & Inada's (2008) study of the 'mobile massively multiplayer location-based Role-Playing Game (RPG)' (Joffe, 2007) Mogi. In many ways, foursquare can be seen here as a location-based application that bridges the gap between these two networks; containing elements akin to older SNSs, in addition to utilising gaming elements. My research in turn contributes to understanding of how new mobile social networks are presently affecting social practices, owing to the incorporation of play, and the use of GPS.

- **My research contributes to understandings of 'lifelogging'**

As detailed above, lifelogging (Raine et al., 2012), involves the process of recording data on oneself. An example of this can be found in Microsoft engineer Gordon Bells project to document myriad aspects of his life.

Bell attempted to digitally record as much of his life as possible including photos, e-mails, documents, memorabilia, tweet, phone calls, GPS coordinates of his movements, instant messages, appointment calendars, daily activities, and much more. (Hoskins, 2010: 85)

Lifelogging is made easier now by the 'availability, sophistication, capacity and portability of ... capture/record technologies ... they are smaller, lighter, wireless-internet enabled, have longer battery life and are cheaper' (House & Churchill, 2008: 300). Moving forwards, location-based applications offer people new ways of documenting their day-to-day movements through space and place, in a manner that wouldn't have been possible - for the public at least - a short time ago. My study thus contributes to research on 'lifelogging', by providing 'real' world accounts

of participants employing foursquare to build locational archives, as well as their reasoning for doing so.

8.3 Limitations of My Research

My research project of course had limitations which impacted its findings. I will now outline these limitations, while reflecting on how they might be addressed.

- **My research used a qualitative methodology:**

In line with the anti-essentialist position developed in the first three chapters (Foucault, 1998; Giddens, 1991; de Certeau, 1984; Lefebvre, 1974/1991), as well as the kind of information I have been interested in, a qualitative methodology was chosen. Consequently, it was never my intention to make generalisations, but rather to cast a light on the impact foursquare is having on the physical, spatial and social practices of my participants. Nonetheless, had I employed a mixed methods approach, utilising both qualitative and quantitative methods, it might have given me further insight into how foursquare is employed, as well the effects it is having. As Neuman (2011: 165) suggests 'A study that combines both tends to be richer and more comprehensive'. Future projects could thus do just this, and combine both qualitative and quantitative methods.

- **I interviewed a small number of participants:**

I interviewed a small number of foursquare users, as it has always been my intention to focus on quality over quantity; to focus on gaining rich information from each participant, as a means to really understanding how they used foursquare, as well as what effect they felt it had on their physical, spatial and social practices. Although this decision has led to me gaining rich data on foursquare, this data could have been further enriched had I spoken to more foursquare users. Future projects could therefore engage with more foursquare users.

- **Comparatively speaking I interviewed less female foursquare users:**

As discussed in chapter four, I found it extremely difficult to find foursquare users who were willing to sit down with me for an hour or more, and discuss how they used this particular LBSN, as well as how they understood it as impacting their physical, spatial and social practices. The participants who did respond to my various recruiting techniques were on the whole male. Furthermore, these participants then put me in contact with other male foursquare users. By speaking to comparatively less female foursquare users, it limited my ability to glean potential gender differences in terms of use and effect. Although it has never been my intention to make generalisations, this may nonetheless have cast a more varied light on how foursquare is used, and how its effects might be felt. Future projects could thus seek to recruit more female users.

- **Participants were only interviewed:**

My findings stem from a series of individual semi-structured interviews. As Neuman (2011: 164) notes, 'in social research, we build on the principle that we learn more by observing from multiple perspectives than by looking from only one a single perspective'. Future projects could combine interviews with other methods. For example, they could also employ focus groups, group interviews, participant observation and/or participant diaries. Again, annexing interviews with one or more of these suggested methods could help build a better understanding of foursquare. Alongside this, new development in research methods seeking to examine people as they traverse through space and place (Cressie and Wikle, 2011; Cresswell, 2010; Cresswell & Merriman, 2010), while engaging with digital technologies (Buscher et al., 2011; D'Andrea et al., 2011), have subsequently emerged, in part as a result of 'the new mobilities paradigm' (Shelly & Urry, 2006). New 'walk-along' techniques have been created to interact with moving people (Myers, 2011; Rose et al., 2010), just as the mobile phones has been seen as a viable method of gaining access to participants at any time, owing to the interminable connectivity they allow (Berry and Hamilton, 2010). Accordingly, future projects could employ one or more of these new methods, perhaps leading to new findings, as well as exploring their pros and cons.

- **My research solely focused on foursquare:**

Following in a similar vein of thought to research that had focused on just one mobile social network (Humphreys, 2007, 2010), or just one location-based game (Licoppe & Inada, 2008), this decision in part stemmed from a desire to make specific points about foursquare; a decision I stand by. Moving forwards, however, future research could explore new and emerging location-based applications and games.

- **My research is a snapshot of foursquare and its use:**

In many ways, my research focuses on how participants felt about foursquare and its effect, during one interview. It would be extremely interesting to also explore how participants' usage changed over time, as this might provide other valuable insights into foursquare. Future research projects could thus explore this, by doing follow up interviews, for instance.

8.4 Reflections on Future Projects

From the very beginning, the intention of this research has been to examine the impact foursquare was having on the physical, spatial and social practices of my participants; approaching this along four lines of enquiry. This interest stemmed from a fascination in the 'virtual coimplacement' (Moores, 2006) smartphones and location-based applications might allow, and the different ways they may affect how people subsequently approached their environment, themselves and their social connections. The validity of this interest is borne out by my findings, as detailed above. At the same time, however, this project has also taught me many things beyond my initial research questions. Over the course of my thesis, I have continually been struck by just how difficult it is to examine any new media technology, be it smartphones, LBSNs, pervasive forms of play, and so on, owing to not only the speed in which these technologies and applications are developed, but also, and perhaps more significantly, the speed in which they disappear.

When I started this project in October 2010, there were numerous examples of location-based applications on the market, just as there were numerous

examples of pervasive games. These included: Gowalla a LBSN that employed similar gaming elements to foursquare, Google Latitude, My Town a LBSN which also employed gaming elements, enabling users to buy 'real' properties in a Monopoly-esque manner, as well as Loopt and many more. In addition, Facebook had just launched Places, its own 'check-in' service, allowing users to let friends know where they were. During this period, location-based applications were seen as being the future of smartphones; a future that would bring various spatial possibilities in its wake, as well as new forms of connectivity. I'm not suggesting this hasn't been the case, to be clear, but rather pointing out that the initial 'hype' surrounding location-based applications and pervasive games has lessened, or perhaps normalised, over with time, just as the vast majority of these applications have now disappeared. Fortunately for my fieldwork at least, this wasn't the case for foursquare. Foursquare has continued to grow, just as it has continued to adapt itself to an ever changing landscape.

Indeed, throughout my research, foursquare has seemingly made a concerted effort to distance itself from the playful base it launched from. This point was made by several of my participants, who prophetically suggested that it was gradually being repositioned as a tool for gaining unique locational information, as opposed to being a 'game'. Following this, foursquare's user-generated tips has henceforth been its focus, as well as its check-in data seen as a valuable commodity with which businesses could better understand the spatial practices of their customers. This trajectory has more recently culminated in foursquare being split into two separate, while interlinked, applications: foursquare and Swarm. The former, foursquare, is now marketed as being an application for gaining location information, whereas Swarm is marketed as being an application for keeping up with, and meeting, friends. Indeed, swarm makes use of various new features, such as the ability to make social suggestions to friends, which they can then either agree to or decline. In short, foursquare has separated its social side from its spatial side, while reducing the onus placed on play. This move can be seen following a similar logic to Facebook, which recently changed its 'messaging' service into a standalone application: messenger.

Future projects could perhaps explore the extent to which foursquare impacts the places users choose to frequent, beyond play; building on my findings in terms of consumption. Indeed, it would be extremely interesting to examine whether location-based applications like foursquare influence what new establishments are built in this or that area. Likewise, it would be extremely interesting to examine swarm, and the extent to which these new features impact social arrangements, and the spatial practices that stem from them. Again, my finding could be built upon here, by comparing them with new effects and so on. What is clear from these developments then is that LBSNs will continue to change, just as new uses will emerge. Whatever direction they might take, however, my thesis has nonetheless examined the impact foursquare has had on the physical, spatial and social practices of my participants; producing findings that will contribute to future discussions revolving around location-based applications and pervasive play, as well as pointing to new pathways of exploration.

Appendices

Appendix A Participant List

Table 1 Participant List

Name:	Sex:	Age:	Occupation:
Adrian	M	37	Information Technology
Amy	F	37	Web Designer
Ben	M	23	Diversity Project Officer
Bill	M	42	Computer Science Worker
David	M	27	Marketing Executive
Dennis	M	29	CEO
Doug	M	34	University Lecturer
Drew	M	26	Marketing and Advertising Executive
Emily	F	29	Programmes Administration Manager
Henry	M	37	Manager
James	M	33	Pensions Administrator
Jane	F	29	Computer Scientist
John	M	65	Retired
Mark	M	19	Student
Nigel	M	36	Manager of an I.T. Support Team
Paul	M	24	Apple Store Genius
Richard	M	30	University Worker
Robbie	M	33	Technical Architect BBC
Ryan	M	31	BBC Employee
Samantha	F	22	Intern
Sarah	F	34	Unemployed due to health
Terry	M	28	Financial Manager

Appendix B Email to Universities

Subject: PhD Research Project

To whom it may concern,

I am a PhD student at the University of Southampton, exploring how, when and why people use the location-based social network foursquare. I am currently moving into the empirical stage of my research and therefore am interested in getting in contact with foursquare users. If you could forward this message to all of your students I would really appreciate it:

Do you use foursquare and live in Southern Britain?

If you do, you're invited to take part in a research project being undertaken by Michael Saker, a Sociology PhD student at the University of Southampton, to explore how, when and why people use the location-based social network foursquare.

By taking part you will be contributing important information to an emerging field, as well as gaining some interesting insights into your own connection to foursquare.

For more information on this project, as well as more reasons why you should take part, please email Michael Saker mgs1g10@soton.ac.uk

Many thanks for your help.

Michael Saker

Appendix C Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Main questions:

- How, when and why do you use foursquare?

From the ensuing answers I will lead into the questions categorised below. The ordering of questions will depend on the direction taken by the interviewee.

Categories:

- Social
- Locational
- Play
- Identity

Table 2 Social Questions

Main questions:	Additional question:	Clarifying question:
Do you use foursquare to make social arrangements with existing friends?	How? When? Why?	Can you expand on this? Is there anything else you could tell me? Can you give me some examples?
Do you use foursquare to share what you've been doing with friends?	↓	↓
Do you use foursquare to see what your friends have been doing?	↓	↓
Do you use foursquare to meet new people?	↓	↓

Does foursquare work well in terms of its social aspect?	↓	↓
Sum up how you feel the social aspect of foursquare affects (if it does) your day-to-day life?	↓	↓

Table 3 Locational Questions

Main questions:	Additional question:	Clarifying question:
Do you use foursquare to explore your surroundings?	How? When? Why?	Can you expand on this? Is there anything else you could tell me? Can you give me some examples?
Do you use foursquare to explore environments that you aren't necessarily familiar with? For instance, when you're on holiday.	↓	↓
Do you use foursquare to keep a track of where you've been?	↓	↓
Does foursquare change the way you feel about the environments/locations you frequent?	↓	↓

How do you feel the locational information of foursquare relates to the spaces/environments you inhabit?	↓	↓
Do you use foursquare to keep a track of where your friends have been?	↓	↓
Do you inscribe locational 'tips' or suggestions?	↓	↓
Do you use, or comment on, locational 'tips' or suggestions left by others?	↓	↓
Sum up how you feel the locational aspect of foursquare affects (if it does) your day-to-day life?	↓	↓

Table 4 Play Questions

Main questions:	Additional question:	Clarifying question:
Do you use foursquare to compete against yourself, in terms of points, check-ins, badges and so on?	How? When? Why?	Can you expand on this? Is there anything else you could tell me? Can you give me some examples?
Do you use foursquare to compete against your friends?	↓	↓

Do you use foursquare to compete against people you don't know?	↓	↓
Does the 'gaming' side of foursquare affect the way you use it, in terms of the social and locational aspects?	↓	↓
Do you use foursquare to 'save money' or 'unlock rewards'?	↓	↓
Are you the 'Mayor' of any venues? If so, how many, and what benefits does this allow you?	↓	↓
Are there other situations, not noted above, where foursquare, or the use of foursquare, is playful?	↓	↓
Sum up how you feel the gaming aspect of foursquare affects (if it does) your day-to-day life?	↓	↓

Table 5 Identity Questions

Main questions:	Additional question:	Clarifying question:
Do you see foursquare or the use of foursquare, as forming a part of your identity?	If so, how?	<p>Can you expand on this?</p> <p>Is there anything else you could tell me?</p> <p>Can you give me some examples?</p>
Does foursquare allow you to be self-expressive?	↓	↓

Conclude by asking participant “if there is anything else you’d like to tell me?”

Appendix D Participant Information Sheet

Study Title: Smartphones and Pervasive Play

Researcher: Michael Saker

Ethics number: 1029

Please read this information carefully before deciding to take part in this research. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

I am a PhD student, undertaking this research to explore how, when and why foursquare users use foursquare. The developers of foursquare suggest it is used to 'keep up with friends', 'discover what's nearby', and to 'save money and unlock rewards'. This research will examine how far these suggestions are correct, while shedding light on other uses not necessarily accounted for. This research project is funded by the University of Southampton.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen as you are a user of foursquare.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you agree to take part in this research project, you will be involved in the following, between June and December:

Interview:

You will be interviewed once, between June and December. Interviews will lastly for approximately 1 hour. Questions will revolve around: how, when and why, you use foursquare. Prior to the interview taking place, I will email you to arrange a convenient time to call you on the telephone. The location of the interview will be established between you and me during this call. Interviews will take place in locations that you regularly check in to. The time/date will also be arranged to suit you. Lastly, the interview will be audio recorded.

Appendix D

Foursquare data:

At the beginning of the study you will be given the option of befriending me on foursquare. This will give me access to the following information: your last five check-ins, total check-ins, badges collected, current mayorships, friends, tips, 'to-do' list and 'done' list.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

By taking part participants you will be contributing important information to an emerging field, which will help better understand the uses and effects of smartphones and foursquare. At the same time you may also gain some interesting insights into your own connection to foursquare, while examining how, when and why you use this application.

Are there any risks involved?

No there are not. The risks involved are no more than would be encountered in day-to-day life.

Will my participation be confidential?

Your identity will be kept anonymous to the public and your confidentiality will be ensured.

Careful measures will be taken to ensure that research data is not disclosed to public/unauthorised individuals. You will be given a pseudonym, unless specifically requested otherwise. The data that emerges from this study will either be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet, within the University, or kept on a password protected University hard drive.

What happens if I change my mind?

You can withdraw from this study at any time.

What happens if something goes wrong?

In the unlikely case of something going wrong, you should contact Professor Rosalind Edwards, (023) 8059 5857, r.s.edwards@soton.ac.uk

Appendix E Consent Form

CONSENT FORM (22.06.12 v5)

Study title: Smartphones and Pervasive Play

Researcher name: Michael Saker

Study reference: 1029

Ethics reference: 1029

Please initial the box(es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet
(22.06.12/v7) and have had the opportunity to ask

I agree to take part in this research project and agree for
my data to be used for the purpose of this study

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may
withdraw at any time without my legal rights being affected

I am happy to be contacted about this research project in
the future

I agree interviews will be audio recorded

I agree that my foursquare data (i.e. 'check-ins', badges, mayorships,
'tips' and friends) gathered between June and December will be used in
this research project

I agree that if I choose to befriend Michael Saker on foursquare, he
will have real-time access to the following information: the last five
check-ins, total check-ins, badges collected, current mayorships, friends, tips,
'to-do' list and 'done' list

Data Protection

I understand that information collected about me during my participation in this study will be stored on a password protected computer and that this information will only be used for the purpose of this study. All files containing any personal data will be made anonymous.

Name of participant (print name).....

Signature of participant.....

Date.....

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