

# Lived Scenarios -project Final Report

Lived scenarios -project | Final Report  
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Sep 2004 - Feb 2005

## Abstract

*There are so many bright minds in the world. All the people of the everyday life. Yet, there are the very few, who design and create the world we live in. How to give stronger voice to the everyday people? How to provide scaffolds that enable people to participate in the making of today and tomorrow?*

This final report provides a description of the role-playing -oriented Lived Scenarios -project, conducted at the University of Art and Design Helsinki (Uiah). The project, conducted during Autumn 2004, was built around a course called "Introduction to Future Media Scenarios through Role-playing". The optional course was held in Helsinki Polytechnic, and was open to all of the students in the school.

In addition to this final report, the deliverables of the Lived scenarios -project include a **DVD** that contains the final scenario videos as well as the video documentation of the course process.

The main sources of inspiration for the project were **everyday creativity** (Sanders 2003), **co-design** (Botero et al. 2003), **immersive stories** (Kim 2004), and **using stories and acting to develop product ideas** (Lehrdahl 2002).

The aim of the Lived scenarios -project has been to make evaluations of the Mediaspace scenarios, to produce "living scenarios" based on the videotaped and partly improvised acting. Additionally, a higher aim has been to **develop the methods** for using the **empathy, improvisation** and **role-playing** as **way of doing idea generation and reflection**.

From these ingredients, the methods used in the Lived Scenarios -project have been evolved as a process that has spanned the whole project.

During the course process, six stories were written by students, who drew inspiration from a set of excerpts that described possibilities of using media in the future. The stories were then evolved with partly improvised acting by the participating three students. Eventually, the result was five video scenarios describing the personal views of the students on what the media practices should be in the future.

In overall, the students felt positive about the course they participated in. The most significant issues with the course was that there was not enough time to properly make improvisations based on the completed scenarios.

Looking at the feedback from the student evaluations, it can be said that improvisational and role-playing-inspired methods have helped the participating students to interpret the given material into scenarios that reflect how the future possibilities could be realized in one's own life and social environment.

The method of the project is engaging to participate in. However, it does require many special skills, such as shooting, lighting, sound editing, directing and storytelling. Also, the participants may need to be facilitated in order from them to get familiar with acting.

The findings of this project suggest an orientation of the future research towards experimenting on performance inspired design methods for communities. The interesting communities for this research would be those that are already actively "physically doing things together", i.e. that joint action is central to the community's existence.

# Introduction

During the Lived Scenarios -project, students of Stadia Polytechnic wrote and performed five personal video scenarios of potential media practices in the near future. This document describes the details of the project.

The chapter **Background** summarizes the original plans and the background of the project. **Methods** -chapter describes the details of what was done. The **Results** -chapter explores the outcomes and the student evaluation of the projects, and finally, the **Discussion** summarizes the findings of the project and discusses the future directions.

# Background

The **Mediaspaces -project**, that began in 2004 at the Media Lab UIAH, has been exploring the future of media and related tools. The central concept of the project is the Mediaspace, which is a representation of the converged media environment, where software, rather than hardware, defines the boundaries and where there is seamless communication between people, and between technological solutions. In the Mediaspace, media can be accessed in any form or format that is most convenient to the user.

## What was planned...

Empathy, improvisation and role-playing are means to give ordinary persons tools to interpret the building blocks and Mediaspace scenarios. This allows people to understand what future possibilities could mean in one's life.

The aim of the **Lived scenarios** -project has been to make evaluations of the Mediaspace scenarios, to produce "living scenarios" based on the videotaped and partly improvised acting. Additionally, a higher aim has been to develop the methods for using the empathy, improvisation and role-playing as way of doing idea generation and reflection.

It was decided to conduct the empirical research of the Lived scenarios -project as a role-playing course in the Stadia polytechnic. During the course, the Mediaspace scenarios would be designed by the students into role-plays and then acted and recorded.

More specifically, the goals were:

- To mold Mediaspace scenarios into material for role-playing
- To formulate instructions for students so that they are able to create role-plays out of Mediaspace scenarios
- To collect empirical data by:
  - recording to the video the creation process of the student role-plays
  - recording to the video the acting of the role-plays
  - collecting written and verbal feedback about the scenarios from the students
- To evaluate the Mediaspace scenarios by summarizing the empirical data and seeking out the differences to the original Mediaspace scenarios
- To compile 'Lived scenarios' from video material and discussions
- To compile a list suggestions for further scenario-development

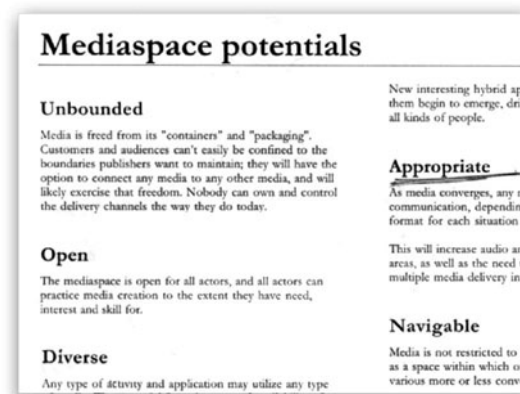


Figure 1: An excerpt of the Mediaspace potentials

During the year 2004, the Mediaspaces -project has produced Mediaspace potentials (Kommonen 2003) – a list of future media possibilities – and is currently designing building blocks and Mediaspace scenarios. The Mediaspace scenarios are stories about everyday people in the future, who take advantage of building blocks (which are based on the Mediaspace potentials). The scenarios thus provide an easy-to-understand stories of what the future potentially could be.

It is not, however, easy to evaluate, how useful, significant and appealing these stories are to everyday people. Do they really fit in their (future) lives? It is not easy for an ordinary person to project oneself to the imaginary future and comment on the different possibilities in that realm. This research has explored these issues.

## Methods

The Lived Scenarios -research project draws in ideas from the fields of theater to role-playing, and applies them into concept design. This has resulted into an idea generation method that emphasizes participation through mental and physical personal

### The Approach

Instead of creating product concepts, the project is involved in the **co-design of everyday practices** (Botero et al. 2003). It is part of an overall effort in our ARKI research group at UIAH to describe the **desirable future of media** and related tools. In order to define what is desirable, our research actively involves everyday people to discuss and brainstorm, what kind of future they would want to have for themselves.

During the process in the Lived Scenarios -project, students were frequently reminded to **create stories that were meaningful** to them **personally**. The stories did not have to be focused on the students themselves, however. It was enough to think that the story could involve a person close to the student.

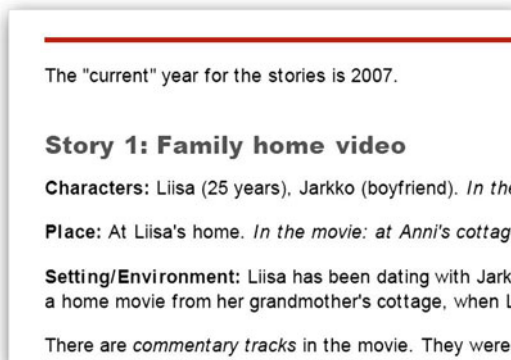


Figure 2: An example of the small excerpts

To facilitate the forming of a common language for the participants and to inspire participants to open their minds to unexpected possibilities, the Lived Scenarios -project used a prepared context,

### What was done...

experience. A more detailed analysis of the project's relationship to role-playing and design theory can be read from Huuhtanen (2005), attached as *Appendix 1*.

a set of 9 excerpts, as a starting point for the idea generation. The excerpts were brief stories based on the work in Mediaspace scenarios, a sibling research project in the ARKI research group. The two projects had natural synergy between them, as the aim of the Mediaspace scenarios -project is to explore and visualize the potentials of media practices in the future.



Figure 3: An improvisational acting session

In the Lived Scenarios -project, the students' **stories were evolved into video scenarios through acting**. During the first half of the process, the focus was on iteratively writing and discussing the stories. In the second half, the stories were acted out in several variations with almost fully improvised dialogue. The intention during the whole process was to describe and then rethink the desired media practices.

## The process

A more detailed, visual description of the course process can be seen in the Lived Scenarios DVD

material. The images below highlight some of the essential elements in the course.

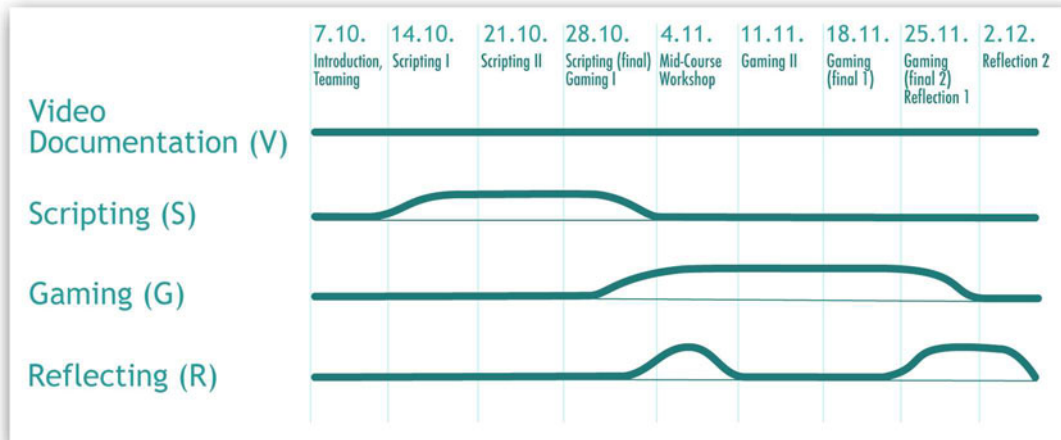


Figure 4: The process of the role-playing course in the Lived Scenarios -project



Figure 5: (Video Documentation) Snippets of the course sessions were recorded by the students



Figure 6: (Gaming) Some of the props used in making the scenarios

Hahmot	Miljö	Tarpeisto	
2 Taiteilijaa Katujongööri Yleisö	Kävelykatu Taiteiden yö	2 Käyntikorttia Jonglooritavarat -miten olisi tyhjat 1/2 muovipullot?	Taiteiden yö
Sankari Uhri Hätäkeskus Lääkäri	Katu / tie Hätäkeskus	Puhelin / kamerapuhelin -kännykät?	Ommetommuus
Ryhmä 1 (2hiöä) Ryhmä 2 (2hiöä) Opettaja Lampaankasvattaja Käsityöläinen	Koulu Lammasstila Käsityöpaja Koululaisen koti	2 E-notebookia -kävisikös foonon käärityt kirjat? Villalankaa Lammas -saattaa löytyä joku lammasurkin jämä Keritsin Sakset	Ryhmäyö

Figure 8: (Scripting) A plan for the characters and props



Figure 7: (Reflection) A student writing her thoughts on the scenarios

## Results

During the course, altogether five video scenarios were created, based on six finalized stories. One of the stories, “Digital Diary”, was left out, because

### What was gotten out of it...

the students felt it was a little bit too close to the other stories and was the least interesting to act out. The video scenarios were:



**Two friends**, showing a possibility of listening again songs that had been played in the radio.



**Accident**, exploring the possibilities of using pictures and video to communicate first-aid instructions to a passer-by at the accident site.



**School assignment**, where media devices were used by school kids to record the visits to a lamb farmer, a textile designer and a clothes shop and then share the experiences with the class.



**Night of the arts**, showing two art-loving city dwellers use close proximity digital contact cards as a way to advertise and share.



**Safari**, where two grand-children used a “magic thing”, to communicate with both the camera of the tour car at the safari and the television at grandma's home.

In addition to the five video scenarios, three smaller half minute long video clips were recorded. The aim was to explore and to reflect further in the prepared world that was now very easy for the

students to relate to. The video clips consisted of **quick improvisations**, based on the characters of the school assignment scenario. The three clips described:



The possibilities to **share music** while speaking on the phone – an improvisation based on one of the school girl characters.



The use of **laptop as a VCR** – an improvisation based on the teacher character



The **cooperation with** several **lamb farmers** on wool orders – an improvisation based on the lamb farmer character.

## Student evaluation

The *figure 9* shows how the participating students commented on and ranked the story excerpts. The digital diary -story received almost solely positive feedback and inspired a long discussion on possible current and future scenarios. At the same time, however, it was felt that digital diary was already very familiar concept for people in general

and that it also would be the least interesting to act as a scenario. In the other end of the scale was the collaborative present -story. While students felt that it did describe quite feasible scenario, it did not sound plausible for them. They did not see a need or interest in acting out a scenario with that type of activity.



Figure 9: Students' ranking and comments on the story excerpts. The stories that are marked black had the strongest influence to the student made scenarios.

During the brainstorming and discussion for student's own scenarios, several alternative ideas were described, based on the excerpts.

The following summary shows the parts of the discussion and the ideas that did not get included into the final scenarios.

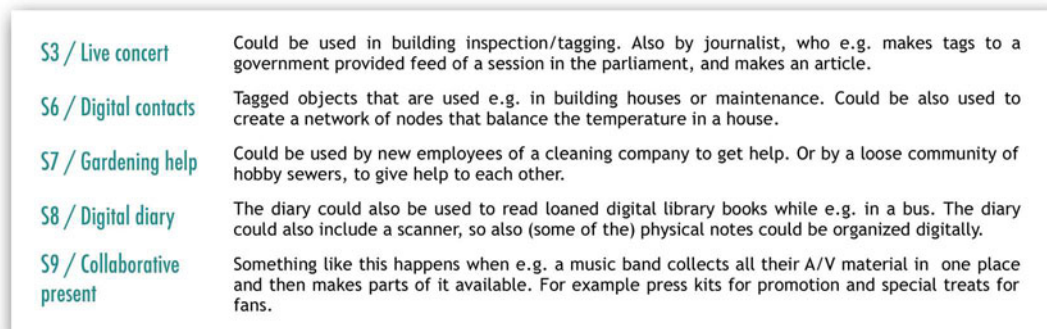


Figure 10: Ideas generated during the scenario brainstorming

The students also produced written evaluations of the scenarios and of the course as a whole.

In overall, the students felt positive about the course they participated in. The most significant issues with the course was that there was not enough time to properly make improvisations based on the completed scenarios. Although the

possibility of further improvising the scenarios was discussed during the course, the making of the scenarios did not leave any time for the improvisation.

The individual student evaluations are presented in the following. The names of the students have been changed.

### Evaluation by student Jaakko

Studies: **Building and Construction**

Hobbies: **Larp and Role-playing games**

Activities: **As a tutor I use sometimes improvisation**

Digital media: **Very basic skills**

Overall, the course progressed very smoothly, and I hadn't noticed how well the course followed the pre-made plan. The course **taught** to think how to make innovations useful (in everyday life). Not such a bad thing, others should think about it too! For me, the central theme of the course was human and technology. Especially I see copyright issues in a new way now.

The original excerpts and the ideas within them can be seen in the final scenarios that we created. We kind of refined the original material into workable everyday events. The **final scenarios** are what they are, because we focused on making them natural, desirable and justifiable. And acting out made us stand behind our ideas. The scenarios are aiming to extend our social lives, or aid in our daily life. My opinion on the scenarios is, of course, somewhat biased as I have participated in creating them.

Looking back at the course, I think it was mostly about acting freely, plus some improvisation. I don't see this as role-playing.

### Evaluation by student Leena

Studies: **Communications and Digital Media**

Hobbies: **Larp and Role-playing games**

Activities: **Writing plays, web programming**

Digital media: **Experienced, strong skills**

Work: **Freelance web designer**

The **course** has had an positive social impact. I was surprised how fun it was to play with previously unknown people. Whereas many of my other media courses have made me criticize things more, this course has been an opposite force, allowing out-of-the-box thinking. Acting has been very much fun and it made the ideas nicely more concrete.

One can see that the original excerpts and the **final scenarios** are connected by the similar use of media. I think the role of media in the scenarios was well balanced, although the radio scenario may be a bit unclear in that respect. I liked most the *School assignment* and *Accident* scenarios. The *Night of the arts* maybe a bit too advertisement oriented. In my opinion the central themes in the scenarios were unusual use of copyrights, and technology that is usable, accepted and present. The scenarios that we made could be best used as an inspiration for discussion, but they do not directly innovate concrete products.

“ It's refreshing to form visions about how technology can be applied to serve the society ”

#### Questions & Answers

(rated: 1 poor - 5 very good)

Q: Did the excerpts help you?

A: **3 - They were useful, but they required some elaboration and discussion to get insights.**

Q: Did the course aid in making the scenarios?

A: **5 - Very well, I think the scenarios could be understood even by outsiders.**

Q: General grade?

A: **4 - More improvisation would have been good.**

**Nits:** Towards the end of the course, I was less enthusiastic about acting out children (I wasn't writing those scenarios). Also, I think that the course could have emphasized improvisation more to develop and expand further the ideas and scenarios.

“ I liked to create the stories. Copyright and intellectual property discussions were especially interesting ”

#### Questions & Answers

(rated: 1 poor - 5 very good)

Q: Did the excerpts help you?

A: **3 - On one hand they limited, on the other hand they inspired thinking.**

Q: Did the course aid in making the scenarios?

A: **4.5 - It would have been nice to use a studio and more props. Unfortunately we could not get them for this course.**

Q: General grade?

A: **4 - I would have wanted to learn a bit more concrete things also, but in general the course was excellent.**

**The good:** Ponies, lambs, participating people, the rather free study-style

**The bad:** Should have been more participants, too late in the evenings, too little improvisation, we could not use the studio facilities

## Evaluation by student Laura

Studies: **Traffic and logistics**

Activities: **Listening music, taking digital photos, and surfing the net**

Digital media: **introductory skills**

The **course** surpassed my expectations. I was positively surprised. I thought it would be more theory-oriented.

**Acting** was nice and creative work. I found new insights when acting out the scenarios. It would have been boring to discuss the scenarios only on paper. In the end, I think this was a form of free-style acting without written lines. Although the scenarios were written beforehand.

In both the excerpts and the final scenarios, media is in a central role. I think that even an outsider would see the similarities between excerpts and final scenarios. The **final scenarios** were clear, concise, believable and to the point. Only in the *School assignment*, media was bit too much on the background.

I think the scenarios *Two Friends* and *Night of the Arts* could be from my life. I stand behind the scenarios that I wrote. Although I wrote quite impulsively and un-planned, the ideas felt good and my own. We worked on the ideas together and it was great. We seemed to share a some kind of common understanding.

The media seemed like a natural part of the scenarios, as part of life in general. Although I don't see my attitudes towards the media changed much, I think that I now see the media a bit less cold and rigid. It's more natural and part of the everyday now.

**Top 5:** Acting, nice team of students, good teacher, new dimensions of media, harnessing my own creativity

**Nits:** The course was too short

“ Interesting and rewarding ”

### Questions & Answers

(rated: 1 poor - 5 very good)

Q: Did the excerpts help you?

A: 5 - Yes, they helped the working on the scenarios, because they showed the role of media.

Q: Did the course aid in making the scenarios?

A: 5 - Yes, things progressed more or less as planned.

Q: General grade?

A: 5 - Great course!



## Discussion

The Lived scenarios –project has sought to find out how to make Mediaspace potentials and Mediaspace scenarios easy to understand and meaningful for ordinary people. This task has been approached by encouraging the participating students to create their own, acted scenarios. These own scenarios were based on the inspirational story excerpts created from Mediaspace scenarios.

Looking at the feedback from the student evaluations, it can be said that improvisational and role-playing-inspired methods have helped the participating students to interpret the given material into scenarios that reflect how the future possibilities could be realized in one's own life and social environment.

Although role-playing was supposed to be just one of the many inspirational sources for the project methodology, using it explicitly in the name of the course proved to cause some controversy. It seems that for many people, role-playing has strong association to role-playing games (RPGs) and live-action role-playing (Larp). The more “short movie”-oriented style of the course was not expected by some of the participants.

### The goods and the bads...

Should there be another course of this type, it would be recommendable to expand the process into iterative acting. This could be accomplished by transforming the process from Scripting-Acting to **Scripting-Acting-Improvisation-Acting**. The new process would consist of creating scenarios as before, but then making short improvisations based on the scenarios and then remixing the improvisations and created scenarios into new scenarios. Using the iterative acting would emphasize the body-thinking, or **reflection-in-action** as discussed by Iacucci and Kuutti (p304, 2002).

In summary, while there is still room for development, the Lived scenarios –project seems to have reached the goals it aimed for. The resulting scenarios represent the opinions of the participating students on what the desired media practices of the future should be. The method of the project is engaging to participate in. However, it does require many special skills, such as shooting, lighting, sound editing, directing and storytelling. Also, the participants may need to be facilitated in order from them to get familiar with acting.

The following *Figure 11* summarizes the insights gotten during the project and compares them to two articles that discuss related experiments.

	The Lived Scenarios -project	Ylirisku (2004)	Iacucci & Kuutti (2002)
<b>Strengths</b>	<p>Concrete, engaging, physical and mental experience.</p> <p>Shared language between participants, possibly easy to convey ideas to others as well.</p> <p>Taking the ideas to the level of action makes visible the details, thus enabling to solve, while acting, the potential problems that arise.</p> <p>Once familiar with the method and the defined world, it is relatively easy and quick to act out and develop any ideas that arise.</p>	<p>Acting and scriptwriting can be highly motivating for the participants. Participatory video scenarios were used to co-design with users in an efficient, effective and engaging way. (page 13)</p> <p>The scenarios can communicate media practices to uninformed people without any additional explanation. (page 12)</p> <p>Well created video scenarios can convey a message in rich, specific and emotion-evoking way. (page 4)</p>	<p>Reflection-in-action, it is possible for participant to discern contextually relevant details and let them further influence her action. (page 304)</p> <p>Performing sets more realistic limits and requirements scenarios and that influences also action. Restrictions as constraints have a symbiotic relationship to creativity. (page 304)</p> <p>Three points of view: 1) <b>Trying out</b>, testing ideas. 2) <b>Exploring</b>, collective creativity. 3) <b>Communication</b>, collecting realistic, authentic scenarios and sharing those with others. (page 301)</p>
<b>Challenges</b>	<p>Acting raises the demands to trust all participants and not to lose one's face</p> <p>Acting by it self does not necessarily make the resulting scenarios easily understandable.</p> <p>Post-processing of the videos can be timeconsuming, especially if original audio/video quality and content do not fit the needs of the final video scenarios.</p> <p>Getting used to improvisational acting can take some time to learn.</p> <p>A relatively straight-forward and transparent process, from an idea to the scenario</p> <p>The participants' "voice" is quite visible in the resulting scenario.</p>	<p>Creating video scenarios requires willingness from the participants to act, which in some cases will require facilitation and practicing. There must be a way to withdraw without losing face. (page 13)</p> <p>Making video scenarios needs skills similar to making movies: shooting, lighting, sound recording and directing. Those are required to make quality videos. Also, skills in storytelling are required to make the video scenario engaging and understandable. (page 4)</p> <p>Participative scenarios can be made relatively quickly, however editing the final video scenarios can take a lot of time. (page 4)</p>	<p>How to capture or later access the performances which took place? - An experience is not immediately explicable. (page 304)</p> <p>Participants may feel uncomfortable or embarrassed due to the social situation - may require courage to perform. (page 305)</p> <p>May require competencies from performing arts - warm up exercises useful to prepare performing. (page 305)</p> <p>The relevancy of the performances and scenarios is tied to the moment they are created. (page 305)</p>

Figure 11: Insights from this project and comparison to related experiments

## Interesting challenges for future research and design

In his dissertation, Jacucci (2004) declares a larger agenda for performance perspective, as a contributor to interaction design. Jacucci argues that the current HCI design approaches are mostly evolutionary, iterating phases of observation, implementation and testing. Performance perspective, on the other hand, is more about reflection-in-action. It intertwines observing, idea generation and reflective thinking into a one continuous process, rather than in discrete, sequential steps. This difference is evidently shown in the *Figure 12*.

Whereas Jacucci has in recent years (Jacucci 2004) focused on the performance related to **physical interfaces**, there is much left to explore in the related research area of **performance inspired idea generation and design methods**. The latter is closer to the research of the Lived Scenarios -project.

In addition to the dissertation of Jacucci (2004), there has been also another major dissertation related to user-centred design, namely Battarbee's book on co-experience (2004). In her book, Battarbee encourages design activities that enable people to be and to use together, so that products can be co-experienced. This de-emphasizes the one user – one product -orientation that is very prevalent in current products.

By combining Jacucci's and Battarbee's work with ARKI group's focus on everyday use and communities, the research orientation shifts towards experimenting on performance inspired design methods for communities. The interesting communities for this research would be those that are already actively “physically doing things together”, i.e. that joint action is central to the community's existence.

General human-computer interaction tenets	Performance applied to physical interfaces
Task, timeless, universal, general	Event, contingent, ephemeral, unique
Recognition, affordance	Perception, sense experience
Usability, accountability	Expression
Behaviour	Individual's expressivity
Supporting the creation of a product	Supporting the staging of a process
Users, consumers, administrators	Participants, directors, performers
Personalising, computer artefact's view	Configuring, actor's view
Sensing system	Sensing humans
Measuring, simulating space	Configuring, performing space
Tracking movements, objects	Amplifying movements, augmenting objects
Recognising, sensing situations	Staging, configuring situations
Eliminating secondary tasks	Amplifying action and communication

Figure 12: The contribution of the performance perspective to interaction design (Jacucci 2004)

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