Since the advent of Web 2.0, the Internet has greatly changed. Wireless networks, mobile and portable devices have spread to the extent that the distinction between online and offline has almost disappeared. Moreover, even though we can access the Internet from mobile broadband or wireless networks, we are now able to do all the activities that we used to do on the Internet just by using specific apps (such as email services, maps, social networks, newspapers, RSS feed, and so on). We are constantly connected, and as a result, the space we inhabit, the city, is becoming a place where the flow of information overlays and integrates the existing network of roads and buildings. Social media tend to work more and more on real time participation and has currently embraced location-based features. Hence, I want to explore applications such as Foursquare that use location-based, real-time features, and explore the prior phenomena that they re-mediate. Additionally, I will review how our ways of looking at and experiencing the city are affected by Web 2.0 first, and in particular by location-based social networks. Therefore, I will use and analyze Foursquare (with some comparisons to other location-based services) as an example of this tendency. I will also examine Foursquare's game dynamics and “tips”, which differentiate it from its competitors. The concept of building identity online will also be addressed in relation to the sharing of one's location and how these factors enhance performative aspects. I will conclude by investigating how the custom of checking-in at venues and location-based social networks could also be tools for user-generated-surveillance. My theoretical approach is grounded in the cross field between the studies of (new) media, performance, surveillance, space and society.
From Geographia to Google Maps

What is considered to be the first “map” is actually a drawing dating from 6200 BC that was found in Çatalhöyük, Turkey. As a matter of fact, the drawing, which is said to represent the aforementioned town, with an erupting volcano in the background, has not been universally accepted as map. Nonetheless, what is significant is that the undertaking of depicting our perception of the world predates by far any written document. Mapping and the practice of cartography has changed in many ways over the centuries; maps changed in shape and served a multiplicity of purposes. They were used to represent a village, for example, or to control the borders of conquered territories. In fact, the creation of detailed maps has gone hand-in-hand with the developing of empires. One of the first accurate accounts of cartography was Ptolemy's Geographia, which includes a world map of the era. It represents what was known to Western civilization in the second century AD, and it is the first one to use longitudinal and latitudinal coordinates, which later on became the standard system to position geographical locations. Following the scientific and technological development of societies, maps have been drawn on different materials: from stone and wood to paper, which has long been the most common medium for production and distribution. In the past decades, production has moved to the computer, and distribution to the Internet. Already in 2005 (the year of the launch of the Google Maps service) the amount of maps distributed per day on the Internet was estimated at over 200 million. That number is higher than the number of maps being printed on paper each day (Peterson 1). What makes cartography so powerful? We are so used to seeing and using maps that we tend to forget that the representation of the space surrounding us is an artifact that only tries to represent actual space, and is therefore not “real”. The power of maps (and of who produces them) is inherent in them being an interpretation. According to Susan Sontag, we can argue the impossibility of objectively depicting reality in photography (6-7). It is unachievable to portray the world “as it is” in cartography either, since it is beyond the bounds of
possibility to have a scale 1:1 map, unless one might want to emulate Borges's cartographers of the empire, as referenced by Jean Baudrillard in “Simulacra and Simulations” (166-167). The process of creating a map is a selective one, some information is displayed, while other information is left out. Moreover, how this happens is inevitably dependent on the culture that produces it.

As a matter of fact, the closest we can get to a scale 1:1 map is through user-generated mapping, which I will further investigate. As mentioned earlier, maps have been the subject of progressive digitization and services such as Google Maps and its API played a fundamental role in distributing them. In fact, the use of maps to show routes and locate businesses has become ubiquitous and most new cellular phones are sold with a built-in GPS mapping function. In addition, not only has their quality and accuracy changed, but also the ways we use them. The popularity of online maps has made them more appealing to the everyday user, increasing interaction and adding services such as Google Street View. These features give a new dimension to mapping and to the users' experience.

**Web 2.0 and Maps 2.0**

It might not be necessary to explain all the characteristics of Web 2.0, since the O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 conference has largely made it a familiar term (Harrison and Barthel 158-159). Nonetheless, I feel it is useful to highlight the main aspects that influenced our interaction with maps and the evolution from the Web to apps that is currently occurring. According to Harrison and Barthel:

What O'Reilly (2005) identifies as . . . Web 2.0 is the ‘architecture of participation’ created by web enterprises whose applications invite, facilitate, encourage or make it possible for users to interact, share knowledge and information with each other and construct content. . . . [It] facilitat[es] user-generated content and capitaliz[es] on users’ products for their own survival and profit. (159)
From a cartographic point of view, some of the features that highly increased our interaction with maps are the Web as platform, user-generated content and the interoperability of information systems. Google Maps has a feature called My Places (formerly known as My Maps) that allows the user to customize his/her own maps, creating routes and adding location-based information on top of it. All of this can be synched across all other Google platforms such as Google Earth, Places and Maps, including their mobile versions (Asakawa). This is a fundamental shift and according to Kelly in the article “We Are the Web”, the ability to modify maps to suit personal needs has allowed “cartography [to go] from spectator art to participatory democracy.” (3)

In fact, not only are we able to access on portable devices what previously required atlases and guide books, but we can now customize maps and, through GPS, see ourselves on the map, as if we were part of it. Moreover, the participatory aspect in the shift from paper to multimedia maps creates agency. Discussing electronic literature, Janet Murray defines agency as “the satisfying power to take meaningful action and see the results of our decisions and choices” (126). Hence, Google Maps and Google Earth create agency in our experience of cartography. Furthermore, Foursquare increases agency with its game dynamics and the possibility of actually mapping and building a database of venues and places, which users can tag and leave tips for. We are given the opportunity to re-map the city. The virtual territory of the online town is virgin and tools such as Foursquare give us the chance to modify it, in a playful way. The program allows users to earn different badges depending on the frequency and labeling of their check-ins. All locations (or “venues”) are added to the database by the users; Foursquare works on a Google Maps API. They can also submit tips and notes about venues. In fact, the application works both as a social networking website but also as a glocal guide, constantly updated with reviews. Where by using the word glocal I mean a “strategic integration and interaction between globalisation and localization” (Foglio, and Stanevicius 26).
Remediation and Gamification

Bolter and Grusin define remediation as “the representation of one medium in another” (45). In this regard I would move from Google Maps to Foursquare. The combination of social networking capabilities, a user-generated tip/review platform and a travel journal results in a complete structure that makes for a good subject of analysis. The inevitable comparison with its main competitor has to acknowledge the fact that Facebook Places, despite having the potential of millions of subscribers, utilizes the check-in function as a mere feature within the broader structure of Facebook and game dynamics or tips are completely absent.

In fact, one of the foregrounding aspects of Foursquare is its use of pervasive, alternate reality, gaming elements. In its attempt to turn everyday activities into a game, it allows the user to earn points, mayorships and badges while playing and interacting with the network. The person who has the most check-ins in a venue becomes the mayor. S/he will be featured in the venue page and be reminded of his of her position every time s/he checks-in. “You're still the Mayor!” will pop up right after the check-in and one will have earned more points. While if the user is not the mayor, one might get “Every check-in counts” and be reminded of the number of days that separate the user from the mayorship. Sometimes one receives more points depending on reasons that might vary from the distance from the last check-in to unlocking badges. It is all presented with pleasant graphics and the user is constantly rewarded. Every single check-in gains one point and it is possible to unlock site-specific badges through multiple check-ins in certain locations. The ranks of the badges change and grow constantly. Some of them can be unlocked only in certain places during particular events, and others can be unlocked following certain brands. The badges earned are displayed as military rank insignia, as though having more badges elevates the status of the user among the other players. Moreover, users are always given the opportunity to share each event (a check-in, an earned badge, a mayorship gained) on different social networks, such as Facebook or Twitter. This, not only creates more engagement and allows the user to publicize his/her
achievement but it has the effect of giving more visibility to Foursquare itself.

In fact, Foursquare's use of gamification techniques has multiple layers. The goal claimed by the company is to have people engaging more in social activities in the “physical space”. Therefore, they use game dynamics to increase the number of participants and their interaction (Cramer, Ahmet, Rost, and Holmquist 1). In fact, to gain points and badges the user needs to spend time on the platform. The system encourage users to constantly play with features such as a leaderboard which shows the amount of current points they and their friends have gained over the past seven days, hence, it changes constantly; this is aimed at keeping the competition more open. A similar rule applies to mayorships, as explained on Foursquare's website: “we calculate mayorships based on the number of days that you've checked into a place over the past 60 days to keep mayorships current” (Foursquare). This example of mainstream gamification illustrates the principles which Jesper Juul describes in *A Casual Revolution*; more people are starting to play games without being gamers. They play in their free time on different devices, often on portable ones such as smartphones. The target audience of Foursquare is, in fact, not the gamer, but potentially everyone with a relevant technical device. The game dynamics should make it fun to play and create commitment, but not interfere with the simplicity of the service. According to Juul, “Expert gamers … play for the longer term rewards of competition and rankings, whereas casual gamers play for the shorter-term rewards of beauty and distraction” (25). Foursquare incorporates some competition but it is not aimed at advancing through the complexities of the game but rather to keep a constant feeling of challenge among the participants. Its dynamics are those of a relaxed social game though, and the user gets rewarded for every single activity s/he performs.

The game dynamics are also helping to build a solid up-to-date collection of locations all over the world. In fact, each of the users, in a Magellan-like quest to explore and map the world, is creating an unprecedented database of venues and places. In addition, the platform is built, keeping an eye towards businesses and their promotion; since check-ins are broadcast to friends, there is a
constant word-of-mouth happening on the site. This, together with the tip/review system, can become a powerful advertising tool. Moreover, the deals that can be unlocked through check-ins and the points/badges (e.g. one gets extra points if checking-in to a venue for three days in the same week) foster frequency and business retention. In the end, perhaps above all, it also functions as a statistics engine of people's habits.

Mobile Apps and Augmentation. Do you Remember Virtual Reality?

When the Internet initially developed and became popular, part of the discourse that promoted it, was about the disembodied freedom that could be found in what was then called cyberspace. The word was coined by science-fiction author William Gibson, and then used to describe both virtual reality and the networks of connected computers including all the functionalities of the early World Wide Web (Bryant 140).

Today we might find it hard to relate to this concept. The popularity of virtual reality, which reached its height in the 1990s, has since then been losing ground in new media company projects. It is not the purpose of this essay to forecast whether virtual reality will still be a major player in the future, but as a matter of a fact, right now augmented reality seems to be have become the subject of technological debates. Some iconic data was recently presented on TechCrunch, a technology-based critical website; the article showed Google queries on augmented reality (AR) surpassing for the first time those on virtual reality (VR) in 2009 (Schonfeld). The difference in nomenclature is a substantial difference in what these technologies do. AR works by enhancing the current perception of physical reality while VR creates a parallel, simulated, world. The change has been driven by different factors, such as the advent of wireless Internet and the size of portable devices which are able to connect to the web that have gotten smaller and smaller. This has the potential to affect our way of experiencing the city as well. In the 1990s to be connected to the Internet still meant to be sitting at home, in front of a bulky computer, and one's activity was mostly that of reading, chatting
or downloading content. Today laptops and cellular phones with Internet capabilities are replacing stationary computers. Likewise, we have the possibility to be always connected, both at home or anywhere in populated areas. Moreover, after the Web 2.0 (r)evolution the relationship with the online content became bidirectional, creating and sharing content is a fundamental part of one's online experience.

The shift towards mobile technologies and the rise of computer-like cellular phones have also affected our way of perceiving the public space. We are constantly connected, when we are walking in the streets or sitting in a cafè, and this gives us the possibility to share our location in real-time. Is this going to be the end of the online vs. offline dialectic? Townsend, quoted by Humphreys, “suggests that mobile technology changes the urban metabolism by accelerating the exchange of information to the point that it can bring about a ‘real-time’ city” (3). The connected city merges virtual and physical together. Moreover, the dualism that also used to imply being at home or in an indoor environment (where one could have accessed the Internet) as opposed to being outside becomes irrelevant. Once we start having a deep interaction between communication technologies and urban space, the city becomes not only a city of streets but also one of information. Therefore, being able to access online information and connect with others wherever we are, affects the way we perceive the physical space. Hence, the physical and the digital coexist, and they create a new space, which differs from the virtual or the augmented. Such a state of convergence is what de Souza e Silva defines as hybrid:

[E]very shift in the meaning of an interface requires a reconceptualization of the type of social relationships and spaces it mediates. Because mobile devices create a more dynamic relationship with the Internet, embedding it in outdoor, everyday activities, we can no longer address the disconnection between physical and digital spaces. I name this new type of space hybrid space. (de Souza e Silva 262)

As she explains thoroughly in her article, different definitions were, and still are, used to
refer to this state of being. I will not analyze them in depth, but I will provide a summary of how contemporary scholars have tried to define this emerging space. Moreover, I will explain why I will use the term hybrid, as it seems the most appropriate to describe the current expansion of the online realm through mobile devices. Milgram and Colquhoun use the term 'mixed reality', “to define situations in which it is not clear whether the primary environment is 'real' or 'virtual' or when there is no predominance of 'real' or 'virtual' elements in the environment” (de Souza e Silva 264) but they are more concerned with visual and technical aspects of augmentation rather than the social or communicative. Ishii, despite expanding the notion to the change in perception of the digital to the physical does not cover the networking aspects either. Lev Manovich, on the other hand, acknowledges the switch from the virtual 90's to an augmented 00's and in its notion of augmented space he is the first to extend his definition to the urban space, considering Janet Cardiff's audio walks as a way of augmenting reality. What is still lacking is the recognition of the role of social interaction and the constant flow of information as the game-changer for redesigning and rearranging our urban space. “It is [...] the mix of social practices that occur simultaneously in digital and in physical spaces, together with mobility, that creates the concept of hybrid reality” (de Souza e Silva 265).
This definition recognizes the importance of social networks and communication in relation to public space. Since the rise of smartphones sales and connectivity via mobile devices, it is important to specifically address the impact of this new space of information that overlaps with the physical. Augmentation now works complementary with GPS and there are already countless apps that ask one to automatically detect his/her position. It is interesting to see what a powerful tool the constant sharing of people's location is becoming; it leads to more personalized services for the user and a more effective targeting of advertising for businesses. The development of numerous mash-ups or apps that work on or with the Google Maps API is also a sign of how we are re-writing and re-reading geographical data. In terms of production, graphic aspect and usability.

#Tagging, #Geotagging and the #Rhizome

In David Weiberger's book *Everything is Miscellaneous: The Power of the New Digital Disorder*, there are three categories of order presented. Weiberger considers the first order to be structuring, as in putting books on shelves. The second is to arrange products into categories, to classify; while the third order is tagging and other meta-data. The latter changed our way of
cataloging. It substituted taxonomy with social indexing, currently referred to as *folksonomy*. Folksonomy is, in fact, the bottom-up practice of cataloging information online. The word, as reported by the New York Times in 2005, was coined by Thomas Vander Wal to describe the phenomenon of tagging. Despite the fact that people are just “throwing words out there for their own use”, as Vander Wal puts it (Pink), the development of a bottom-up approach to organizing information proved to be an efficient way to catalog large numbers of data. In fact, the practice of tagging was soon adopted by websites as a quick way of indexing information. This new practice for organizing knowledge rose together with the expansion of user-generated content, as less technical skills were required to perform these tasks, and online services actively relied on the data uploaded by users for their growth.

In the case of Foursquare, users generate all the content. There is a platform, working on the GoogleMaps API, that allows users to add venues to the database. Since the service works on GPS-enabled mobile phones, the venues are automatically geotagged (given geographical identification metadata, such as latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates), and further information can be given by the user, the name of the street, state, country, and also how the venue should be named and categorized. The categorization works in two ways: categories and tags. Interestingly enough, it makes visually clear the coexistence between taxonomy and folksonomy. The venues need to be classified according to a scheme; there is a variety of categories to choose from (Arts & Entertainment, College & University, Food, Great Outdoors Home/Work/Other, Nightlife Spot, Shop, Travel Spot), and each of them presents more precise subcategories. The only users who can later edit this information are the user who uploaded the venue and certain so-called 'super-users'. This empowers the people who “colonize” more and who add more venues to the database. Inherently in the act of cataloging and mapping there is the power to influence (voluntarily or not). Furthermore, in the tags section, any user could add extra details to the given venue as there are almost no restrictions to the choice of words that can be used.
Foursquare has not been the first service (even though later on in this essay I will address the first experiment, Dodgeball) to deal with location-based social networking but it has indeed been among the forerunners and through its success has brought media attention to the issue. Now geolocation is becoming ubiquitous as almost anything can be geotagged, including tweets or news. GPS-enabled cellular phones can automatically geotag pictures as we upload them on a website. This practice of entering information is reinforcing the concept of the rhizome, already used when describing the connection of data on the Web. Deleuze and Guattari used the term to describe a structure that allows for multiple, horizontal, non-hierarchical entry and exit points in data representation and interpretation (Wardrip-Fruin, and Montfort 407-410). It is opposed to the arborescent model, which is hierarchical and its connections develop vertically and linearly. There is a clear parallel between an arborescent system based on taxonomy and a rhizomatic one built on folksonomy. The cartographic aspect of Foursquare works on the second model.

_Dodgeball: Foursquare 1.0_

As I mentioned earlier, the precursor of Foursquare was Dodgeball. This was a short-lived experiment created by Dennis Crowley (who later on founded Foursquare with Naveen Selvadurai) and Alex Rainert, while attending New York University. Dodgeball was a location-based social network which worked through text-messaging. Users would “check-in” (the terminology remained the same) via SMS (text message) to share their location; the service then finds it in a directory and communicates one's presence to the other friends on the service. It was already possible to visualize check-ins on a Google Map through Dodgeball's website (Humphreys 3). There were only a few cities in the US where it was possible to use it and, for a variety of reasons, it did not make a breakthrough. Google bought it in 2005 and decided to shut it down in 2009, when launching Latitude. Dodgeball wanted to facilitate meet-ups among friends in public spaces, by letting users share their physical location. The service did not support game-dynamics, badges and tips on
venues. It was tightly linked to locating people in the physical space. This is a different concept compared to Foursquare. In the latter, part of the activity for a user is to explore the world on his/her own, the user gets a richer activity from engaging with friends but one could also just play with strangers.

This is significant if one considers Humphreys's analysis of “parochial spaces” and “redirection”. In his work “Mobile social networks and urban public space”, he introduces Lofland's concept of parochialization as a series of actions and relationships that transform a public space into a place that has a sense of commonality (6). He recognizes sharing as one such behavior, especially when the exchange of information happens in and is related to the public space: “[s]haring information through mobile social networks can help to contribute to a sense of familiarity among users in urban public spaces” (7). In fact, the location-based social network lets one knows where your friends are, and (in theory) you know what to expect when deciding to go to a certain venue. You have a “sense” of what is going on around you, one of the interviewee said. Indeed to have more information about a place beforehand increases the sense of familiarity. We might argue that this has been happening already on other media, from television to guide books. Notwithstanding, this is the first time that we have real-time interaction, combined to an extensive up-to-date database that we can carry in our hand while we move. I claim that having more information enhances one's experience, but how? On Foursquare most of the interaction happens with your group of contacts.

There is no data (or very contrasting opinions) on how many of a user's friends on Foursquare are real friends. Since Foursquare is a location-based service one may reasonably assume that most users do not want to share their location with strangers, even though this might happen, especially at the beginning when the service does not have many users but people want to have a network to share information with. To accept friend requests from strangers could lead to cases of stalking, burglary, or other unpleasant situations which people do not want to be victims of. Hence, according to this assumption, friends on Foursquare equal real friends; the interaction that
happens with strangers (as in people who are not in your Foursquare's friends list) is limited or at least not foregrounded. Mayors are always public figures and it is possible to see other people's tips and badges if they are checking in to a venue. While I agree on the enhancement of our everyday experiences and the amplification of our ways of interacting, I do not concur with Humphreys that “[m]obile social networks seek to alleviate some of the challenges of interacting with others in public. These services use mobile technology to facilitate the exchange of social or locational information among users to encourage face-to-face interaction” (3). Location-based social networks users tend to be more concerned with accepting friend requests from strangers. So the interaction with strangers in public tends to remain the same. Even though sociological studies affirm that people who share interests are more likely to interact with each other, I am unsure whether being part of a location-based social networks will create such a common denominator to let strangers engage in conversation (3). Moreover, these factors are hard to predict as they are highly dependent on context and cultural framework.

What happens instead is that it might affect the way you casually meet up with your friends through redirection. Redirection happens when someone decides to change his/her itinerary because of some information received while on the move. As Humphreys discovered, interviewing Dodgeball users, there are factors that greatly influence this behavior depending on the context; timing, distance and travelling time as factors that will make it easier or not to redirect (7). To have information about a place before getting there is an important factor in affecting one's decision to go to a place. In addition, being able to read comments, see pictures and the number of check-ins creates familiarity. In fact, knowing in advance how many people and who is in a certain venue, one can choose whether or not to go there, depending on what one is looking for. (12). This leads to the issue of constant selectivity, which is in fact not only related to location-based services but more broadly to the Internet. People are always given the chance to choose what suits them best. In so doing, the ratio of encountering something unexpected is diminishing, with consequences that
would need to be subjects of further research.

*Embodyment and Identity in the Hybrid Space*

Social networks with location-based functionalities will also make us rethink ideas of identity and embodiment. As the clear separation between physical and online is disappearing it is necessary to redefine notions of “real identity” and “virtual identity”. In the new context of a hybrid society, identity should be studied as the sum of online and offline activities and how the two interact. This issue was explored earlier by Sherry Turkle when she stated: “I see MUDs and other experiences on the Internet as a context for construction and reconstructions of identity and as a context for the deconstruction of the meaning of identity as 'one’” (122). A division between the two seems not to fit the current scenario. The theories about the creation of virtual personas are no longer applicable to the creation of identity in today's social-network-dominated society. A purely disembodied virtuality seems to remain utopian, and also not attractive. The concept of disembodiment as a marginalization of the body when a person is online (as if the body were no longer required) seems to be fading away in favor of the exploration of a new embodiment of physical space.

Moreover, Kathrine N. Hayles already argued against the erasure of the body in the virtual realm in her book *How We Became Posthuman*, analyzing how we went too far in thinking that information could lose its body completely and “circulate unchanged among different material substrates” (1). The body is part of the information; it “exists in space and time and […] through its interaction with the environment […] defines the parameters within which the cogitating mind can arrive at 'certainties’” (203). The way the body is coming back into the picture shows the need for this interaction, the need to express itself in space and time and that the erasure of the body itself was utopian, or rather, dystopian.

On the contrary, location-based services and mobile Internet are an integral part of a process
of web development that has the body as its center. This physical presence can be reiterated by checking-in to a place and its echo will reverberate on different social networks. The performative aspect starts when a user communicates their presence in a certain place with other people. This theory is explained by Yew, who defines “Open contribution systems” (OCS). He considers OCS as platforms that “elicit contributions from the individual end-user through their open and public architecture.” (517) This can be seen to incorporate location-based social networks and, in general, the same definition could be applied to Web 2.0. Yew also introduces Bauwens' term “holoptism” as opposed to “panoptism” (517). Holoptism is defined as transparent, non-hyerarchical and horizontal; while panoptism, which comes from Jeremy Bentham's idea of the panopticon, denotes a structure where an observer can watch all (hence the word) the inmates of an institution without them knowing if they are or are not being observed. Wikis or open-source softwares are considered holoptic. Yew recognizes social networking websites as OCS, therefore inherently holoptic (in the production of content and interactions) and reads social interactions as forms of performance. The source is Kenneth Burke and his ideas on dramaturgy, which were also adopted by Erving Goffman in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. I made a variant of the dramatistic pentad, following some of Yew's suggestions. (517)

a) Act: sharing of information.

b) Scene: the social networking websites or applications.

c) Agent: the user as actor (and the network of people s/he can connect to as co-actors).

d) Agency: given by the structure of the platform and its interoperability.

e) Purpose: self-expression, building and reinforcing identity.

The actions in this “drama” are enhanced by the platform itself, as social networks are constantly trying to improve the user agency: by making the experience more interactive, and in so doing, letting people share more, and aggregating different platforms. Moreover, as seen earlier, one of the latest things we have started to share, or have been asked to share, is our location. I correlate
the sharing of our location with the construction of identity and performance. Hence we can argue that:

[O]pen sharing behavior is motivated by both the affordances of the software and the performative dynamics generated by the public nature of these systems. 1) The act of freely and openly sharing content in an OCS is an expression of self-identity; 2) Open sharing is determined by the alignment of individual contributions to group scripts/narratives; 3) Open sharing is determined by the functionality and affordances of the social software application. (Yew 517)

There are, of course, different degrees in how and how frequently people decide to share and what they choose to share. Some people have started to manage their online activity as if it were part of their personal branding, while other might be less aware and careful in their participation on the social media “stage”. However, we have seen that the latest trend in sharing is stating one’s location. Location-based services have flourished and, despite a part of the population being reluctant to the idea, people seem to be embracing this new tendency (Foursquare Blog).

Nevertheless, there are questions that can be promptly raised: why would someone want to share his/her location? If we compare that aspect of sharing to similar practices of sharing personal information on social networks, location-sharing can be considered as a means of self-representation and expression of identity. A user can affirm their physical presence online in a specific location and share it with the world (or, at least, with the people who have been granted access to their profile). This creates a feeling of communion. A second question is: what does it mean to be physically in a place and then reiterate one's presence online? One reason could be so that friends can locate a user and thereby facilitate meet-ups between people, which is one of the declared goals of location-based services. Nevertheless it often occurs that one decides to check-in to a venue and then share that information on different platforms just to inform the network
about one's current location. In fact, to be in that place at that time says something about oneself. It is another tessera of our lifelong mosaic that merges our offline and online activity.

To have a strong online identity reinforces and complements one's offline identity. I suggest that it is possible to compare the places where people like to spend their time to the music they listen to. They both help to shape identities and they often influence each other. A person's favorite restaurants, shops, streets or resorts are an integral part of their everyday life. The places where people spend more time or that they frequent on a daily basis are indicative of their personalities. Nonetheless, we should remember that Foursquare has promotional deals with merchants and prominent game dynamics. The choice of a user to check-in to a place is strongly affected by these features.

*The built-in Panopticon and the Exercise of Power*

[B]logs and mashups … could be regarded as a form of collective urban surveillance that is undertaken by the inhabitants of the city (cf. Lyon 2003). This again suggests that Web 2.0 resources are not isolated in a cyberspace silo but should be regarded as active parts of urban life. As people use and contribute data (sometimes unknowingly) to these resources more the city may begin to follow patterns of habitation and sociability initially sketched out on the Web. (Hardey 876)

The city of information is also a space where the concept of connectivity and sharing is close to that of continuous locatability. Even though we are asked for permission to share our position, as services rely increasingly on geolocation, not to agree to reveal our location means to greatly limit our experience. In fact, participating in a social network and not allowing its prominent features makes the experience less rewarding. Social networking websites are designed to share, and users are asked to give up some of their privacy to get the most of the experience. In fact, we are often
asked to give some personal information in order to get a service online, this may vary from our
email address, age and sex to real name, birth date and residence. But we constantly provide
evermous amounts of information about ourselves to social networking sites and make their
databases grow exponentially with user-generated records.

The desire for users to share content seems always higher than the worries about privacy
issues. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, companies facilitate and encourage this behavior. For
instance, Facebook Places allows someone else to check you in, while Foursquare will tell you who
the other people are who are in the same venue as you. In the case of Facebook Places, if someone
else is tagging you in a check-in, it is your friend's account settings that determine who sees your
location. This amplifies the information to an audience you do not know and which you have no
control of. In addition, online social networking has become a widespread and everyday activity for
many, in the U.S. half of the country's population uses social networking websites and the number
grows to 65% if we only consider Internet users (Madden, and Zickuhr 2). The majority of users
provide a variety of personal information, among which might be their current address. However,
we have seen that there is a growing minority that uses location-based services, as geolocated
services have started to collaborate with brands to offer special deals. But what makes these
phenomena so wide-spread?

The practice of online social networking can be seen as empowering, as it is a way to
voluntarily engage with other people and construct identities, and it can thus be
described as participatory. It is important to not automatically assume that the
personal information and communication, which online social networking is based
on, is only a commodity for trading. (Albrechtslund)

The success of social networking websites based on active engagement and constant sharing
of information is grounded on various principles. The ever-changing pace and up-to-date
capabilities of knowledge-sharing are empowering and addictive at the same time. Moreover,
exhibitionism for some and voyeurism for others are relevant factors in participating in an extent where their behaviors could be exalted. While also simplifying social activities such as meeting new people is greatly attractive. As we have seen earlier, instant gratification in social-networking services and applications plays a fundamental role as well. Of course, as Albrechtslund points out, to be under surveillance is considered undesirable, nonetheless it becomes inevitable once we start sharing ourselves with others. The user of a social networking website often considers the advantages of participating with personal data to greatly outnumber the disadvantages, as explained by Gross and Acquisti:

“While privacy may be at risk in social networking sites, information is willingly provided. Different factors are likely to drive information revelation in online social networks. The list includes signalling or because the perceived benefit of selectively revealing data to strangers may appear larger than the perceived costs of possible privacy invasions; peer pressure and herding behavior; relaxed attitudes towards (or lack of interest in) personal privacy incomplete information (about the possible privacy implications of information revelation); faith in the networking service or trust in its members; myopic evaluation of privacy risks … or also the service’s own user interface, that may drive the unchallenged acceptance of permeable default privacy settings. (4)

In addition, what previously used to happen within anonymity (MUDs, MySpace, etc.) is now moving (or it has already moved) towards the use of real names and surnames as well as the use of personal pictures. On Foursquare you cannot become a mayor of a venues, unless you have uploaded a profile photo. It does not necessarily have to be a picture of yourself, but it is strongly implied that a genuine personal photo is preferred. One of the latest social networking websites, Google+, was strongly discouraging the use of any name other than the users' real name, and Eric Schmidt, Google Chairman, admitted that Google+ was meant to be an identity service (Banks).
Even though complaints were raised over the strict name policy, the tendency towards creating a universal online identity seems to grow.

Moreover, we have to be aware of the fact that our data on social networking websites might always remain there. Not all websites remove one's information even after the deletion of his/her account, and in addition, we have no control on information added by friends (such as pictures). Therefore, because of the intertwined nature of these services (and their interconnectivity), it could become extremely hard to remove all data from all platforms. This is also due to the long tail of Web 2.0, as content can be multiplied and connected with countless websites, to remove content from the “head” is not going to be sufficient.

Initially in my research, I reviewed the history of cartography and moved on to discuss the possible risks of being under surveillance given by the sharing of our position on social networking platforms. In fact, the relationship between cartography and surveillance has always been very close. J. B. Harley recognizes the process of mapping and the exercise of power as being closely linked together, and affirms that cartography creates “a spatial panopticon” (165). It is a top-down view and, as such it was used to exercise control, to organize, to catalog and fundamentally to know. In fact, all these services have more in common than it might seem, and their relationship with the exercise of power can be exemplified by their common origin. The development of cartography has followed that of empires. In addition to that, the urbanist and cultural theorist Paul Virilio goes further and sees war as the real driver not only for technology but for human society in general. He argues that “cities, cathedrals, the economy, politics, and other key aspects of the modern world are products of military mobilization and deployment” (Kellner 4). In fact, if we broaden our view, we see that throughout history, conflicts have always been a driver for technology. Moreover, many technologies were invented for a military purpose and then entered the business and industrial market, serving another one. The GPS and the Internet are two of these, in fact. This may raise ethical questions that I will not be able to address in this essay. But, as the military has always been
looking for technological superiority both for defensive and offensive purposes, the result is that technological innovation enters society therefore re-mediated for different uses. In his discourse about warfare and modern media, Virilio also acknowledges the role of speed; the pace at which things happen has the power to change their nature. If one can control the speed, one can therefore control the territory. He affirms that “territory and movement are linked. For instance, territory is controlled by the movements of horsemen, of tanks, of planes, and so on” (Virilio). Such dynamics of domination based on velocity could be easily linked to the fast pace of the information flow on new media, and to the real-time city of information that we will inhabit. At the same time, targeted marketing can be seen as another product of these new forms of surveillance.

\[A\ text\ of\ two\ cities?\]

When considering the opportunities of hybrid spaces and new ways of experiencing the city we should keep in mind who will be able to access the 2.0 urbanity. It could soon create a new digital divide after one was about to be filled. Not having a smart-phone, broadband mobile Internet or not being tech-savvy will be factors that exclude people from being able to explore the new city, and hence access more information. This will potentially create a gap at different levels. Moreover as we have seen, the possibility to map the space online, or design the city of information is also another way of exercising power and control. Hence it might create new imbalances, and turn what was previously called “participatory democracy” into its contrary.

\[Conclusion\]

In my essay I have highlighted the rise of a new hybrid space, according to the definition given by de Souza e Silva, and some of its possible consequences. The birth of the new space was possible because of various technological developments, like the Web 2.0, smartphones, wireless and mobile Internet. Furthermore, what is fundamental in the creation of such space is its
relationship with social networking websites and real-time communication. The act of sharing information on multiple online platforms has become increasingly important and has been performed by millions of people everyday. Such behavior blurs the border between our private and public realm, and the division between online and offline identity. Moreover, location-based social networking websites can change the way we experience the city, as people can discover in real-time where their friends are and what is going on in different places before getting there. I have mentioned the phenomenon of redirection and the parochialization of public spaces. This gives people the chance to always have up-to-date knowledge of the space they inhabit, and subsequently even to choose whether or not to go to a place, depending on the real-time information received. In fact, a service like Foursquare could either be used to facilitate meet-ups or, at the same time, to avoid certain places or people (Humphreys 13). Therefore, we may observe a reproduction of the selective tendency that happens online. People who share the same interests will recreate their networks in the physical world, if this happens we will observe “a greater clustering of people” (Hardey 880); hence, issues about people becoming less keen to accept diversity could be raised. It might be a topic of further research to observe how such changes will affect the shaping of our identity, that, as we have seen, has already been affected by the merging of the virtual and physical.

Furthermore, I have analyzed practices of surveillance that are present in social networking websites, with an emphasis on location-based ones. Such surveillance, is inherently participatory and user-generated, and it reinforces Foucault's concepts of docile bodies and the Panopticon. Moreover, given the structure of social-networking platforms, a new holoptic surveillance emerges as well. Both practices coexist on different levels and work together. Nonetheless, I agree with Albrechtslund who, at the end of his essay, affirms that “we should not let the awareness of these threats take over when we study online social networking … Rather, online social networking is an opportunity to rethink the concept of surveillance”. I think that the most important thing that can be done in this regard is to educate and inform people about such services, since their impact on our
lives will continue to grow in the future. But it is important to keep awareness of these services separated from being afraid of them. In this regard, while I share some of Virilio's opinions, his view is oftentimes too unbalanced towards the negative aspects and missing “the emancipatory and democratizing aspects” of new media (Kellner 1). The possibility of reshaping the city gives great opportunities to enhance our experiences of the urban space and increases agency. People will be able to tell their stories about the space they inhabit, to add site-specific layers of images, sounds and words, that will be integrated to the physical space. They could share their opinions on topics regarding a certain area, and perhaps create a bottom-up dialogue with the institutions for developing neighborhoods or addressing problems. A user-generated content and constant feedback could work in the same way Wikis or folksonomy work.

Of course, who benefits from the sum of a higher speed of information and location-based services is not only the citizen but companies as well. The marketing of products will become more targeted and specific. As more information about each of us will be available for companies to use, the holder of the power becomes the one who can control such information. Therefore, in the case of social networking websites it will be fundamental to keep a balance between the social media marketing data that can be given to their business partners and the data that should remain private. But, inevitably, the city of information will re-mediate the physical space (and the Internet) in advertising, each one will see his/her own personalized billboard, that will change depending on his/her location. In addition, our identity and activity in the hybrid town will intertwine more with marketing as we will not be the object of the campaign but the subject. Hence, the new space that is grounded in the interoperability of platforms and real-time sharing of (geolocalized) information will require us to adapt to a society that will be “increasingly fleeting, unplanned and dynamic” (Hardey 880).
Works Cited:


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