Reading websites as places:
Two case studies of exploratory digital documents.

Judy Yu Ying Au

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Acknowledgements

May God be praised for He is the source of all wisdom, knowledge and understanding.

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1.   Introduction

1.1   The Challenge

"Websites" are information objects readily accessible on the Web.[1] Even though we surf the Internet and access many websites daily, we do not critically reflect on their nature or their significance to our existence. Apparently, they belong to the "take-for-granted" items and are a part of the "easy-come, easy-go" trend.

The fact that it is difficult to define a website complicates the issue. Websites do not have overt physical traits or standard features that make them recognizable. It is aso impossible, as Ida Engholm aptly observes, to hold websites in your hands or move them around.[2] The most commonly shared characteristic is that they are digital documents that exist on the Web.[3] This also implies that they consist of combinations of hidden digital codes that require both hardware and software for decoding. Websites are therefore more than what they appear to us in front of the screen. In addition, websites may also be seen as cultural products since they are undoubtedly constructions of digitally mediated environments and part of our daily culture.

Among the relative small amount of research on websites, there is a general bias towards their functional and technical aspects.[4] Some studies also view websites in their capacities as effective marketing tools.[5]

This thesis, however, focuses on studying websites from a humanistic perspective.[6] I shall argue that despite the fact that they are called websites, they may also be read as

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[1] See Chap.2 Section 2.7.2.

[2] Ida Engholm (2004) "Webgenrer og stilarter: om at analysere og kategorisere websites". In I. Engholm and L. Klastrup (Eds.) *Digitale verdener: De nye mediers æstetik og design* (Denmark: Gyldendal) p.58.

[3] See Espen Aarseth (1997) *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press) p.81.

[4] The range of literature on websites includes usability and functionality of websites (Jakob Nielsen 2002), website design guides and handbooks (David Siegel 1997; Lynch and Horton 2001; Curt Cloninger 2002), website content, purpose and functionality (Quelch and Klein 1996; Chang et. al. 1997). See also Kari Holmefjord, Grete Rusten and David Charles 2002; Ida Engholm 2004; and Lisbeth Thorlacius 2005, for their comments about the lack of non-technical website research.

[5] See Cooper and Burgess 2000; Briggs 2001.

[6] This study is not about technical and instrumental web design, nor does it study websites as objects of art. Issues such as technological determinism, Internet and democracy, community organization and global unity are not within the scope of this study. It is also not my intention to go into debates around technology and society or issues such as technological determinism.

"places". And by reading websites as "places", we are able to achieve insights into digital documents and their environments that may otherwise be neglected. To read websites as "places" thereby allows us to reflect critically on what they are and why they are important to our digital daily life.

According to the philosopher Edward Casey, "sites" differ from "places" in three aspects. While "sites" are anonymous, indifferent and open, "places" are selective, familiar and enclosed.[7] Casey uses the construction site as an example, it is anonymous and one cannot distinguish one construction site from the other. It is also indifferent in the sense that it is impersonal and does not encourage any kind of attachment. Finally, it is open, random and uninhabitable. Even though there may be construction materials, machines and tools at the site, these objects disappear after the building is erected. They do not belong to the site but are there only for a period of time for functional purposes.

A place is different because it is selective, familiar and enclosed. For example, a building is a place because each building is distinctive and has features that are particular. It is familiar because it allows attachment. For those who live or work in that building, this familiarity increases with their frequent visits. It is enclosed in the sense that it provides shelter and stability.

What I intend to do is to argue that some websites may be read as "places" because they have the essential characteristics that mark them as selective, familiar and enclosed. These characteristics encourage users to revisit them, remember them and develop a kind of bonding with them. Even though users do not literally "go" to these websites, they pay regular visits to them and these websites have special meanings to users. These websites are therefore important for our daily existence because they offer us some kind of shelter and stability. This is particularly crucial in the modern age that is often characterized as mobile, rootless and "placeless". Instead of depending on physical places such as geographical locations, I argue that websites that display "place" characteristics serve the function of providing attachment and

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[7] Edward Casey (1987) "Place Memory". In *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) pp.181-345. See also Chap.3 Section 3.2.3.

stability. The advantage of "places" in the digital realm over geographical locations is that they may be accessed no matter where we are geographically. For people who need to be physically mobile such as pilots and aircrew, travelling salesmen or performing artists, these digital "places" may therefore be invaluable for their mobile lifestyle.

"Place" in this thesis is not simply a geographical location but a much discussed, complex theoretical concept.[8] The significance of "place" as "an irreducible part of human experience" is expressed by the anthropologist Christopher Tilley who remarks that "a person is `in place´ as much as she or he is `in culture´".[9]

Theories of "place" explore two major issues in human existence: identity and orientation. The relationship between humans and environment is significant because humans need to understand their environments so that they can express their meaning, formulate their conception and orientate themselves in their daily functioning. Our natural environment provides us with raw materials for reflecting on our identity and expression. But in the modern situation when urban humans have lost touch with the natural environment, the cultivated environment often replaces the natural. Norberg-Schulz uses the example of Nordic man and modern man to illustrate this difference.[10] He contrasts the Nordic man with the German-born American architect Gerhard Kallman. The Nordic man has to make friends with the natural environment that includes snow, icy winds and fog. Conversely, Kallman associated the typical pavement of a sidewalk where he used to play as a child as "home", whilst he revisited his native Berlin.[11] The pavement, an example of the cultivated environment, replaces the natural environment and becomes the "home" that Kallmann looked for.

According to Norberg-Schulz, the relationship between natural and cultivated places may be seen as threefold: firstly, cultivated places may be seen as a visualization of

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[8] See for examples: Tuan 1974; Norberg-Schulz 1980; Tilley 1994; Casey 1996; and Escobar 2001.
[9] Christopher Tilley (1994) *A phenomenology of landscape: places, paths and monuments* (Oxford: Berg) p.18.
[10] Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980) *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli)
[11] See Norberg-Schulz 1980, p.21.

natural places.[12] Humans need to express what they see in nature in the form of something they create. Secondly, humans need to complement what is lacking in the natural setting. Thirdly, humans translate what they experience in nature into another medium by means of symbolization. The meaning experienced from a place becomes a cultural object.

Following this line of argument, I shall argue that websites may be seen as cultural objects that exist in digital environments, which are also one type of cultivated environments. If websites may be read as "places", they may provide the feeling of attachment to modern man who has lost touch with the natural environment. In addition, websites may also be seen as a kind of concretization that allows humans to express and communicate their meaning to others.

Meaning is expressed and represented in symbols and narratives. Following the broad lines of thoughts of Paul Ricoeur and Peter Brooks, narratives enable humans to give meaning to life. In other words, by means of narrating, humans make sense of time, destiny, and mortality and also create and project identities. In this way, they situate themselves as individuals among others. Researchers such as Yi-Fu Tuan argue that narratives of special events connecting to a certain place contribute to making that place special.[13] When events are told and retold from generation to generation, these narratives develop a bonding between the place and the people. These narratives, together with the place, become part of the local history that belongs to the community. Narratives therefore play an important role in making a certain place "mythic" or even "sacred".

It is, however, important to clarify "narrative" in the literary sense as compared to the use of "narrative" in the digital dimension. According to literary theorist Mieke Bal, a literary "narrative" should contain both an actor and a narrator and also it should be "a series of connected events caused or experienced by actors".[14] In the digital realm, the term "narrative" has often been used as "an all-inclusive" term because of the lack

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[12] Norberg-Schulz 1980, pp.17-18.
[13] See Chap. 3 Section 3.4.2.2. See Tuan 1974b, 1991.
[14] Mieke Bal (1985) *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) p.8, quoted by Lev Manovich 2001, p.227.

of appropriate terminologies to describe the new information carriers.[15]   Lev Manovich argues against the assumption that when users put together an arbitrary sequence of text as a result of their navigation, the combination of these elements will become a narrative that satisfies the above-mentioned criteria of literary narratives. Nevertheless, literary narratives or "traditional linear narratives" as Manovich calls them, "can be seen as a particular case of hypernarrative".[16]

In this thesis, literary narratives or "traditional linear narratives" are included as one specific type of the overall inclusive "hypernarrative". I shall argue that literary narratives of websites with special reference to tales and stories, reinforce the overall website narrative that consists of the typography, interface designs and other narrative sequences.[17]   In addition, I shall also argue that symbols such as navigation icons help to hold the attention of users. Together, narratives and symbols contribute to developing a bonding between users and a website.[18]   They encourage revisiting and strengthen the "sense of place" of a website and thus transform a website from a "site" to a "place".

Last but not least, websites may also be seen as experiential entities that appeal to our senses, perception and conception.[19]   To experience a website we rely on our imagination or symbolic associations as well as our previous experiences in natural environments. By means of symbols and narratives, websites evoke our imagination and relate to our former experiences.

Informed by theories of "place",[20] I suggest therefore that three specific features may serve as essential markers for a website to be read as a "place". They are:[21]

- A "place" is a human construction. It is an expression or a concretization of how we see, understand and experience the world.

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[15] See Lev Manovich (2001) *The Language of New Media* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press) p.228.

[16] Manovich 2001, p.227.

[17] Website narratives refer to those sequences that are not literary narratives and therefore do not fulfil the requirement as literary narratives. See also Chap.2 Section 2.7.5.

[18] See Chap.3 Section 3.4.2.

[19] See Chap.4 Section 4.1.1.2 and Chap.5 Section 5.1.1.2.

[20] See Chap.3. See also Section 1.3.1.

[21] See Chap.3 Section 3.5.

- A "place" is made distinctive by symbols and narratives that humans attribute to it. These symbols and narratives reinforce the bonding between humans and the environment.

- A "place" is a kind of localization with boundaries and connections. It displays the dialectics between local and global.

1.2   The Study: "Place" and "Websites"

The metaphorical use of geographical terms like "place" for digital environments in an electronic information age is not uncommon. William Mitchell, for example, in *City of Bits: Space, Place and the Infobahn* attempts to re-imagine architecture and urbanism in the context of digital telecommunications.[22] Another example is Jakob Nielsen and Marie Tahir's comparison of a website to a house. They say, "A website is like a house in which every single window is also a door".[23] From these examples, we can see that geographical terms like place, house, window and door are no longer restricted to physical locations and concrete buildings.

However, the use of "place" and other geographical terms as well as other metaphorical descriptions of digital environments such as "room" (as in "chat room"), "cities" (as in "virtual cities"), "space" (as in "cyberspace") and "dungeons" (as in "Multi-User Dungeons"), are often uncritical.[24]

A simple "google- search" of relevant literature reveals the following scenarios:

- "place" is associated with websites as a matter-of-fact description,[25]
- "place" is used to imply meeting place and contact points,[26]

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[22] William J. Mitchell (1996) *City of Bits: Space, Place and the Infobahn* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press)
[23] Jakob Nielsen and Marie Tahir (2002) *Homepage Usability: 50 Websites Deconstructed* (USA: New Riders Publishing)
[24] See Anne Buttimer's insightful discussion about how root metaphor approach helps to explore the diversity of geographical experience. See A. Buttimer (1993) "The Way of Metaphor" in *Geography and the Human Spirit* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press). See also George Lakoff and Mark Johnson's arguments about the conceptual nature of metaphors. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press)
[25] See Rob Barrett and Paul P. Maglio (1998) "Intermediaries: new places for producing and manipulating Web content". In *Computer Networks and ISDN Systems*, Vol.30, April, No.1-7, pp.509-518, Abstract.

- "place" is seen as a geographical entity, for example, as equivalent to "location".[27]

Despite the frequent use of "place" in connection to websites, the notion of "place" is not problematized. This apparent "natural" connection is itself a sufficient reason for more research because it reveals a kind of blind spot that deserves reflection.[28] As researchers argue,[29] there is an urgent need to achieve a critical understanding of digital culture and also "digitally mediated environments".[30]

1.2.1   The Strategy

"Place" have been regarded as a complex contested notion that has raised debates in diverse disciplines.[31] It continues to be an open evolving concept that invites new interpretations and ongoing debates. I have chosen the humanistic geographers' interpretations of "place" as the core theories for this thesis for the following reasons.[32] Firstly, this thesis follows the tradition of humanistic studies that contribute to humans' awareness of their existence and consciousness. Secondly, since the aim of this study is to investigate the spatial dimension within the digital realm, geography as a discipline that specializes in spatial analysis appears to suit the present purpose. Thirdly, some humanistic geographers' studies of the spatial dimension are related to experience, which is defined as "the totality of means by which we come to know the world" and includes "sensation (feeling), perception and conception".[33] This approach helps to achieve the purpose of this thesis.

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[26] See Andreas Girgensohn and Alison Lee (2002) "Making web sites be places for social interaction". In *Proceedings of the 2002 ACM conference on Computer supported cooperative work* (New Orleans: Louisiana, USA) pp.136-145, Abstract.

[27] See Kari Holmefjord, Grete Rusten and David Charles (2002) "A Place on the Web: The use of Spatial Concepts in Business Websites". *Working Paper No.5/02*, SNF-Project No.4285: Business and Communication (Bergen: Institute for Research in Economics and Business Administration) Abstract.

[28] See David Trend (2001) "Introduction". In D. Trend (Ed.) *Reading Digital Culture* (Mass. & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.)

[29] See William Mitchell 1996 and David Trend 2001.

[30] William Mitchell proposes the importance of imagining and creating the "digitally mediated environments". This thesis however focuses on critical analysis of these environments instead of creating and imagining. See William J. Mitchell (1996) *City of Bits: Space, Place and the Infobahn* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press) p.5.

[31] See Tim Cresswell (2004) *Place: a short introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing). See also Chap.3 Section 3.1.

[32] These theories are supplemented by other "Place" theories in Chap.3.

[33] See Tuan 1974a, p.213.

To anchor an evolving and open notion like "place" to websites requires concretization. There are almost uncountable numbers of websites. As I have mentioned before, websites are difficult to categorize because they do not have standard features, formats, ownerships and functions.[34] My strategy is to conduct two in-depth case studies as empirical findings. Firstly, I will test if they qualify to be read as "places". Secondly, these two case studies will enable us to explore what kind of insights they will bring to a better understanding of place-making and digital environments. With reference to "place" theories, I shall compile a list of features that characterises websites as places. I shall then apply these features to the analysis of these two websites, and argue that if these websites fulfil the distinctive features of a "place", they may be regarded as places.

1.2.2 Choice of websites

It is not an easy task to choose two websites among the innumerable ones available. The two websites that I have chosen are:[35]

World Tales website (http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/frontpage.php), and
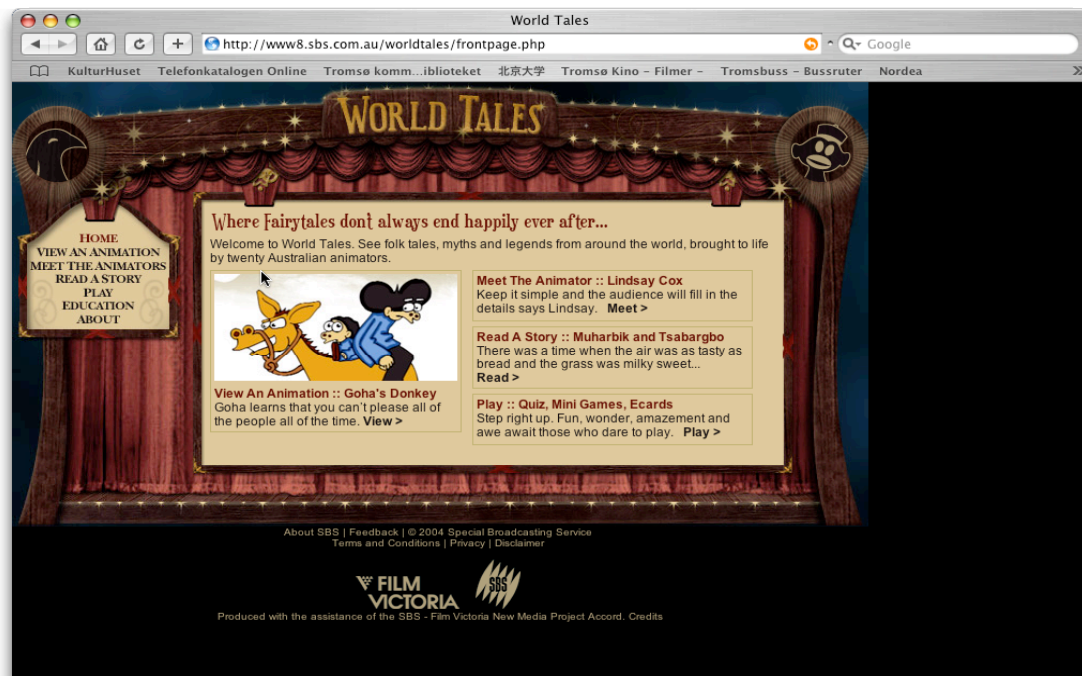
Figure 1: Example of *World Tales* Homepage – "Goha´s Donkey"

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[34] See Section 1.1.

[35] Instead of using the URLs or the complete Internet addresses as the identification for the two websites, I have chosen to call them by their given names at their homepages. This is a practical measure to avoid repetitions of long URLs.

Dim Sum website.

(http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/DimSum%20T.ofCon.HomePg.htm)
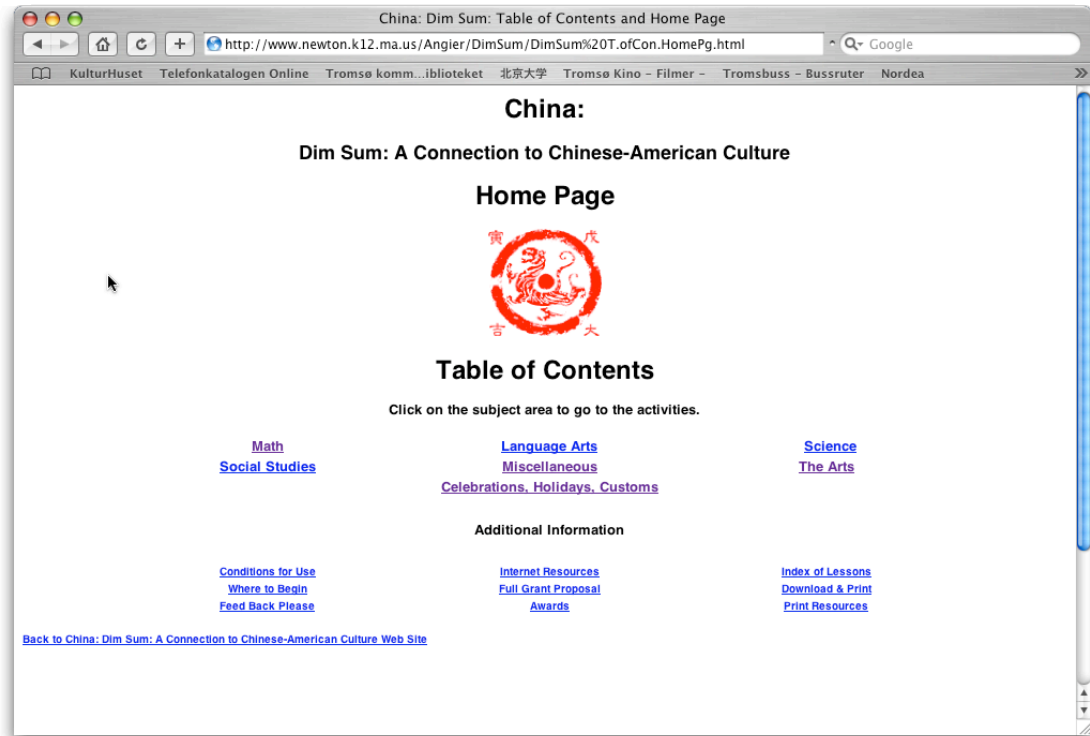
Figure 2: *Dim Sum* Homepage

According to the hypertext pioneer Michael Joyce, hypertexts may be divided into two main categories: "exploratory" and "constructive".[36] The former refers to those digital documents that enable users to navigate without alterations whereas the latter includes those that allow users to reconstruct. Borrowing from Joyce, these two websites that I have chosen belong to the "exploratory" category since they are non-interactive digital documents that do not allow users to write on-line.

The reasons for choosing these two websites are twofold: firstly, these two websites appear to be representative of most "exploratory" non-interactive websites. They may be seen as "typical" digital documents since they exemplify the database structure, one of the most fundamental properties of digital media according to Lev Manovich.

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[36] See Michael Joyce (1995) "Siren Shapes: Exploratory and Constructive Hypertexts". In *Of Two Minds: Hypertext Pedagogy and Poetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press) pp.39-59. See also Chap.2 Section 2.7.3.

Following his argument, the database structure implies "collections of items on which the user can perform various operations – view, navigate and search".[37] These two websites illustrate this characteristic since they consist of many independent subcategories that users may access in many different orders. My proposition is that if these two apparently common and typical "exploratory" websites may be seen as "places", there is a great possibility that similar types of websites may also be seen as "places".

Another decisive factor for the choice of materials is that these two websites contain a number of literary narratives in the form of folk tales, legends and myths even though the significance of tales differs from one to the other. It is my hypothesis that literary narratives are crucial to the reading of these two websites as "places". The centrality of literary narratives is that they trigger the associations of users and help them to relate their real-life experiences with the website. Unlike interactive websites where the "sense of place" is developed by online, "in real-time", communications, I shall argue that for non-interactive "read-only" websites, this "sense of place" is shaped by symbols and narratives.[38] Following the lead of humanistic geographers, I shall argue that this "sense of place" is the essence of any "place" and is a determining factor for place making. By analysing these two websites that consist of a substantial amount of literary narratives, I intend to demonstrate how the literary narratives reinforce the website narrative and contribute to creating the "sense of place" that makes these websites distinctive.

Despite the fact that these two websites share similarities since they are both exploratory non-interactive digital documents, they have major differences that make them unique in their own ways. *World Tales* is a website that features animations based on traditional tales from all over the world. *Dim Sum*, on the other hand, integrates legends and folk tales into pedagogic teaching plans to enhance cultural awareness. These two websites therefore serve as interesting examples for comparison. As cases, the study of these two websites is intended to shed light onto "exploratory" websites in general.

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[37] See Lev Manovich (2001) *The Language of New Media* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press) p.218. See also Chap.2 Section 2.4.

[38] See Tuan (1991) "Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach". In *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 81, No.4, pp.684-696. See also Section 1.3.1.

1.2.3 Objects of comparison

As a starting point, I shall briefly pinpoint some obvious differences between these two websites:

1.2.3.1 Organization and ownership: commercial vs. public

World Tales is a project about folk and fairy tales funded by the SBS Radio Broadcasters and Operators in Australia.[39] This website is therefore owned by a commercial corporation that has professional expertise in filmmaking, radio and media broadcasting. Even though the website does not contain any explicit commercial content, one can argue that commercial interest is indicated by the ownership as well as the demonstration of the company logo on each webpage. Conversely, the *Dim Sum* website was financed by a public grant channelled through the School Foundation in Newton, U.S.A. It was developed by a group of concerned parents and teachers and is loosely attached to the elementary schools in the Newton area.

1.2.3.2 Purpose and content: entertainment vs. pedagogy

Even though both websites claim to be educational and cultural, one can see essential differences in their approaches. *World Tales* focuses on twenty animations that are regarded as new interpretations of written folk and fairy tales in order to enhance multiculturalism. According to the project presentation, these lively multimedia animations are to be enjoyed.[40] The "Play" Section further reinforces this element of fun by incorporating the animations into interactive games.[41]

Dim Sum, on the other hand, is fundamentally a pedagogic website that uses cultural materials including folk tales, animals, festivals and distinctive cultural objects for teaching purposes. By means of practical teaching plans and classroom activities,

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[39] The project is under the Film Victoria New Media Project Accord.
[40] See *World Tales/About the Project*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/about.php
[41] The only exception is perhaps the "Education" Section. See *World Tales/Education*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales_education/

Dim Sum serves as a resource kit on China for elementary school teachers. In fact, the creation of this website is a response to a lack of such materials.[42]

1.2.3.3 Target Users/Readers: general vs. specific

World Tales mixes education, information and entertainment together and appeals to a more general audience. By focusing on multimedia animations and offering the "Play" Section that includes a quiz, mini games and E-cards, one may expect the website to attract children and teenagers as well as concerned parents and teachers. Contrarily, *Dim Sum* has a more specific target, mainly elementary teachers and educators who are interested in using the resources they provided to supplement classroom teaching. Even though the end-users of the teaching activities are children, the immediate target of the website is adults.

The rest of this chapter will include a brief review of the core theories and how they converge to form the theoretical framework for this thesis. This is followed by a description of the methodology that is used to compile the empirical materials. The last section provides a chapter synopsis.

1.3   Theory

As I have mentioned earlier, this study aims at a critical analysis of websites by means of the notion of "place". Following the principle of triangulation, we are able to appreciate the complexity of the research object by viewing it from different angles.[43] In order to substantiate the study, it is therefore essential to anchor the study in both "place" and digital theories. Since these theories will be elaborated in the following two chapters, my objective here is to point out how these core theories converge and therefore may be seen as a theoretical framework for the case studies.

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[42] See *Dim Sum/Full-Grant Proposal*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Full%20Grant%20Proposal.html

[43] Triangulation is not restricted to theory. It may also refer to methods of data collection in the sense that a number of methods are used so as to increase the validity of research findings. See Norman K. Denzin (1978) *The Research Act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (New York: McGraw-Hill). See also Jick Todd (1979) "Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Methods: Triangulation in Action". In *Administrative Science Quarterly* Vol.24, No.4 (Dec.) pp.602-611.

1.3.1   The humanistic geographers and "place"

As Anne Buttimer points out, "humanistic" refers to a new orientation within well-established subfields such as historical, political, and cultural geography.[44] Regardless of their ideological stance, humanistic geographers urge for a heightened sensitivity towards cultural differences in environmental perception. Among them, some emphasize human attitudes and values, aesthetics of architecture and landscape, or emotional significance and human identity.[45] Others advocate human engagement in resolving social and environmental issues,[46] and some argue for transformations in culture and politics as a consequence of the concern for environmental abuse.[47]

In the 1970s, some humanistic geographers began to develop "place" as a theoretical concept.[48] Tim Cresswell traces the development of "place" from a physical location to a concept. He summarizes,

> Place, to geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan (1977; 1974b); Anne Buttimer and David Seamon (1980) and Edward Relph (1976) was a concept that expressed an attitude to the world that emphasized subjectivity and experience rather than the cool, hard logic of spatial science.[49]

Cresswell points out that these humanistic geographers are influenced by philosophies of phenomenology and existentialism, and in particular Martin Heidegger's notions of "being" and "dwelling".[50] For these geographers, "place" is seen as "an idea, a concept and a way of being-in-the-world".[51]

This approach is thoroughly developed by the humanistic geographer Yi-Fu Tuan. He argues for a humanistic subfield in geography that relates spatial concepts to people's feelings.[52] Inspired by Norberg-Schulz's discussion of the "genius loci",[53] Tuan

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[44] Anne Buttimer (1993) *Geography and the Human Spirit* (Baltimore & London: The Johns Hopkins University Press) p.45. See also Ley & Samuels 1978; Daniels 1985; Mackenzie 1986, Brunn and Yanarella 1987; Rowntree 1988.

[45] See Bowden and Lowenthal 1975; Meining 1976; Seamon and Mugerauer 1985; Pocock 1981, 1988; Rowntree 1986,1988.

[46] See Thomas 1956; Buchanan 1968; Bunge 1973; Santos 1975; Guelke 1985.

[47] See G. White 1985; Johnston and Taylor 1986.

[48] See Yi-Fu Tuan 1974a, 1974b, 1977; Edward Relph 1976; Anne Buttimer and David Seamon 1980.

[49] See Tim Cresswell (2004) *Place: a short introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing) pp.19-20.

[50] See Martin Heidegger (1971) *Poetry, Language and Thought* (A. Hofstadter trans.)(New York: Harper & Row)

[51] See Cresswell 2004, p.20.

[52] See Chap.3 on "Place" theories and also Tuan 1974a, pp.213-252.

argues that a place is a "unique ensemble of traits".[54] And this ensemble of traits represented by symbols and narratives gives us a "sense of place".[55]

1.3.2 Digital theories

Ever since the commencement of the digital era and in particular the Internet, theorists have proposed diverse concepts and theories to explore and understand the new digital media,[56] the evolving digital culture,[57] and digitally mediated environments.[58] Digital theories are far from conclusive and need to be seen as starting points for an understanding of the digital phenomenon as well as the World Wide Web.

Diverse approaches are engaged to do research on the digital phenomenon.[59] One approach is by comparing digital documents to traditional ones. Theoretical concepts such as remediation,[60] cybertext,[61] convergence and divergence,[62] are proposed to connect the new and the old. Another approach emphasizes the fundamental uniqueness about digital documents and their environments. Most of these researchers arrive at a list of distinctive properties that describe digital documents.[63] For example, Janet Murray proposes four essential properties of computers: the procedural, the participatory, the spatial and the encyclopaedic.[64] Meanwhile, Lev Manovich suggests the key properties are: numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability and transcoding.[65] Even though these terminologies sound

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[53] Norberg-Schulz (1980) *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli)

[54] Norberg-Schulz (1971) *Existence, space and architecture* (New York: Praeger) quoted by Tuan 1974a, p.235.

[55] Yi-Fu Tuan (1974a) "Space and Place: humanistic perspectives". In *Progress in geography* Vol.6, pp. 211-252; pp.234-235.

[56] See Bolter 1991; Bolter and Grusin 1999; Manovich 2001.

[57] See Porter 1997; Trend 2001.

[58] See Joyce 1992, 1995; Lunenfeld 1999; Landow 1992, 1994; Liestøl 1999, 2003.

[59] See Chap.2 Section 2.3.

[60] See Jay D. Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999) *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Mass.: The MIT Press)

[61] See Espen Aarseth (1997) *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press)

[62] See Jens F. Jensen (1998a) "Communication Research after the Mediasaurus? Digital Convergence, Digital Divergence". In *Nordicom Review* (1998) Vol.19, No.1. See also Anders Fagerjord (2003) "Rhetorical Convergence: Studying Web Media". In Gunnar Liestøl, Andrew Morrison and Terje Rasmussen (Eds.) *Digital Media Revisited* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press) pp.293-325.

[63] See for examples: Janet Murray 1997; Lev Manovich 2001; Marie-Laure Ryan 2004.

[64] Janet Murray (1997) *Hamlet on the Holodeck: The Future of Narrative in Cyberspace* (Mass.: The MIT Press)

[65] Lev Manovich (2001) *The Language of New Media* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press)

different, since the focus of each researcher is not the same, they may be referring to similar traits.

At closer examination, many of these concepts and theories are borrowed from other related disciplines such as media, film and literary studies.[66] However, some researchers argue that adopting existing theories from other disciplines to digital environments is inadequate because digital documents are fundamentally different from conventional ones. New concepts and theories need to be developed to better describe digital documents and their environments.[67]

Moreover, other researchers note that because of the basic differences of digital environments, the role of users has also changed.[68] Interactivity is perhaps one of the most widely discussed concepts when exploring the relationship between digital documents and users.[69] Even though researchers argue that interactivity occurs also in traditional documents, most agree that interactivity in digital environments requires active and nearly continuous participation.[70] The explicit links and nodes almost demand actions – for example, clicking – instead of passive consumption.[71] Diverse notions concerning interactivity and reading are suggested: "nonlinearity" and "nonsequentiality",[72] "multilinearity" and "multisequentiality",[73] and "multicursality".[74] In addition, some researchers also point out that existing research on modes of reading prioritizes written texts and often undermines the multimedia and aesthetic elements that are crucial in digital documents.[75]

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[66] See for examples: Bolter 1991; Shillingsburg 1991; Landow 1992, 1994.

[67] See for examples: Aarseth 1997; Jensen 1998b; Juul 2000; Hayles 2001; Dahlström 2002; Liestøl 2003.

[68] See Chap.2 Section 2.4.

[69] See Jens F. Jensen (1998b) "`Interactivity´: Tracking a new concept in Media and Communication Studies". In *Nordicom Review* Vol.19, No.1. See also Aarseth 1997, 2003; Liestøl 2003.

[70] See Chap.2 Section 2.5.

[71] Gunnar Liestøl (1995) "Notes on Integration, Linking, Reference, and Inclusion". Reprinted in Liestøl (1999) *Essays in Rhetorics of Hypermedia Design* (Oslo: University of Oslo) pp.191-221.

[72] See Ted Nelson (1987) *Literary Machines*. Edition 87.1, quoted by Aarseth 1997, p.43.

[73] See George Landow (1992) *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Literary Theory and Technology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press)

[74] For the debates around these notions, see Aarseth 1997, pp.41-47. See also Anders Fagerjord (2003) "Rhetorical Convergence: Studying Web Media". In Gunnar Liestøl, Andrew Morrison, and Terje Rasmussen (Eds.) *Digital Media Revisited* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press) pp.293-325.

[75] For example, Gunnar Liestøl argues that reading text and moving images are different. See Liestøl (1999) *Essays in Rhetorics of Hypermedia Design*. Quoted by Fagerjord 2003, p.316. See also Johan Fornäs (1998) "Digital Borderlands: Identity and Interactivity in Culture, Media and Communications". In *Nordicom Review* Vol.19, No.1.

If we expand the relationship between single user and individual document to that of multiple-user and multiple-networked setting such as the Internet, the notion of "imagined communities" seems to be an appropriate description of the virtual communities.[76] Apparently, the Internet seems to promise an associational life for the "networked citizen" who has access to the Net.[77] Whereas cyber-enthusiasts argue that the Internet is the tool for liberation and democracy,[78] and gives voice to marginalized minorities,[79] this over-optimistic attitude has often been criticized and contended.[80]

The above-mentioned theories require empirical data to substantiate their validity. Detailed website analysis is one of the methods to compile these essential empirical findings.[81]

1.3.3   Convergence between "place" and digital theories

The term "convergence" suggests the coming together or merging of different findings, approaches and perspectives. "Convergence" is not simply combination because it implies a kind of mixing together and symbiosis. It refers to concurrent developments that are partly inter-related although they may happen in different arenas such as within different disciplines. Theoretical convergence therefore helps us to see how theories complement each other to shed light on complex phenomena. It has been much used in describing the effects of digitization as well as the digital phenomenon in general.[82]

I have identified two interrelated areas that appear to indicate a convergence of "place" and digital theories:

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[76] Benedict Anderson (1983/1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York: Verso)(Revised Ed.) See Section 1.3.3.2.

[77] See Dave Healy (1997) "Cyberspace and Place: The Internet as Middle Landscape on the Electronic Frontier". In David Porter (1997) (Ed.) *Internet Culture* (New York & London: Routledge) pp.55-68; p.60.

[78] See for examples: Cynthia Alexander 1991; Pamela Varley 1991; The Progress and Freedom Foundation 1995.

[79] See for example: Michel de Certeau (1984) *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press)

[80] See for examples: Derek Foster 1997; Shawn P. Wilbur 1997; Johan Fornäs 1998. See also Chap.2 Section 2.6.

[81] See Section 1.4.3.

[82] See for examples: Jens F. Jensen 1998a; Johan Fornäs 1998; Anders Fagerjord 2003.

1.3.3.1　Localization: connections and boundaries

Locality is more than a fixed geographical entity. A place needs to be seen in the context of its connection to the rest of the world. It is therefore in the dynamics of the local and the global. The contemporary feminist geographer Doreen Massey, for example, argues to see places as connections and flows rather than static entities.[83] Like localities, websites resemble places as connections and flows since they do not exist in isolation in digital environments. Because of the expandable nature of digital environments, the links and nodes enable users to navigate from one website to another with ease. Each website contains external links that are connections to the global whereas internal links bind the web pages together as a local entity. In the hypertext or hypermedia environment, boundaries are seen as evolving and dynamic rather than fixed and rigid.

1.3.3.2　"Community" and "sense of belonging"

The notion of "community" has been a focus within the social sciences and has generated much discussion.[84] In their critical study of "The Trouble of Community", Vered Amit and Nigel Rapport discuss the two main lines of inquiry regarding "community".[85] The first line of inquiry focuses on the factors and processes that generate the emergence of social affiliations and groupings, from gathering together to consociation and communality. The second line of inquiry centres on the production of collective identities that rely on symbolic markers, "imagination" and categories, rather than face-to-face interactions.

Benedict Anderson, for example, proposes that the notion of "community" is "imagined".[86] He uses the nation as an example of an "imagined" community:

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[83] Dorothy Massey (1997) "A Global Sense of Place". In T. Barnes & D. Gregory (Eds.) *Reading Human Geography* (London: Arnold) pp.315-323.
[84] For an introduction of the diverse theorists and approaches to "community", see Vered Amit and Nigel Rapport (2002) "The Trouble with Community". In *The Trouble with Community: Anthropological Reflections on movement, Identity and Collectivity* (London: Pluto Press) pp.42-43.
[85] Vered Amit and Nigel Rapport 2002, pp.42-44.
[86] Benedict Anderson (1983/1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York: Verso)(Revised Ed.)

> In an anthropological spirit, then I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.[87]

This horizontal imagination among members who do not meet face-to-face but rely on symbolic associations opens the possibility of the second kind of "community" that is much favoured by cultural theorists. Amit and Rapport point out the reason:

> It is not altogether difficult to understand why cultural theorists who have characterized contemporary life in terms of movement and fluidity, of interconnection and border-crossing, should be so interested in this form of collective identification. Because the premise of this form of collective identity is not actual consociation, in principle, it appears to be quite portable. It can be moved from locality to locality, take shape in different forms of activities and claim adherence across the divides of region, class, gender, citizenship.[88]

The portability and non-contextualization of the notion of "community" enable researchers to study the sense of belonging and fellowship without direct communal activities.

Because of this apparent portability, the notion of "community" is also applied to the analysis of digital culture and in particular that of the Internet.[89] The World Wide Web as a computer network enables users to communicate with each other in cyberspace where direct contact may not always be possible.[90] Anderson's suggestion of "imagined communities" brings forward fruitful discussions concerning virtual communities and the sense of collectiveness.

1.4   Methodology

Triangulation is not restricted to theory. Data collected by diverse methods can help the researcher to explore, describe and explain a multifaceted phenomenon. Moreover, one way to validate the findings is to examine if the types of evidence

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[87] Anderson 1983/1991, pp.5-6.
[88] Amit and Rapport 2002, p.61.
[89] See Chap.2 Section 2.6. See also Johan Fornäs (1998) "Digital Borderlands: Identity and Interactivity in Culture, Media and Communications". In *Nordicom Review* Vol.19, No.1, pp.27-38.
[90] Some virtual communities may overlap with "real-life" communities. See for example, Kumiko 1994. See also Chap.2 Section 2.6.

support each other. In this section, I shall briefly outline the methods I intend to apply for the present study.

1.4.1   Case Study

Researchers from diverse disciplines have used case studies as a method of exploration, expansion and theory building. Generally speaking, case studies are used to increase our existing understanding and knowledge of complex and holistic phenomena.[91]

Instead of "building theory from scratch" as suggested in the Grounded Theory by Glaser and Strauss,[92] Robert Yin argues that the advantage of the case study approach is that it allows a "test and comparison of existing theories of knowledge utilization".[93]

Robert Stake, however, argues that case study is particularly relevant to human studies because it enhances our "existing experience and humanistic understanding".[94] It is a method that expands knowledge of human experiences.

Meanwhile, Charles Ragin argues that the case study approach is practical. For him, this approach is most appropriate for investigating evolving and developing theories because cases are dynamic.[95]

The two websites in this study are treated as two individual cases. Case study is selected as a major research strategy because of the exploratory nature of this thesis as well as the complexity of the digital phenomenon. On the one hand, case study analysis allows us to apply and compare different existing theories to the two websites and test their validity. On the other hand, it is a pragmatic method that enables a

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[91] See Louis Smith 1973; Robert Stake 1978; Robert K. Yin 1981.

[92] Barney Glaser and Anslem Strauss (1967) *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine)

[93] Robert K. Yin (1981) "The Case Study as a Serious Research Strategy". In *Knowledge: Creation, Diffusion, Utilization* Vol.3, No.1 (Sept.), pp.97-114; p.109.

[94] Robert E. Stake (1978) "The Case Study Method in Social Inquiry". In *Educational Researcher*. Vol.7, No. 2 (Feb.) pp.5-8; p.7.

[95] See Charles Ragin (1992) "'Casing´ and the process of social inquiry". In Charles Ragin & Howard Becker (Eds.) *What is a Case: Exploring the Foundations of Social Enquiry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

correlation between ideas and evidence by means of detailed case analysis. While conducting the case analysis, I shall attempt to see if there is more than one way of connecting theories and evidence.

1.4.2 The Comparative Perspective

As the anthropologist Swanson claims, "Thinking without comparison is unthinkable".[96] Most researchers would agree with this observation even though methods employed may be different.[97] Comparison, in the broad sense, provides a basis for interpreting cases and generating theories.

In response to what distinguishes Documentation Science from other disciplines, Niels Windfeld Lund argues,

> one could see Documentation Science as a discipline offering a scientific framework for comparative art studies emphasizing the creative process, the materials and instruments at disposal and the resulting artistic documents.[98]

This new framework offers to study multimedia documents that require new theories by means of a comparative perspective.

My research applies the comparative perspective that implies firstly an internal comparison in which segments of each website are studied in relation to each other. Each website is a complex digital document that consists of a combination of written text, typography, graphic layout, navigation structure and icons, images and movement. Comparing segments will imply comparing these elements. Secondly, the two case studies are compared to each other by means of the discussed "place" and digital theories. By undergoing this process of comparison, it is my intention to generate reflections on digital documents and also the related digital environment.

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[96] Guy Swanson (1971) "Frameworks for comparative research: Structural anthropology and the theory of action". In Ivan Vallier (Ed.) *Comparative Methods in Sociology: Essays on Trends and Applications* (Berkeley: University of California Press) pp.141-202; p.145.

[97] For example, the comparative method in social science often refers to the comparison of large macrosocial units. However, empirical research in human sciences also involves comparison of some sort such as case comparisons, quantitative comparisons, qualitative comparisons and so on. See Charles Ragin (1987) *The Comparative Method: Moving Beyond Qualitative and Quantitative Strategies* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press)

[98] Niels Windfeld Lund (2003a) "Documenting the Arts – A technical turn?" *DOCAM ´03* (preliminary paper)(The Document Academy) p.6. See also Lund (2003b) "Omrids af en dokumentationsvidenskab". In *Norsk Tidsskrift for Bibliotekforskning* No.16, pp.92-127.

Even though the comparative perspective may not be expressed explicitly in the thesis at all times, there should not be any doubt that it is employed throughout the research process.

1.4.3   Website Analysis

Researchers have used detailed analysis as a method for conceptual understanding. Roland Barthes's method of textual analysis is a good example.[99] He divided the text into lexia and then coded these into a number of codes according to five main categories. However, detailed analysis of digital media may appear to be almost impossible. George Landow, for example, argues that because of the "nonlinearity" or "multicursality" of hypertext, there is no fixed pattern of reading.[100] Any two users may read the hypertext in a different sequence and therefore a thorough reading of any web document is a real challenge to a researcher.

Nevertheless, digital theorists demonstrate that detailed analysis of digital documents is possible when appropriate strategies are adopted. For example, Espen Aarseth explores the concept of "cybertext" by applying it to the analysis of diverse digital documents from hypertext fiction to computer games.[101] Anders Fagerjord read VG Nett's coverage of *The Triple Murder Trial* through the notions of "convergence" and "divergence".[102] Researchers also use a range of strategies to analyse Michael Joyce's hypertext fiction *Afternoon*.[103] All these examples show how detailed analysis as a method generates insights into existing theories.

To assist in this process of detailed analysis, I have chosen to apply a model specifically designed for websites as the analytical tool. Websites as complex digital

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[99] Roland Barthes (1993) *S/Z* (Richard Miller trans.) (Oxford: Blackwell) See also Barthes (1994) "Textual Analysis of a Tale by Edgar Allan Poe". In *The Semiotic Challenge* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press) pp.261-293.

[100] George Landow (1994) "What's a Critic to Do? Critical Theory in the Age of Hypertext". In G. Landow (Ed.) *Hyper/Text/Theory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press) pp.1-50.

[101] Aarseth 1997.

[102] Anders Fagerjord (2003) "Rhetorical Convergence: Studying Web Media". In Gunnar Liestøl, Andrew Morrison and Terje Rasmussen (Eds.) *Digital Media Revisited* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press)

[103] Michael Joyce (1992) *Afternoon: A Story* (3rd Ed.)(Watertown, MA: Eastgate Systems) This is one of the first hypertext fictions that emerged on the Net and has drawn a lot of attention and arguments about the nature as well as the writing of hypertexts. See also Fagerjord (2003) for elaborations of the strategies employed by diverse researchers on *Afternoon,* p.321.

documents need to be seen in a holistic manner and as a mixture of text, images, multimedia effects and net-specific elements.

Even though websites are one of the most common types of digital documents on the World Wide Web, it is not a simple task to find a model that suits the present research purpose. Existing models tend to over-emphasize the technical and functional aspects of websites and neglect the aesthetic and communicative aspects.[104] Two models seem to be appropriate, though, because they see websites in a holistic manner.

The first model is Ida Engholm's descriptive-analysis model ("deskriptiv analysemodel") for websites.[105] Inspired by the Roman architect Vitruvius's theoretical concepts of design – structure, function and form[106] – Engholm's model consists of five elements. They are: technical construction (the technological aspect), user's functionality (the navigational interface-aspects), aesthetic dimension (the emotional and sensational aspects), form (symbolic and interpretative aspects) and context of usability (institutional aspect and audience orientation).[107]

The second model is Lisbeth Thorlacius's "Visual Communication Model" for websites.[108] It is based primarily on Roman Jakobson's Linguistic Communications Model and is also informed by the theories of Charles Sanders Peirce, Roman Jakobson and Roland Barthes.[109] Thorlacius emphasizes that even though this model is intended to be an inter-disciplinary theoretical model, it is also applicable to concrete website analysis.[110]

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[104] See Lisbeth Thorlacius (2005) *Visuel Kommunikation på Websites* (Denmark: Roskilde Universitetsforlag) pp.13-16. See also See Kari Holmefjord, Grete Rusten and David Charles (2002) "A Place on the Web: The use of Spatial Concepts in Business Websites". *Working Paper No.5/02*, SNF-Project No.4285: Business and Communication (Bergen: Institute for Research in Economics and Business Administration) p.2.

[105] Ida Engholm (2004) "Webgenrer og stilarter: om at analysere og kategorisere websites". In I. Engholm and L. Klastrup (Eds.) *Digitale verdener: De nye mediers æstetik og design* (Denmark: Gyldendal)

[106] Vitruvius (1931) *On architecture* (Frank Granger translated from the Harleian manuscript.)(Mass.: Harvard University Press) quoted by I. Engholm 2004, p.60.

[107] Engholm 2004, pp.60-63.

[108] Thorlacius 2005. See also Section 1.4.4.

[109] See Thorlacius 2005, p.16.

[110] Thorlacius applies the Model to DSB's website as a demonstration of the possibility. See Thorlacius 2005.

Between these two models, I have chosen Thorlacius's "Visual Communication Model". As a theoretical analytical tool, Thorlacius's model serves the purpose of this study, which is primarily a theoretical analysis.[111] Also, the focus on websites as visual communicative documents takes into consideration the complexity of websites as multi-dimensional digital documents.[112] In addition, Thorlacius emphasizes multimedia elements such as sound, light and movements as part of the aesthetic expressions of websites as they contribute to users' experiences of the websites.[113] This proposition is particularly relevant to my study because for websites to be seen as "places" it is essential that they encourage users to revisit them. Therefore, it will be interesting to see how the two websites encourage revisiting – via multimedia elements, aesthetic expressions or by other means.

Some delimitations:

As part of the nature of web documents, it is not possible to know how long these two websites will remain. Neither is it possible to ensure that these websites will not be altered. These two websites are analysed and described at the period of time when this study is conducted.[114] Even though the snapshots taken as illustrations stay the same in this thesis, they cannot replace the web documents. The snapshots are only illustrations to facilitate the discussion.

The analysis of the two websites is primarily based on the user-interface dimension, with the awareness that websites are more than what we see.[115] As a theoretical study,[116] the technical construction behind the screen, such as computer capacity, program software, speed of transmission, and browser technology, will not be discussed in this study. Since this thesis is not about functional website designs, the

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[111] See Section 1.4.4.

[112] See Thorlacius 2005, p.136. See also Niels Windfeld Lund (2003) "Omrids af en dokumentationsvidenskab". In *Norsk Tidsskrift for Bibliotekforskning* No. 16 pp.92-127 and pp.119-120.

[113] Thorlacius divides the aesthetic functions into the formal ("formale") function and the indescribable ("uudsigelige") function and elaborates how these functions operate in net-media. See Thorlacius 2005, pp.113-118 and p.136.

[114] This study took place from April 2006 to June 2008. The *World Tales* website disappeared in August 2008 because of some major changes on the SBS website. Response from the SBS web master was as follows: "our website has been completely revamped in the last few months, and unfortunately, many of the older websites are no longer available".

[115] Websites are more than the visible elements. See Engholm 2004, pp.58-59. See also Chap 2 Section 2.7.2.

[116] See Section 1.2.

aesthetic elements are analysed from the user's perspective and not from the designer's perspective.[117]

Finally, as Roland Barthes remarks, it would be utopian to think of analysing all the narratives in the world.[118] Likewise, it will not be possible to analyse all parts of the website narratives. Only those parts that may shed light on the major issues in this thesis will be analysed.

1.4.4   The Visual Communication Model for Websites by Lisbeth Thorlacius[119]

As I have mentioned previously, the uniqueness of Thorlacius's model is the combination of the aesthetic and theoretical dimensions of websites together with the functional and communicative aspects.[120]   She argues that the aesthetic and communicative aspects should be stressed,

> Books concerning theories and methods for web designs have until now emphasized on the technical and functional aspects of websites as objects of theoretical enquiry and have neglected the aesthetic dimensions.[121]

Despite being relatively new, this model is undoubtedly a significant attempt to bridge a gap in website research because it serves as a theoretical apparatus for analysis and reflection. Following Thorlacius's suggestion, I shall apply her model to concrete website analysis and see how it helps to generate fruitful insights to the phenomenon.

Roman Jakobson's Model:

Since Thorlacius's model is inspired by Roman Jakobson, it will be beneficial to take a closer look at Jakobson's Linguistic Communications Model.

According to Jakobson, language consists of six factors and each of these six factors determines a different function of language.[122] The six factors are: addresser/sender,

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[117] This is in line with Thorlacius's argument about how aesthetic functions evoke user's experiences of websites that I have discussed earlier in this section.

[118] Roland Barthes (1994) *The Semiotic Challenge* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press) p.97.

[119] The name of the model is "visuel kommunikationsmodel" (My translation). See Lisbeth Thorlacius (2005) *Visuel Kommunikation på Websites* (Denmark: Roskilde Universitetsforlag) p.49.

[120] See Section 1.4.3.

[121] Lisbeth Thorlacius (2004) "Visuel kommunikation på WWW". In Ida Engholm & Lisbeth Klastrup (Eds.) *Digitale verdener: De nye mediers æestetik og design* (Denmark: Gyldendal) p.79. (My translation.)

message, addressee/receiver, context, contact and code. The addresser sends a message to the addressee. This message requires a context as a point of reference and a code that is at least partially shared by the addresser and the addressee as well as a contact that Jakobson referred to as "a physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee".[123] To clarify the process, Jakobson provided the following scheme:

```
                        Context
     Addresser          Message                    Addressee
                        CONTACT
                        Code
```
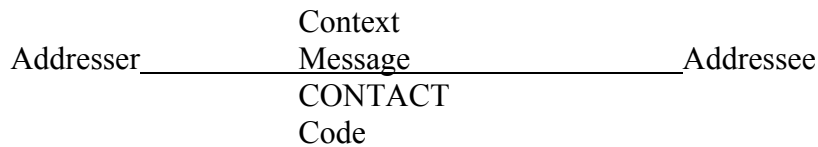
Each of these six factors may contain a set of diverse functions. Even though there may be a "predominant" function, verbal messages rarely perform only one function.

Inspired by Jakobsons's model, Thorlacius adopts the overall structure of his six factors and their related functions: addresser/sender, message, addressee/receiver, context, contact and code.[124] When applying these factors to the study of websites, new communications functions are incorporated.[125] Moreover, emphasis is put on the Net-specific elements such as interactivity and navigation.

Thorlacius's model consists of three major communication functions: sender(s), receiver(s) and product, as well as three essential elements for communication: context, media and code.[126]

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[122] Roman Jakobson (1960) "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics". In Thomas A. Sebeok (Ed.) *Style in Language* (Mass.: The MIT Press) pp.350-377.
[123] Jakobson 1960, p.353.
[124] See Jakobson 1960, pp.350-377.
[125] See Thorlacius 2005, pp.16-17.
[126] See Thorlacius 2005, Figure 4, p.49 (My translation).

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┌──────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                                        │
│                              Context:                                  │
│                          The referential                              │
│                                 &                                      │
│                          The intertextual                             │
│                          functions                                    │
│                                                                        │
│                                                                        │
│   Actual        Implicit         Product:          Implicit   Actual   │
│   Senders:      Senders:                           Receivers: Receivers:│
│                                                                        │
│   Research      The expressive & The formal &      The        Research │
│   of senders'   the emotive      the indescribable conative   of the   │
│   intention     functions        aesthetic         & interactive cognitive,│
│                                  functions         functions  conative &│
│                                                               emotional │
│                                                               reception │
│                                                                        │
│                                                                        │
│                                  Media:                                │
│                                  The phatic &                          │
│                                  the navigative                        │
│                                  functions                             │
│                                                                        │
│                                                                        │
│                                  Code:                                 │
│                                  The meta-communicative                │
│                                  & the inter-semiotic                  │
│                                  functions                             │
│                                                                        │
│                                                                        │
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Figure 3: Overview of the Visual Communication Model of Lisbeth Thorlacius

Echoing Thorlacius, I shall argue that websites should be seen as complex visual communication digital documents that include the communicative, aesthetic and theoretical dimensions, together with the functional and instrumental dimensions. Her model therefore heightens our awareness that websites should be seen in their totality and not as a collection of written documents.

Following her analysis of DSB website, I shall select some of the functions in her model and apply them to the two case studies. The purpose of applying these functions is to see how the model operates in actual website analysis. I have chosen

to incorporate these functions into the two cases with brief references to Thorlacius's conceptions whenever necessary. In this way, theory and practice may be discussed simultaneously during the process of case analysis.

1.5   Chapter Review

Even though the chapters may be read separately, each chapter builds on the previous one. The Introduction (Chap.1) provides a foundation for the understanding of why and how this research is conducted. In this chapter, the main concepts used are discussed with reference to how they will be used in the thesis. The object of study, the strategy employed and also the choice of materials are presented. Since major theories will be expanded in the second and third chapters, the theory section is mainly concerned with the convergence of these two groups of theories. At the same time, the methodology to conduct the present study is thoroughly discussed.

The second chapter focuses on a mapping of the major digital theories that inform this thesis. Instead of providing a detailed overview, the digital theories are gathered loosely into four groups that resemble major landmarks in a landscape. These four groups are: nature of digital documents; modes of reading in digital narrative; the nature of hypertexts; and the nature of digital communities. In addition, a list of digital terms is included so as to facilitate the ongoing discussion.

The third chapter focuses on the concept and theories of "place". To sharpen our understanding of this complex notion, I attempt to distinguish "place" from other geographical notions such as "space", "site" and "non-place". I shall also conclude with the essential features that contribute to a "place". These features will then be applied to the two case studies that follow.

The fourth chapter presents the first case study – *World Tales*. This website is analysed with the help of Lisbeth Thorlacius's Visual Communication Model for websites. The three essential features to see a website as a "place" are identified. At the same time, the nature of digital documents and digital environments is examined by corresponding the relevant digital theories with the website analysis.

This is followed by the second case – *Dim Sum* – that makes up the fifth chapter. In this chapter, similar procedures are employed as in the fourth chapter. Whenever appropriate, the first case is referred to so as to heighten our awareness of the similarities and differences. However, the bulk of the chapter concentrates on the website *Dim Sum* and not on the comparison deduced.

The last chapter summarizes the comparison of the two cases and the conclusions drawn by correlating the discussed theories with the empirical data. Even though the two websites belong to the same group – "exploratory" digital documents, the comparison shows major differences. Two summaries are drawn so that the two main aspects of this thesis may be concluded: place and place making and also digital documents and digital environments. In addition, a suggestion for further research points in the direction of other types of websites that may also be seen as "places".

2.   Mapping the digital landscape: theories and perspectives

2.1   "Mapping" the digital "landscape"

The World Wide Web as a crucial part of the digital phenomenon deserves and receives attention. Different theories are concerned about the Web as a new type of media, a way of communication and a new form of technology.[127]

The term "mapping" implies a subjective process and a way of interpreting. As the cultural geographer Keith Lilley states, the act of mapping "is a way of actually producing a landscape".[128] For him, mapping is not simply drawing and describing but rather a way of connecting the landscape with those who see it. In the process of mapping, the landscape is studied as a material object as well as an ideological representation – a set of dialectic relationships that connect diverse elements together.[129]

The notion of "landscape" suggests theoretical construction as well as perspective. The humanistic geographer Richard Schein suggests that "landscape" is seen as symbolic and representative, as a material form as well as a metaphor, as a text and also as an epistemological framework.[130] Schein argues that any cultural landscape needs to be "seen". Vision is thereby the most significant element regarding the cultural landscape and it entails a certain perspective as well as a set of hidden rules and values. Likewise, D. W. Meinig suggests that ten different individuals faced with the same visible scene might perceive ten different landscapes because we interpret landscapes through the ideas we bring with us.[131]

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[127] See Fagerjord 2003; Engholm & Kalstrup 2004; Thorlacius 2005.

[128] Keith Lilley (2000) "Landscape mapping and symbolic form: drawing as a creative medium in cultural geography". In I. Cook, D. Couch, S. Naylor and J. Ryan (Eds.) *Cultural turns/geographical turns* (London: Prentice Hall) pp. 370-86; p.381.

[129] See Lilley 2000, pp.370-381; See also Don Mitchell (2002) "Cultural landscapes: the dialectical landscape – recent landscape research in human geography". In *Progress in Human Geography* Vol. 26, No.3, pp.381-389.

[130] Richard H. Schein (1997) "The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene". In *Annuals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 87, No. 4, pp.660-680.

[131] D.W. Meinig (1979) "The beholding Eye". In Meining (Ed.) *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes* (New York: Oxford University Press) pp.33-50.

To be consistent with the rest of the thesis, I shall now use another geographical metaphor – landscape – to describe the digital phenomenon.[132] As a cultural landscape, the digital phenomenon may be seen through the double focus of a material existence as well as a theoretical conception. A digital landscape reminds us of the existence of a context, even though this context may seem less visual in a virtual environment when compared to a physical location on the planet Earth. Also, the digital landscape as a theoretical notion allows us to connect it to other landscapes or other theoretical networks. As a result, the mapping of the digital landscape also differs from one person to another. Meanwhile, the notion of "mapping" conveys the subjectivity of interpretation since each individual views landscape differently.

Instead of offering a comprehensive overview of all existing digital theories, which is an impossible task by itself, I shall highlight some major concepts that are most relevant to the present thesis, loosely grouped into four main areas. Like major landmarks in the proposed digital landscape, these concepts and related theories enable us to examine the different aspects of websites and also to appreciate their complexities.[133]

The first group of theories is concerned with the specific nature of digital documents,[134] whereas the second group of theories explores the interaction between users/readers and the documents.[135] The third group of theories focuses on the relationship between digital documents and the hypertext/hypermedia context since no document remains isolated on the Web.[136] The fourth group of theories assists in our reflection of the relationship between multiple users and numerous documents by means of notions such as "imagined communities".[137] To facilitate the discussion in this thesis, I shall also highlight the relevance of each theoretical area to the two case studies.

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[132] The humanistic geographer Anne Buttimer claims that "geographical language is thoroughly metaphorical". See Anne Buttimer (1993) "Introduction: The way of Metaphor". In *Geography and the Human Spirit* (Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press) pp.77-85.
[133] See Chap.1 Section 1.3 for more on theory triangulation.
[134] See Section 2.3.
[135] See Section 2.4.
[136] See Section 2.5.
[137] See Section 2.6.

2.2   Documents and Digital documents

Before proceeding to the discussion of the nature of digital documents, it may be profitable to trace briefly the development of "document" to "digital document". Although the notions of "document" and "digital document" appear to be rather straightforward, they are in fact complex and deserve closer examination. Generally speaking, we can regard a document as a physical entity that "furnishes evidence" of some kind, such as a book, a letter, a contract, or a record of text.[138] But should a document be limited to "printed" texts? Or could it be applied to other forms of representations of ideas or objects such as graphic records, natural objects, artefacts, and objects bearing traces of human activity?

The definition of the term "document" in information science and archive terminology implies the following:

- A combination of a medium and the information recorded on it.[139]
- Recorded information regardless of medium.[140]
- Recorded information that can be treated as a unit in a documentation process.[141]

In all of these definitions, the term "document" is regarded as a "record" of a certain kind and also as a kind of distinct physical entity.

Scholars have attempted to extend the definition of "document".[142] Susanne Briet, a French librarian and documentalist, claimed that "a document is evidence in support of a fact" and it is "any physical or symbolic sign, [...] to represent, to reconstruct, or to demonstrate a physical or conceptual phenomenon".[143] She implies that when considering a document, one should focus on the access to evidence rather than text. Her examples are: a star in the sky is not a document, but a photograph of it would

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[138] See *Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

[139] See BS 5408: 1976 *Glossary of documentation terms*.

[140] See ICA Dictionary (1998) *Dictionary of Archival Terminology* (München: Saur)

[141] See ISO/DIS 5127-1 (1996) *Information and documentation - Vocabulary* - Chapter 1: Basic and framework terms.

[142] See Paul Otlet 1934; 1990; Suzanne Briet 1951; J.M. Izquierdo Arroyo 1995; Niels W Lund 2003.

[143] Suzanne Briet (1951) *Qu´est-ce que la documentation*. p.7 (Paris: EDIT), quoted from M. Buckland (1998) "What is a digital document?" In *Journal of the Document Numérique* (Paris) Vol.2, No.2, p.222.

be; a stone in a river is not a document, but a stone exhibited in a museum would be. Roland Barthes, in discussing "the semantics of the object" said that the object "function(s) as the vehicle of meaning [...] it also serves to communicate information".[144] He develops the idea that an object can also be a sign, "object-as-sign". So, it seems that the concepts of "text", "evidence" and "sign" should also be taken into consideration in the discussion concerning "document" and "documentation".

If defining the notion of "document" is a complex issue, the digital era does not improve the matter. Michael Buckland puts forward the problematic nature of digital documents: A paper document can at least be distinguished by the fact that the text is on paper but how about digital documents?[145] He uses e-mail as an example: it exists physically in a digital environment as a string of bits, but it is also a text, and can be printed out as a text on paper. Multimedia formats add to this confusion because ironically, these formats can also be "reduced to the mono-medium of electronically stored bits".[146]

Anders Geertsen defined electronic/digital documents as having the following unique characteristics when compared to paper documents:

- The unity between form and content is gone. Data and Rendering become two separate things.
- Electronic documents feature hyperlinks and jumps.
- They are often fragmented, they tend to be bits and pieces.
- Electronic documents contain Objects.
- Electronic documents are two things: a flow of information, and a set of frozen information.[147]

For him, the separation between data and rendering is one of the crucial distinctions between paper and digital documents.

Likewise, Poul S. Larsen argues that the most significant difference between paper and electronic or digital documents is that the latter can only be read by software. In

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[144] Roland Barthes (1988) *The Semiotic Challenge* (New York: Hall & Wang) p.182.
[145] Michael Buckland (1998) "What is a digital document?" In *Journal of the Document Numérique* (Paris) Vol.2, No.2.
[146] See Michael Buckland 1998, p.221.
[147] Anders Geertsen (1997) "Scientific publishing and electronic documents". In *Organize IT: Research Libraries in the Future, Nordinfo '38* (Helsinki) p.35.

other words, digital documents need a kind of translator so that they can be perceived.[148]

Following the same line of thought, David Levy also points out this significant feature. He says,

> You are meant to believe that there is just one thing, one unified thing: your document. [...] But the truth is, [...] there really *are* three different kinds of materials in use: the invisible digital representation, the visible marks on the screen, and the visible marks on paper.[149]

In the digital situation, we need to pay attention not only to the perceptible forms such as the print copy of a text of a Microsoft Word document or a photo display on the screen from a JPEG file, but also the digital representations themselves – the collection of bits on a Microsoft Word file or a JPEG file, even though they are not visible to our naked eyes.

Websites, as forms of digital documents that exist on the World Wide Web, consist of similar properties as other digital documents. In her analysis of websites, Ida Engholm argues that websites should be seen as a combination of "invisible components and codes shared by one or many servers".[150] Although websites may be seen visually in the form of an interface, one should be aware that website construction depends on invisible technical conditions such as computer capacity, the screen and hardware, program software, the speed of transmission and the type of browser.[151]

The conclusion seems to be the awareness that digital documents are not what they appear to be. When we look at digital documents, we should not be restricted to what we see – the perceptible forms. But rather, we need to be fully aware that behind

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[148] Poul S. Larsen (1999) "Books and Bytes: Preserving Documents for Posterity". In *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* Vol.50, No. 11, p.1024.

[149] David Levy (2001) *Scrolling Forward: Making sense of documents in the Digital Age* (New York: Arcade Publishing), p.148.

[150] Ida Engholm (2004) "Webgenrer og stilarter: om at analysere og kategorisere websites". In I. Engholm and L. Klastrup (Eds.) *Digitale verdener: De nye mediers æstetik og design* (Denmark: Gyldendal) pp.57-77; p.58. (My translation)

[151] See Engholm 2004, pp.60-61.

these visible forms, there are invisible systems, programs, forces and elements at work.

2.3   The nature of digital documents

As previously discussed,[152] new digital documents are often compared to traditional pre-digital documents such as the codex, manuscripts and other analogue materials. Some theorists apply theories of older media to new media texts,[153] whereas others argue that new media texts need new terminologies because they are fundamentally different.[154]   Since digital documents as well as digital theories are evolving and contested, the debates around these notions are continuous and inconclusive.

The major concepts here suggest mainly two approaches to viewing digital documents. The first approach focuses on the contrasts between digital documents and conventional ones. By means of notions such as "fixed" and "fluid", researchers view the differences in terms of a kind of "paper-digital" dichotomy. "Fixed" suggests rigidity and stability whereas "fluid" points to the opposite: flexibility and instability. The second approach suggests a connection or a transition between the digital and the conventional documents. Notions such as "borrowing", "remediation", "convergence" and "evolutionary" suggest a kind of continuation between the past and the present.[155]

- "Fixed" or "Fluid"

As I have just mentioned, researchers have attempted to investigate the uniqueness of digital documents by means of comparing them to paper/print documents. Jay D. Bolter, for example, argues that digital documents when compared to traditional documents are fluid and unstable. "Electronic text is the first text in which the elements of meaning, of structure, and of visual display are fundamentally unstable".[156]   This is however challenged by David Levy, who claims:

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[152] See Chap.1 Section 1.3.2.
[153] See Bolter 1991; Bolter & Grusin 1999; Landow 1992, 1994.
[154] See Aarseth 1997, 2003; Liestøl 2003; Hayles 2003.
[155] See Chap.1 Section 1.3.2 for more.
[156] Jay D. Bolter (1991) *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates) p.31.

> all documents, regardless of technology are fixed *and* fluid – fixed at certain times and fluid at others. Indeed, they exist in perpetual tension between these two poles – fixing content for periods of time to serve particular human needs, and changing as necessary to remain in synch with the changing circumstances of the world.[157]

He uses editing as an example of fixity. Regardless of whether the documents are paper-based or digital, the act of editing relies on a certain degree of fixity in the sense that the editors only edit the parts that need to be changed and the rest remains unchanged. The only difference in the digital environment is the increase of the rate of change.

Instead of the paper-digital dichotomy, Levy argues that documents may be seen as human extensions or "talking things".[158] For him, documents demonstrate their power by ensuring the sameness or repeatability. He says, "The brilliance of writing is the discovery of a way to make artefacts talk, coupled with the ability to hold that talk fixed – to keep it the same".[159] Even though the forms appear different, the functions between digital and traditional documents remain the same.

- "Borrowing"

Another approach to comprehending the relationship between traditional and digital documents is by means of the notion of "borrowing". New document forms often borrow from previous forms in the process of formation. For example, one of the first digital genres – e-mail – is a mixture of old and new. As David Levy observes, e-mail drew its conventions from other earlier document forms such as the letter, the memo, and the greeting card but nevertheless it is not identical with any of these.[160] It has the feature of the Cc (carbon-copy) that reminds one of the memo, but also the B.c.c. (Blind carbon-copy) that is unique to its form.

This is however not a new phenomenon. Marshall McLuhan claims that the content of any medium is always another medium – "the content of the press is literary statement, as the content of the book is speech, and the content of the movie is the

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[157] David Levy (1994) "Fixed and Fluid? Document Stability and New Media". In *Proceedings of the European conference of HyperText* (Sept) p.26.
[158] David Levy (2001) *Scrolling Forward: Making sense of documents in the Digital Age* (New York: Arcade Publishing) p.35.
[159] Levy 2001, p.26.
[160] Levy 2001, pp. 164-169.

novel".[161]   In adapting to a new medium, humans borrow from their previous experience. For example, the World Wide Web borrows from almost all other previous media so that text, graphics, sound and movement are all available and accessible simultaneously.

- "Evolutionary"

Espen Aarseth proposes to use the notion of "cybertext" and "ergodic" aesthetics as an alternative approach to understanding the evolvement of digital documents. In his analysis of a wide range of documents ranging from the ancient Chinese *I-Ching*, Apollinaire's "calligrammes", print novels, and picture books, to hypertext fiction, computer games and collaborative electronic texts, Aarseth concludes that open dynamic texts are found in both paper and digital texts. He also argues that some digital texts may be more controlled than paper-based texts.[162] Thus, the fact that the text is in digital form does not guarantee that it is more flexible than traditional texts. He explains in the following way,

> The paper-digital dichotomy is not supported by our findings. It is revealing and refreshing to observe how flexible and dynamic a book printed on paper can be, and this gives us an important clue to the emergence of digital text forms: new media do not appear in opposition to the old but as emulators of features and functions that are already invented. It is the development and evolution of codex and print forms, not their lack of flexibility that makes digital texts possible.[163]

As Aarseth argues, instead of focusing on the paper-digital dichotomy, one should view the digital form as an extension or development of the traditional paper-based forms in the process of the evolution of documents.

On the other hand, George Landow argues that it is crucial to avoid reducing new information technology either to mere mechanical devices or to a "simulacrum of the old" and thereby ignoring the differences between the old and the new. He concludes by emphasizing the importance of generating new theories to connect the new and the old. He says,

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[161] Marshall McLuhan (1964/1994) *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Mass.: The MIT Press) p.305.
[162] Aarseth argues that "hypertext can be a stronger linear medium than the codex" if a hypertext path is conditioned with only one directional link between the lexias. See Aarseth 1997, pp.46-47.
[163] Espen Aarseth (1997) *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press) pp.74-75.

> The benefit of theory, therefore, lies in its ability to enhance innovation by permitting us to recognize more easily and more clearly both the old and the new, perceiving that any two such technologies or other cultural phenomena exist on a continuum or spectrum rather than in any fundamental opposition to one another.[164]

The perspective of a "continuum" and "spectrum" in which diverse kinds of technology can be positioned reminds us of Espen Aarseth's evolutionary perspective of documents.

- Relevancy to the thesis

Undoubtedly, websites are examples of digital documents and should also display a similar nature as other digital documents. By using the two websites as empirical studies, I intend to explore if they support the paper-digital dichotomy or the evolutionary perspective of documents. As web documents, websites borrow from previous forms of information carriers. However, it will be interesting to investigate if this "borrowing" is a kind of direct transference from one document form to another or rather if it is a kind of transformation. If the latter is confirmed, it will appear that the evolutionary perspective better describes the development of documents.

2.4 Digital Narrative: Interactivity and Modes of Reading

Interactivity, generally regarded as one of the most fundamental and distinctive properties of the digital media, has generated much debate.[165] It is however important to realize that interactivity does not occur only in digital environments. Any reader of a text interacts with it, regardless of the physical carrier of the text. As Mats Dahlström argues,

> Interactivity as a relevant distinction can only be called for when designating the reader's potency to affect the production of the very sequences of textual signs displayed on the surface of the page or the screen.[166]

The uniqueness of interactivity in digital narrative lies therefore in the opening of new possibilities for readers' roles. As mentioned before, interactivity and readers' roles

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[164] George Landow (2003) "The Paradigm if more important than the Purchase: Educational Innovation and Hypertext Theory". In Liestøl, Morrison & Rasmussen (Eds.) *Digital Media Revisited* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press) p.58.

[165] See Jens F. Jensen (1998b) "`Interactivity´: Tracking a new concept in Media and Communication Studies". In *Nordicom Review* Vol.19, No.1, pp.185-204; See also Espen Aarseth 1997; Liestøl 2003; Ryan 2004.

[166] Mats Dahlström (2002) "When is a Webtext?" In *Text technology* Vol. 11 No.1, pp. 39-161; p.156.

have generated widely discussed notions such as "nonlinearity", "nonsequentiality", "multilinearity", and "multisequentiality".[167]

Because of interactivity, and the nature of hypertexts as networks of "lexia" and "textrons" connected by links,[168] some researchers argue that digital narratives are formed by the technique of chunking and linking.[169] Each user can follow a different path and produce a different combination of "lexia" and thus generate diverse versions of text. Michael Joyce, for example, argues that, "Reordering requires a new text; every reading thus becomes a new text […] Hypertext narratives become virtual storytellers".[170]

Lev Manovich, however, objects to this claim. He argues that any "arbitrary sequence of database records, constructed by the user" is not a unique narrative because it does not fulfil the criteria of a narrative.[171] To Manovich, as mentioned earlier,[172] the term "narrative" is confusing since it is often used as "an all inclusive term" in the digital dimension because new terminologies are still in the process of making. Distinction should therefore be made between "traditional linear narrative" such as literary narrative and "hypernarrative or interactive narrative" in digital environments. Traditional linear or literary narrative can be seen as a specific type of hypernarrative.[173]

According to Manovich, the distinctiveness of digital media is twofold: their vast storage resources and also their random-access capabilities. He suggests that a database is a good example to illustrate this essence because it is a fundamentally open structure that allows almost unlimited addition of new elements.[174] At the same time, users do not need to explore the entire database to respond to their needs. They

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[167] See Chap.1 Section 1.3.2. See also Aarseth 1997, pp.41-47 and Anders Fagerjord 2003, pp. 293-325.

[168] See Section 2.7.4 "Hypertext", "Hypertexts" and "Hypermedia".

[169] See Katherine Hayles (2001) "The Transformation of Narrative and the Materiality of Hypertext". In *Narrative* Vol.9, No.1: 21-39.

[170] Michael Joyce (1995) *Of Two Minds: Hypertext, Pedagogy, and Poetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press) p.193; quoted by Ryan 2004, p.340.

[171] See Mieke Bal (1985) *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) p.8, quoted by Manovich 2001, p.227.

[172] See Chap.1 Section 1.1.

[173] See Chap.1 Section 1.1. See Lev Manovich (2001) *The Language of New Media* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press) pp.225-228.

[174] Lev Manovich 2001, pp.218-219 and pp.225-228.

can view, navigate, search and select randomly without any specific order of retrieval. Users' participation in the use of databases differs from other kinds of media such as that of reading a book or watching a film.

Following this line of thought, Marie-Laure Ryan argues that the notion of hypertexts as "story machines" has been replaced by the notion of hypertexts as "searchable archives" in recent years because of a new understanding concerning the fundamental changes in the modes of reading.[175]   She suggests that,

> The type of topic and structure best suited to this idea of searching an archive will be collections of little stories, such as family sagas, narratives of cultural memory, local history... or biography. These subjects lend themselves particularly well to the relatively free browsing of hypertext because the story of a life or a community is not a dramatic event aimed at a climax but an episodic narrative made of many self-sufficient units that can be read in many orders.[176]

Because of the distinctiveness of digital media, Ryan devises a typology of user participation in digital media.[177]   One of these modes is the "external" and "exploratory". Reading is "external" because the reader's navigation of the text does not change the narrative events or actions of the characters. It is also "exploratory" because "readers regard the text more as a database to be searched than as a world in which to be immersed".[178] This new mode of reading is more like an investigation and is different from isolated immersion or social reading. It may therefore be apt to say that the feature of interactivity in digital narrative creates new modes of reading and also new narrative experience.

- Relevancy to the thesis

As examples of digital narratives, the two websites to be examined will illustrate the above-noted characteristics. Website analyses will therefore enable us to explore the proposition that digital narratives may be seen as a kind of "searchable archive". Furthermore, Ryan's suggestion that the mode of reading is "external" and "exploratory" may also be examined. This mode of reading is closely related to interactivity and the nature of hypertext. It will also be interesting to discover how

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[175] See Raine Koskimaa (2000) *Digital literature. "From Text to Hypertext and Beyond".* PhD diss., University of Jyväskylä (Finland), quoted by Ryan 2004, p.343.
[176] Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) "Will New Media Produce New Narrative?" In Marie-Laure Ryan (Ed.) *Narrative Across Media* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press) p.343.
[177] Ryan 2004, p.339.
[178] Ryan 2004, p.342.

this mode of reading is related to previous modes of reading such as the "isolated immersion" mode that is commonly accepted as a predominant mode in reading fictional narratives. Are these modes of reading inter-related or mutually exclusive?

2.5 Hypertext: links, nodes, connections and boundaries

The hypertext may be described as an environment of nodes and links.[179] Each unit or chunk of information is a node and the unit may be represented in diverse information types and forms. The links are pointers that connect one node to another.

When compared to traditional media, what distinguishes these nodes and links in hypermedia, as Gunnar Liestøl aptly points out, is their explicitness. They are visually discernible by devices such as underlining and colours. For Liestøl, these overt nodes and links request or demand users to take action:

> A hypermedia link – which can be viewed as a micro statement, an integral part of the overall message – reports on a relevant and associated reference, asks the reader if s/he wants to activate and follow that link, and commands the reader/user to follow the link.[180]

Thus the World Wide Web gives us an image of a globally networked hypermedia environment where countless hypertext documents are connected by these nodes and links.

In addition, Liestøl argues that integration and reference are two fundamental conditions for linking. He proposes three forms of linking and reference that are applicable to all kinds of information:

1) Intra: the anchor and destination of the relationship are both found in the same node or document.
2) Extra, where the destination of the reference is found outside the anchor node; and
3) Inter (a sub category of extra) where anchor and destination are found in two different (but linked) nodes.[181]

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[179] See Section 2.7.4 "Hypertext", "Hypertexts" and "Hypermedia".
[180] Gunnar Liestøl (1995) "Notes on Integration, Linking, Reference, and Inclusion". Reprinted in G. Liestøl (1999) *Essays in Rhetorics of Hypermedia Design* (Oslo: University of Oslo) pp.193-194.
[181] Liestøl 1995/1999, p.196.

According to Liestøl, inter-reference is also closely related to the poststructuralist notion of "intertextuality" proposed by Julia Kristeva.[182]

On the other hand, because of the expandable and multidimensional nature of digital documents and their environments, researchers such as George Landow argue that connections rather than boundaries should be seen as the focus of digital documents.[183] Contrary to traditional paper-based documents, boundaries in digital environments are no longer clearly defined. He remarks,

> Whereas the print book has fixed edges and borders, digital translations of the same text lose such territoriality: in a digital environment such as the Internet, the borders of one's text become porous, and although one might want a reader to enter the text at a particular point, readers using Internet search tools enter one's text in many places – wherever, in fact, the search tool has found a word or phrase that seems to meet the interest.[184]

Instead of being fixed and rigid, boundaries are dynamic and evolving and should be seen as reconstructions and negotiations.

Following a similar line of thought, Johan Fornäs argues that in the cyberspace, "the boundary between interactive and non-interactive media is notoriously blurred".[185] Communication elements such as written and verbal text are mixed with non-verbal images and sound. For him, it is crucial to understand digital environments as "crossings" where "taken for granted borders have been problematized".[186] Digital documents should therefore be seen as "borderlands" where digital and traditional

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[182] Julia Kristeva (1980) *Desire in language: a semiotic approach to literature and art.* Leon S. Roudiez (Ed.); Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, and Leon S. Roudiez (Trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press), quoted by Liestøl 1995/1999, p.198. Instead of stretching existing theories such as "intertextuality" to digital texts, an increasing number of researchers are sceptical to this approach and argue for new concepts and theories. See Aarseth 1997; Jensen 1998; Juul 2000; Hayles 2001; Dahlström 2002; Liestøl 2003.

[183] Landow proposes the notion of "collages" as a description of hypertext. See George Landow (1992) *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Literary Theory and Technology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press).

[184] George Landow (2003) "The Paradigm if more important than the Purchase: Educational Innovation and Hypertext Theory". In Gunnar Liestøl, Andrew Morrison & Terje Rasmussen (Eds.) *Digital Media Revisited* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press) p.38.

[185] Johan Fornäs (1998) "Digital Borderlands: Identity and Interactivity in Culture, Media and Communications". In *Nordicom Review* Vol.19, No.1, p.32.

[186] Fornäs 1998, p.30.

elements connect with each other, not as "smooth synthesizing integrations" but as hybrids that demand critical analysis and interpretations.[187]

- Relevancy to the thesis

As a digital environment, the World Wide Web connects machines and people across geographical distances and brings them together virtually. I intend to make use of these two websites to examine the dynamics between local and global. On the one hand, websites are regarded as open expandable units connected to other documents on the Web via explicit nodes and links. On the other hand, they are also separate entities on the Web. The dialectics between local and global is particularly relevant in the discussion of websites as "places" since this aspect coincides with theories that regard "place" as a locality with boundaries and connections.[188]

2.6   The Nature of Digital Communities

As David Trend remarks,[189] Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities" is particularly relevant in digital culture because people form groups via the Internet even though they are geographically scattered and temporally dislocated.[190] One may argue that networking has existed before the digital era by means of mail, telephone and face-to-face contacts. Nevertheless, the Internet has become the ultimate "virtual place where people meet, chat, conduct business and develop a sense of togetherness".[191]

Howard Rheingold, for example, describes his experience as an original member of the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link), one of the first online communities. He states in his book how this virtual community expands from the local networks of face-to-face contacts in 1985 to a virtual community of more than eight thousand by 1993. Even though members in these virtual communities do not necessarily meet each other physically or in person, they engage in

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[187] Fornäs 1998, p.36.
[188] See Chap.1 Section 1.3.3.1. See also Chap.3 Section 3.4.3.
[189] David Trend (2001) "Introduction" in Trend (Ed.)(2001) *Reading digital culture* (Mass. & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers) p.4.
[190] Benedict Anderson (1983/1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York: Verso). See also Chap.1 Section 1.3.3.2.
[191] See David Trend (2001) "Searching for Community Online". In Trend (Ed.)(2001) *Reading digital culture* (Mass. & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers) p.251.

> intellectual discourse, conduct commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends…People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind. You can't kiss anybody and nobody can punch you in the nose, but a lot can happen within those boundaries.[192]

He argues that cyberspace and virtual communities have the potential to change our experience of the real world as individuals and communities.

Some researchers, like Rheingold, are optimistic about the power of the Internet and the virtual communities and argue that these are means of advocating democracy and levelling social inequalities. However, others are sceptical or even disappointed over the effect of Internet on public life.[193] Dave Healy, for instance, points out that association via the Net is restricted by access and is also constrained by the voluntary nature of participation. A consequence of this voluntary nature is that members belonging to these networks tend to be more homogenous and like-minded. Healy says,

> The Internet, however, promotes uniformity more than diversity, homogeneity more than heterogeneity. Email discussion lists, bulletin boards, newsgroups, MUDs and MOOs, even many IRC channels, have announced topics and themes – with social sanctions often brought to bear on individuals who depart from the topic.[194]

Thus it may be more appropriate to call these associations as "lifestyle enclaves", rather than communities.[195] These kinds of associations are debased forms of community because they do not aim at being inclusive and whole. The aim of such associations is for leisure and consumption rather than work.

Mark Poster uses the inhabitants of MOOs as an example to argue against the apparent democratic power of the Internet. He points out that these participants do not enjoy democracy because only the programmers who construct and maintain the

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[192] Howard Rheingold (1993) *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publications) p.3.
[193] Since the question of social politics and technology is tangential to the present study, it will not be discussed at length here. But see instead Winner 1986; Carey 1988; Poster 1990; Feenberg 1991; Moulthrop 1991; Tuman 1992.
[194] Dave Healy (1997) "Cyberspace and Place: The Internet as Middle Landscape on the Electronic Frontier". In David Porter (1997) (Ed.) *Internet Culture* (New York & London: Routledge) pp.55-68; p.62.
[195] Robert N. Bellah et. al. (1985) *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press) p.72.

MOOs can change the rules and procedures whereas ordinary players are not permitted to do so.[196] More than that, the language used in the online world and in particular the jargons used in MUDs and MOOs will certainly exclude outsiders because of its over-emphasis on technicality.

Following a similar line of thought, Espen Aarseth also states that,

> The belief that new (and ever more complex) technologies are in and of themselves democratic is not only false but dangerous. New technology creates new opportunities, but there is no reason to believe that the increased complexity of our technologized lives works toward increased equality for all subjected to the technology.[197]

Like other forms of technology, the Internet is only an improved way of addressing the world as it is.

Moreover, other researchers raise their concerns about the susceptibility to fabrication or "identity performance" on the Net.[198] The purpose of this identity construction ranges from role-playing and masquerade to deception and even fraud. Stratton aptly remarks,

> One consequence of the disembodiment of Internet inhabitants is the potential construction of virtual identities: names, profiles, and voices that might suggest a different gender, class background, or personal history than those they occupy in "real" life.[199]

Following the same line of thought, Mark Poster also comments that the socially oriented MUDs and MOOs are especially vulnerable to identity construction. The elaborate self-descriptions depicted in textual form permit individuals interacting to pose as someone else.[200]

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[196] Mark Poster (1997) "Cyberdemocracy: The Internet and the Public Sphere". In David Porter (Ed.) (1997) *Internet Culture* (New York and London: Routledge) pp.201-218; Reprinted in David Trend (Ed.)(2001) *Reading Digital Culture* (Mass. & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.) pp.259-271.

[197] Aarseth 1997, pp.167-168.

[198] See for example, David Trend (2001) "Performing Identity in Cyberspace". In D.Trend (Ed.)(2001) *Reading Digital Culture* (Mass. & Oxford: Blackwell Publishers) pp.183-184; p.184.

[199] Stratton 1997, p.271.

[200] See Erving Goffmann (1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday) for a discussion of the many complex ways that people represent the best of themselves by means of socioeconomic status, competence, attitude, and also face-to-face interactions.

Because of the high plausibility and probability of identity construction, Poster argues:

> The relation of cyberspace to material human geography is decidedly one of rupture and challenge. Internet communities function as places of difference from and resistance to modern society. [....] They are places not of the presence of validity claims or the actuality of critical reason, but of the inscription of new assemblages of self-constitution.[201]

For Rheingold, digital communities are online communities that are able to do almost everything as in real life, even though they need to leave their bodies behind. However, Poster argues that Internet online communities are only "assemblages of self-constitution". Hence, digital communities remain a source of contestations and an area for further research.[202]

Despite all of these arguments, most web designers aim at creating popular websites that attract revisiting. As the web designer and instructor David Siegel claims, "The ultimate goal of many web sites is to create a community. A good site pays off when people return again and again to purchase or participate".[203] To website designers the key seems to lie in the graphic designs – how to make the website appealing and enjoyable so that people revisit.[204]

- Relevancy to the thesis

Anderson's proposal that communities are "imagined" is particularly relevant to the discussion of virtual communities in digital environments. Most of these digital communities rely on direct on-line interaction even though they may not be based on "face-to-face" physical contacts. It will therefore be intriguing to explore if it is possible for non-interactive websites to form communities, and if it is possible, to explore what kind of means they rely on. The horizontal imagination, suggested by Anderson, may be a crucial factor. By means of symbolic associations, a certain bonding is formed among users who access the same websites. If this is the case, this aspect merges with "place" theories that argue for human attachment to places by

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[201] Poster 1997, p.268.
[202] Researchers point out that some online communities are extensions of real ones and not solely virtual communities. See Kumiko Aoki (1994) "Virtual communities in Japan". *Proceedings of Pacific Telecommunications Council Conference* 1994; See also Johan Fornäs 1998, pp.35-36.
[203] David Siegel (1997) *Creating Killer Web Sites* (2nd Ed.) (Indianapolis: Hayden Books) p.18.
[204] See Siegel 1997, "Form versus Function" pp.4-9. See Section 2.7.2 on "Websites".

means of symbols and narratives.[205] In line with this argument, the two case studies will help us to gain insights into this convergence.

2.7   Terminology

Some of the major terms used in the digital context have more than one interpretation. In order to facilitate the discussion in the following chapters, I shall briefly clarify the implications of some major terms that are used in this thesis.

2.7.1   "Reading"

Inspired by David Trend, the term "reading" is intended to suggest a critical approach to the study of digital documents and the websites in particular, as well as the digital culture and environment in general.[206] Trend argues that despite the fact that "technologies emerge from specific contexts and serve particular interests", it is often taken for granted and thereby remain a blind spot in many discussions concerning cyberspace and digital media.[207] My attempt is to scrutinize specifically the two chosen websites as examples of digital documents so as to enhance our awareness and also stimulate reflective and critical discussions concerning the evolving digital culture.

2.7.2   "Websites"[208]

Websites are generally defined as content accessible on the World Wide Web that contains one or more web pages.[209] The difficulty in defining websites is that they do not have standard features or formats in terms of their interfaces and appearances. As Ida Engholm comments, websites consist of invisible technological components and codes.[210] Meanwhile, Espen Aarseth argues that one determining feature is that as web documents, they exist fully only on the World Wide Web.[211] Other non-web documents such as codex, CD-ROM,

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[205] See Chap.1 Section 1.3.3.2. See also Chap.3 Section 3.4.2.
[206] David Trend (2001) "Introduction". In D. Trend (Ed.) *Reading Digital Culture* (Mass. & Oxford: The Blackwell Publishers Ltd.) pp.1-5.
[207] David Trend 2001, p.1
[208] "Websites" is also written in two words as "web sites" or "Web sites" in which the "Web" refers to the World Wide Web. I have chosen the first of these options.
[209] See for example, the *Oxford Dictionary of English* (2nd Ed. Revised) and *A Dictionary of Business and Management.*
[210] See Engholm 2004, p. 58.
[211] See Aarseth 1997, p.81.

and diskettes may be disposed of by their purchasers in different locations and are therefore out of control of the author. Aarseth argues that web documents are never out of control of their authors or owners who can make revisions and alternations whenever they prefer and with little effort.

2.7.3 "Exploratory"

Michael Joyce, one of the earliest literary scholars who experimented with hypertext fiction,[212] proposes a distinction between two types of functions when referring to the use of hypertext – the exploratory and the constructive.[213] Exploratory hypertexts are designed to enable an audience to navigate a body of information to meet their specific needs and interests whereas the constructive hypertexts allow users ("scriptors") to develop, create and change the evolving body of information.[214] The two websites that are chosen as cases fall into the above description of "exploratory" hypertexts.

2.7.4 "Hypertext", "Hypertexts" and "Hypermedia"

"Hypertext" is a problematic term that has caused confusion.[215] The hypertext pioneer Ted Nelson defines hypertext as the nodes that contain only written text whereas hypermedia describes the nodes that contain pictures, sound, and films.[216] However, as Gunnar Liestøl points out, "hypertext" has been accepted in recent years as the general term in which the notion of "text" covers all media types. Liestøl proposes the equation: "Hypertext + Multimedia = Hypermedia" as a more accurate description that distinguishes hypertext as texts and "hypermedia" as context.[217] On the other hand, David Levy separates "hypertext" from "hypertexts": "hypertext" refers to the

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[212] Michael Joyce´s *Afternoon: A Story* (1990) is one of the first hypertext fictions that emerged on the Net and has drawn a lot of attention and arguments about the nature as well as the writing of hypertexts.

[213] See Michael Joyce (1995) "Siren Shapes: Exploratory and Constructive Hypertexts". In *Of Two Minds: Hypertext Pedagogy and Poetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press) pp.39-59.

[214] See Michael Joyce 1995, p.42.

[215] To avoid unnecessary confusions, the terms – "digital documents" and "digital environments" – have been used in this thesis. "Hypertext" is used otherwise as a general term.

[216] Ted Nelson (1965) "A File structure for the Complex, the Changing and the Indeterminate". In *Proceedings of Association for Computing Machinery*. Quoted by Gunnar Liestøl (1993) "Hypermedia communication and academic discourse: Some speculations on a future genre". Reprinted in Liestøl (1999) *Essays in Rhetorics of Hypermedia Design* (Oslo: University of Oslo), p.75.

[217] Gunnar Liestøl (1993) "Hypermedia communication and academic discourse: Some speculations on a future genre". Reprinted in Liestøl (1999) *Essays in Rhetorics of Hypermedia Design* (Oslo: University of Oslo) p.75.

community technology that consists of links and nodes whereas "hypertexts" are the documents produced with this technology.[218]   In this thesis, "hypertext" is used as a general term to cover the context and is roughly equated with "hypermedia" unless specified.

2.7.5 "Hypernarrative"

Instead of the rather confusing term "interactive narrative", Lev Manovich devised the term "hypernarrative" as an all-inclusive term to cover the various kinds of narrative sequences in digital documents.[219]   According to him, "hypernarrative" is "an analogy with hypertext" and a traditional literary narrative may also be seen as a particular type of "hypernarrative".[220] Therefore, "hypernarrative" may cover both literary linear narrative that exists in digital documents and also website narrative sequences. The latter refers to those sequences that give instructions and explanations to users about the website.[221]

2.7.6 "Homepage"

The "homepage" refers to "the introductory document of an individual's or organization's website.[222] It typically serves as a table of contents to the site's other web pages or provides links to other sites".[223] Another related definition stresses on its attribute as the page designated or the main point of entry.[224]

2.7.7 "MUD"

"MUD" stands for Multi-User Dungeon. As Bolter and Grusin explain, "A programming system through which computer users in different physical locations can communicate in the same networked, virtual space. The

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[218] David Levy (1994) "Fixed and Fluid? Document Stability and New Media". In *Proceedings of the European conference of HyperText* (Sept).

[219] Lev Manovich (2001) *The Language of New Media* (Mass. & London: MIT Press) p.227.

[220] A traditional linear narrative refers to literary narratives that fulfill the criteria proposed by literary theorists. One of these criteria is that the contents should be "a series of connected events caused or experienced by actors". See Mieke Bal (1985) *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press) p.8, quoted by Manovich 2001, p.227.

[221] Website narratives are not literary narratives and therefore do not fulfill the above-mentioned criteria. See also Section 2.4 on Digital Narrative.

[222] "Homepage" is also written as two words: "home page" and I have chosen the first option.

[223] See *The New Oxford American Dictionary*.

[224] See Schwebs Ture and Hildegunn Otnes (2006) *Tekst.no: strukturer og sjangrer i digitale medier* (Oslo: Cappelen)

background text of the MUD describes a world with rooms or other physical spaces. Users become characters in this world and participate in the creation of a collective narrative".[225] These environments have developed into multi-player role-playing games of enormous popularity. Players can choose their avatars from a menu of visual elements.[226]

2.7.8 "MOO"

"MOO" stands for Multi-User Dungeon, Object Oriented and is a variety of MUD. "Object Oriented" refers to the programming technique.[227]

2.7.9 "Digitization"

Digitization refers to the process in which "letters, numbers, sounds and images are reduced to a sequence of zeroes and ones, with computers these bits are endlessly interchangeable".[228] In short, it refers to the transference of analogue materials into digital.[229]

2.8 Concluding Remarks

As I have suggested in the beginning of this chapter, these four groups of digital theories enable us to see four key aspects of the digital landscape. Undoubtedly, websites are digital documents that exist on the World Wide Web, a digital environment. The two case studies will therefore enable us to reflect on the discussed theories. I shall argue that even though websites are digital documents with all their attributes, they may also be regarded as "places". Moreover, by looking at digital documents as "places", we are able to critically reflect on the fundamental uniqueness of being digital. Last but not least, place making in digital environments is possible and the process is comparable to place making in traditional environments.

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[225] See Jay D. Bolter and Richard Grusin (1999) "Glossary". In *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press)

[226] The term "avatar" is referred to as the visual equivalent of a MUD pseudonym or a representation of the player as he/she wishes. The constraints of the medium and also the catalogue of available body parts and props restrict this representation. See William J. Mitchell (1999) "Replacing Place". In Peter Lunenfeld (Ed.) *The Digital Dialectic* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press)

[227] See Ryan 2004, p.357. See also Aarseth 1997, p.143.

[228] See Jens F. Jensen (1998c) *Multimedier; Hypermedier; Interaktive Medier* (Denmark: Aalborg Universitetsforlag) p.23.

[229] Examples of analogue materials are paper born documents such as manuscripts and pre-digital press.

In the next chapter, we shall take a closer look at the major theories concerning "place" and the related concepts such as "space", "site" and "non-place". This consists of the second bulk of theories that are essential for the subsequent case analyses.

3. Place; Space; Placelessness and Non-place

3.1 What is a "place"?

At first glance, "place" is a common-sense colloquial word that we use almost every day and in diverse situations. When we examine the use of "place" in everyday speech, we can see that "place" suggests location, for example, university, office, supermarket or school. It also suggests a kind of position or order, for example, in the question, "Is everything in its right place?" In addition, it suggests a relationship between humans and environment, for example, in expressions such as "my hometown" or "her workplace". These examples show that "place" is used in different contexts and does not have a definite concluding meaning.

In this thesis, "place" is seen first and foremost as a theoretical concept. Even when seen as such, "place" – as the philosopher Edward Casey in his attempt to trace its historical development concludes – is not a fixed entity with essential properties or traits.[230] Casey suggests that modern thinkers attempt to define "place" as an ingredient of something or in some kinds of ongoing and dynamic processes. For example, Foucault analyses the notion of "place" in the course of history,[231] whereas Irigaray defines "place" in terms of gender relations and sexual difference.[232] On the other hand, Gaston Bachelard locates "place" in poetic imagination;[233] Tuan, Soja and Relph, in geographic experience and reality;[234] and Derrida and also Tschumi, in architecture.[235]

When studying "place" as a geographical concept, the humanistic geographer Tim Cresswell suggests that there are at least three main approaches.[236] Firstly, a descriptive approach of "place" that mainly concerns research on place as a location or a geographic area. Regional geographers often adopt this approach.

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[230] Edward Casey (1997) *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press) p.286.
[231] Foucault 1986.
[232] Irigaray 1992.
[233] Bachelard 1994.
[234] Tuan 1974, 1977, 1991; Soja 1989, 1999; Relph 1976.
[235] Derrida 1986; Tschumi 1994.
[236] Tim Cresswell (2004) *Place: a short introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing)

Secondly, there is a social constructionist or critical and radical approach to "place" that focuses on studying "place" as a phenomenon indicating general underlying social processes. Marxists, feminists and post-structuralists might take this approach. Looking at the social constructions of "place" involves explaining the wider processes of the construction by identifying the general social conditions and power relationships at work. These social conditions include capitalism, patriarchy, heterosexuality, post-colonialism and other structural conditions.[237]

The third approach views "place" as one of the necessary conditions for human existence. This approach is less interested in geographical locations but focuses on "place" as a theoretical concept instead. Humanistic geographers, phenomenological and existential philosophers and other humanists take this approach to the study of "place".[238]

Cresswell argues that these three approaches should not be seen as discreet sets because there exist overlappings. He also argues that research at all these three levels is necessary in order to understand the complexity of the role of "place" in human life.

As mentioned earlier, this thesis concentrates on "place" as a theoretical concept. I shall argue that "place" is more than a geographical location. "Place" is central to the discussion of human existence in the digital era. No one can deny that digital technologies and in particular the Internet have transformed our daily existence. It seems almost impossible to live without the diverse forms of digital storage systems and computer generated images. How we work, learn, communicate, consume and play depends on the World Wide Web, e-mails, cyberspace, smart cards, ATM-machines, and Internet Cafés. These are no longer abstractions, invisible signals and codes, but part of our daily lives. Therefore, if we were to study the basic and fundamental experience of modern life, we cannot ignore the impact of digital technologies.

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[237] See Anderson 1991; Clayton 2000; Forest 1995; Till 1993.
[238] See Sack 1997; Malpas 1999; Casey 1998; Tuan 1974a.

Websites are examples of digital documents and part of this digital everyday. As I have mentioned before,[239] this study intends to examine websites through the lens of "place". As a theoretical concept, "place" addresses the relationship between humans and environments including both natural and cultivated environments. Following this line of thought, I shall argue that by applying the concept "place" to digital environments, we can achieve a better understanding of the relationship between humans and digital environments as well as the existential condition for humans in the digital age. In addition, reading websites as "places" enables us to critically reflect on the nature of websites as digital documents.

3.2 "Place" or "Site"

Before we discuss the theories of "place", it may be beneficial to take a look at what a "site" is and in particular how a "site" differentiates from a "place". This is of primal importance because the object of study is called "websites" and not "web-places".[240] By critically reflecting on the fundamental differences between "site" and "place", I shall argue that the same arguments that distinguish "site" and "place" may also be applied to websites so as to make a distinction between random websites and those that may be read as "places". In this way, I intend to sharpen our sensitivity towards websites so that we do not treat them as transparent or neutral objects in digital environments.

3.2.1 What is a "site"?

According to the philosopher Edward Casey, a "site" is

> an open area that is specified primarily by means of cartographic representations such as maps or architects´ plans. It embodies a spatiality that is at once homogenous (i.e., having no internal differentiations with respect to material constitution) and isotropic (possessing no inherent directionality such as up/down, East/West, etc.). A site is thus levelled down to the point of being definable solely in terms of distances between "positions" which are established on its surface and which exist strictly in relation to one another.[241]

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[239] See Chap.1 Section 1.2 and Section 1.3.
[240] See Chap.1 Section 1.1.
[241] Edward Casey (1987) "Place Memory". In *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) pp.181-345; p.185.

An obvious example that we have previously discussed is that of a construction site. Consider the possible items that can be found on a construction site – building materials, equipment, elevators, garbage and leftovers. All these items appear, reappear and disappear without specific order. It is not possible to identify any site by means of the items that may be found on that site because similar items may be located in another site. When the building is erected, the tools are removed and the building materials become part of the building.

3.2.2   The dichotomies between "place" and "site"

Following the arguments of Edward Casey, the following dichotomies may be identified when comparing a place with a site.[242] They are:

- Selective vs. Anonymous

  To show the contrast between a place and a site, Casey compares a building lot with a building. An anonymous, indifferent and non-selective building lot may be transformed into a place by the construction of a distinctive building upon it.[243] A house, a skyscraper, a housing estate and even a business tower can be regarded as selective because each of them possesses specific features that make them distinguishable. For example, the World Trade Centre Towers were selected as targets to be destroyed on September 11[th.] 2001, because they were not merely random office buildings but symbols of American enterprises and wealth. Even though there may be other business buildings that resemble the Twin Towers in terms of appearance and size, none of them can replace them. The destruction of the physical Towers does not erase them as "places". Rather, the tragic event together with the empty space where the two Towers once stood transcends them to become "memorable" places that haunt people's minds.

  Casey uses the example of a theatre building to illustrate how memory helps to differentiate a place from a site. He says,

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[242] Casey 1987, pp.181-345.
[243] Casey 1987, p.186.

> The theatre building itself, however, was no mere site for me; as the scene of many memorable movies I had seen there over a period of nearly two decades, it was redolent with the past: *it held the past in place.*[244]

What transform a theatre building into a particular place are the memories attached to it. Casey argues that memories are place-specific.[245] The memories attached to a certain theatre are different from the memories attached to another building such as the childhood home or the primary school one attended. Casey concludes that "memories are selective for place: they seek out particular places as their natural habitats" because places provide situations in which certain actions and events are remembered.[246]

- Familiar vs. Indifferent

Another difference that Casey points out is that a site cannot be made familiar. A site is fundamentally impersonal and indifferent as coordinates on maps, geometry or other metrical dimensions and does not possess points of attachment that encourage memories.

Conversely, a place can be made familiar. The feeling of being "at home" is not only a matter of feeling at ease in a certain place. But more significantly, "at home" implies this place becomes or belongs to one. This sense of belonging is, however, not one of possession but rather implies an emotional and personal engagement. A place is made familiar by means of habits. Casey argues,

> The familiarization itself does not occur by means of recollecting the room in question, much less by comparing it explicitly with other rooms of a similar sort. It arises instead from a succession of postures assumed by the semi-dormant body as it projects various possible habitats.[247]

What makes a place different from a site is that the place is an "attuned space" and not just any anonymous space. To feel "at home" implies to possess a kind of familiarity or some fundamental sympathies to that particular space that one calls "home". Also, familiarity does not imply only the positive

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[244] Casey 1987, p.187.
[245] See Section 3.2.3 for more.
[246] Casey 1987, p.189.
[247] Casey 1987, p.193.

sentiments. One may feel "at home" despite whether the associated feelings towards home are negative.

Habits, to a certain extent, help to transform an anonymous site into an attuned place. Yi-Fu Tuan, the humanistic geographer, uses the urban business executive as an example of modern floating lifestyle.[248] One may however argue that this business executive can transform the indifferent, impersonal hotel room into his "attuned" place with the help of his personal affects and by performing his daily bedtime routines. For example, reading a book, watching a particular bedtime TV program or setting the alarm clock for the next day – all these daily routines familiarize an otherwise anonymous site.

- Enclosed vs. Open
  According to Casey, a site does not contain or enclose. It either opens up endlessly as in the example of absolute space or simply juxtaposes with another site as in the example of building sites.[249] One may argue that a site is prospective instead of habitable. To use the building site as an example again, it is only a temporary location in which habitable buildings such as houses, apartments, and offices are to be constructed.

To be habitable, a place requires a sense of shelter. Casey argues,

> To be a place is to be sheltered and sustained by its containing boundary; it is to be held within this boundary rather than to be dispersed by an expanding horizon of time or to be exposed indifferently in space. In fact, the most characteristic effect of place is that of maintaining or retaining rather than dividing or dispersing.[250]

Unlike a site that may be an extension of unlimited open and random space, a place encloses and contains its contents within its restrictive boundaries. It is made distinctive by the external boundaries that set it apart from other places.

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[248] See Section 3.6.3. See also Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) pp.182-185.
[249] Casey 1987, p.194.
[250] Casey 1987, p.186.

As Casey elaborates, the nature of place encourages distinctiveness. This notion of enclosure and shelter also provides a kind of stability.

The items at a construction site disappear after the building is erected. The tools and machines are evacuated, perhaps to another building site, whereas the construction materials such as bricks, are assimilated into the building, and become part of the finished construction. A site does not provide any stability. However, the erected building – be it a house, a residential apartment block or an office tower – is the stable structure. The building is a place whilst the construction site is not. People remember the building but not the site because memory is "place-oriented" or "place-supported".[251]

To recapitulate, a "site" is anonymous, indifferent and open whereas a "place" is selective, familiar and enclosed. If we apply these arguments to websites, it will be possible to argue that a website that exemplifies these three features – selectivity, familiarity and enclosure – may most likely be entitled to be read as a "place". Conversely, those websites that do not display the above-mentioned three features remain as random websites.

3.2.3   Edward Casey and place-memory

According to Casey, memory, images and place are closely related. He argues that memory may be seen as a series of images. He refers to the Greek "method of loci" as an example to show how images are crucial in evoking memories. This "method of loci" is used by ancient Greeks to train the memory. It relies on creating a place-grid in which a series of images of items are to be remembered in a certain order. By recalling each of these images, the person will then revisit the place-grid.[252]

As previously mentioned, Casey argues that memory is place-related. Memory is often either of a place itself or of an event or person in a place. He says,

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[251] See Casey 1987, p.187. See also Section 3.4.2.
[252] See Casey 1987, pp.182-183.

> Only consider how often a memory is either of a place itself (e.g., of one's childhood home) or of an event or person in a place; and, conversely, how unusual it is to remember a placeless person or an event not stationed in some specific locale.[253]

It is also important to realise that memory is not just private or personal but also collective, social and historical. For example, we preserve old buildings and ancient documents in society because they evoke a collective memory of what happened to us in the past and provide clues to who we are. In short, our memory needs to anchor onto physical entities such as buildings and documents.

To sum up the relation between place and memory, Casey argues,

> An alert and alive memory connects spontaneously with place, finding in it features that favour and parallel its own activities. We might even say that memory is naturally place-oriented or at least place-supported.[254]

In addition, he points out three similar features that are shared by place and memory: horizon, pathway and things.[255]

- Horizon

  A place as remembered involves both internal and external horizontal structures that mark the boundaries. Horizons consist of both the external and the internal. The external horizon may be seen as the boundaries of the vicinity whereas the internal horizon may be enclosed by the walls of the house.

- Pathways

  Pathways exist in and through a place. There are two kinds of pathways: those that give access and those that facilitate internal exploration. Multiple paths across the landscape may be available for those who intend to reach the place. These pathways act as routes that connect the house to other stopping points like a grid. The stopping points may be the neighbourhood store, the post office, the bank or the park. Once we are within a certain place, internal

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[253] Casey 1987, p.183.
[254] Casey 1987, pp.186-187.
[255] See Casey 1987, pp.203-206 for his arguments on why and how memory and place share similar features.

pathways allow movements to various sections of the place. Free exploration is encouraged. Take the house as an example; internal pathways lead us to the various sections such as the attic or the cellar.

- Things

  Material things, as Casey remarks, may be seen as images or items-to-be-remembered. Things are pivotal points in a given place because they encourage attentive attachment and re-attachment. They help us to recognize scenes we remember as well as facilitate our ability to repeat these scenes in subsequent remembering. Images are more than landmarks and they are personal. My memory of London may consist of a series of images that are very different from the popular tourist images of the cosmopolitan London.

To recall a certain place usually requires combining the above-mentioned three features. Finally, Casey uses the Chinese garden as an example of a well-ordered memory of place. The Chinese garden is designed as a microcosm of nature. However, since the garden is often limited in physical space, it is constituted by allusions that draw on memories.[256] The bonsai trees, the vistas, the boulders and the ponds are examples of components of nature that are used in the Chinese garden to make it a miniature world. As Casey observed, the expressiveness of the garden elicits memories of other similar places. Meanwhile, variations are shown in designs of gateways and windows that provide a complex subdivision of space as well as perspectives. Horizons, pathways and things are features that make the Chinese garden memorable.

Likewise, I intend to use websites to examine Casey's arguments about the similarities between memory and place. I shall argue that if a website demonstrates the three features of horizons, pathways and things, it may also be read as a memorable place. Some may oppose and argue that a garden is different from a website because it manifests components of nature. I shall argue that it is not because of these components of nature that a garden is a well-ordered memory of place. Rather, these components evoke memory because of their expressiveness. This

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[256] See Casey 1987, pp.208-209.

expressiveness may also be concretized in other kinds of visualizations. Instead of bonsai trees, boulders and ponds, recurrent navigation icons, standard typography and interface designs may also serve as pivotal points that trigger memories. Consequently, I shall argue that if a website shows these three features that make it memorable, it will also be justified to be considered a place because of the above-mentioned arguments.

3.3   "Place" and "Space"

Another way of responding to the question – what is a "place"? – is by examining how the "place" is different from "space".

In tracing the historical development of "place", Edward Casey argues that "place" has been absorbed by "space" until the postmodern time. Until recently, the focus was on "space" rather than "place" because "space" connotes something unlimited, abstract and open-ended whereas "place" implies questions related to the particular and the local. In studying the particular and the local, individual experience is required. However, the study of space is related to the abstract and the unlimited, and therefore calls for intellectual reflection and objective knowledge. For a period of time, "place" had been regarded as an unimportant theoretical concept because of its emphasis on subjectivity.

Following a similar line of thought, the political geographer Arturo Escobar argues that space was privileged in the past because of its connection with the abstract and the universal. He says,

> Since Plato, Western philosophy – often times with the help of theology and physics – has enshrined space as the absolute, unlimited and universal, while banning place to the realm of the particular, the limited, the local and the bound.[257]

"Place" was marginalized because it was regarded as restrictive and specific.

However, according to Casey, "place" has now re-emerged and "space" is being assimilated into "place". He elaborates and comments that "space has been split into

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[257] Arturo Escobar (2001) "Culture sits in Place: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of Localization". In *Political Geography* Vol. 20, No. 2, pp.139-74; p.143.

places" in the form of various forms of space such as the "smooth space" suggested by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* or as "open spaces" in Jean-Luc Nancy's arguments about "Divine Places".[258]

On the other hand, Tim Cresswell argues that what distinguishes a "place" from random space is the meaning humans attribute to it. In his own words,

> Space, then, has been seen in distinction to place as a realm without meaning – as a `fact of life´ which, like time, produces the basic coordinates for human life. When humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way (naming is one such way) it becomes a place.[259]

Thus, what transforms abstract space into a special place is the meaning humans associate with that particular place. This meaning is often connected with human emotions, perceptions and experience.[260]

Another way to distinguish between place and space is by means of movement. Yi-Fu Tuan argues that space allows movement whereas place may be seen as "pause":

> The ideas of `space´ and `place´ require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place.[261]

He uses the example of how humans learn a maze to illustrate how unfamiliar space can be turned into familiar place.[262] At first, only the point of entry and exit is clearly recognized. Beyond is unknown space. But after several trials, s/he will identify more and more landmarks and gain confidence in movement.[263] Finally, the

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[258] Casey (1997) *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press) p.340; Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari (1980) *A Thousand Plateaus,* B. Massumi (Trans.)(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) and Jean-Luc Nancy (1991) *The Inoperative Community*, P. Coonor (Trans.)(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press)

[259] Tim Cresswell (2004) *Place: A short introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing) p.10.

[260] See Section 3.4.1.

[261] Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) p.6.

[262] Tuan 1977, p.71: Figure 5.

[263] Tuan refers to Warner Brown´s experiments on how humans learn a maze by integrating a succession of movements or kinesthetic patterns, rather than a spatial configuration or map. See Tuan 1977, p.70.

unfamiliar space becomes recognizable landmarks and paths and thus a customary place.

Another example is to study how nomads navigate in deserts. When travelling in the desert, there are no distinctive landmarks from one point to another. How do the nomads locate an oasis? In their research on how nomads find their bearings, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue that instead of relying on distinctive points or objects such as landmarks, the nomads focus on the set of relations at a certain place. This set of relations includes winds, undulations of sand, the tactile quality of sand, the sound made when walking on sand. Navigation in this vast space requires the action of engaging the body rather than the features of any locality. Literally moving our bodies and experiencing the operation is the sole basis of navigation.[264]

As in the case of learning a maze and navigating in the desert, movement is central to our awareness of space. We do not however need to have a precise spatial knowledge to move about. A person only needs to have a sense of direction as well as the knowledge of the terrain so as to know where the destination is and where the next turn is.[265] Consider the example of getting out of a room. We do not need to plan precise steps to the door in order to exit the room. If we know where the door is and roughly where the furniture is, we can walk to the door and get out of the room. Often, we can exit a room by more than one route because there is no predetermined route. Our knowledge of the terrain – the starting point, the exit and some intermediate landmarks – together with a succession of movements will enable us to get out of the room and thus achieve our goal.

3.4   Three approaches to "place"

Among the many theories about "place" from a humanistic perspective, I shall focus on the following three approaches. The significance of these three approaches is that they underline three essential aspects of "place" that are particularly relevant to the present study.

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[264] See Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari (1988) *A Thousand Plateaus,* B. Massumi (Trans.)(London: Athlone Press) p.382, quoted by Casey 1997, pp.304-305.
[265] See Section 3.4.1. See also Jakob Meløe (1988) "Some remarks on Agent Perception". In Lars Hertzberg and Juhani Pietarinen (Eds.) *Perspectives on Human Conduct* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill) pp.89-96.

- Human construction: perspective and experience

Humanistic geographers argue that "place" should not be regarded solely as a geographic location. Rather, it is a human construction that is crucial to human existence.[266] The centrality of "place" to human existence is that it enables us to develop a perspective of the world. Perspective implies a certain framework of how to see and understand the world. Needless to say, websites are human constructions even though they are not geographic locations. They are also a crucial part of our existence in the digital era. I shall argue that websites represent perspectives of the world. Also, it is possible to expose these "hidden" perspectives by applying "place" theories to website analysis. According to humanistic geographers, we obtain the essence of place by means of experience. It is of course not possible for us to literally enter the website by means of the screen, but this does not necessarily imply that we may not experience the world via the website. Apart from physical wandering, what other means are available for us to experience the world? One possibility is, as Tuan argues, that we employ our senses.[267] To extend this argument to websites, I shall argue that we can experience the website by our senses and in particular the visual sense.

- "Topophilia": humans and environment

"Place" is seen as a relationship between humans and environments.[268] The house is not the same as the home. The former refers to the building or the physical entity whereas the latter addresses the relationship between the building and its inhabitants. The home is a special place primarily because of the emotional bonding. Items in the home are not simply things but also images that trigger memories. Likewise, the home is not just a building but also a place that evokes human emotions. Inspired by Gaston Bachelard,[269] the humanistic geographer Tuan proposes the notion of "topophilia" to describe humans' "affective ties with the material environment".[270] I shall argue that this affective tie may be extended to include digital environments as

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[266] See Section 3.4.1.
[267] Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press)
[268] See Section 3.4.2.
[269] Gaston Bachelard (1994) *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press)
[270] Tuan (1974b) *Topophilia: A study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press) p.93.

an example of material environments. In addition, Tuan argues that "topophilia" becomes intensive if that environment is a "carrier of emotionally charged events or perceived as a symbol".[271] He uses sacred places as an example to illustrate "topophilia". I shall argue that websites as examples of digital environments also demonstrate "topophilia" in the sense that they are carriers of events exemplified in the form of narratives. Moreover, the navigation icons, interface designs and typography function as identifiable symbols of websites. Both narratives and symbols of websites stimulate the emotional bonds between users and websites.

- Local and Global: boundaries and connections

This approach points out the dialectics of "place" as a locality with boundaries and also as a link with the rest of the environment. "Place" therefore implies a kind of localization with borders and thresholds as well as a set of connections.[272] The dynamics between inside and outside, mobility and stability, flow and fixity are particularly relevant to the study of digital documents and their environments. I shall argue that websites manifest these dynamics of contrastive elements. Websites may be seen as localities in the World Wide Web that exemplify the dialectics of local and global. On the other hand, they have links that connect them to other digital documents in the network. "Place" theories converge with digital theories that put emphasis on "flow", "fluidity", "connections" and "negotiations" and "border-crossings".[273]

I shall now briefly introduce the theories behind these three approaches:

3.4.1 Human construction: perspective and experience

As mentioned before, humanistic geographers including Yi-Fu Tuan, Anne Buttimer, David Seamon, Edward Relph and Tim Cresswell regard "place" as a central theoretical concept.[274] By turning to European philosophies like phenomenology and existentialism for inspiration, these humanists focus on "place" as a universal and

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[271] Tuan 1974b, p.93.
[272] See Section 3.4.3.
[273] See Chap.1 Section 1.3.3 and Chap.2 Section 2.3 and 2.5.
[274] Tuan 1974a, 1977; Buttimer & Seamon 1980; Relph 1976; Cresswell 2004. See also Chap.1 Section 1.3.1.

transhistorical part of the human condition. They emphasize the significance of the subjectivity of "place" and also its experiential dimension.

Edward Relph's main argument is that "place" determines our experience. He argues that the only way humans can be humans is to be `in place´.

> The basic meaning of place, its essence, does not therefore come from locations, nor from the trivial functions that places serve, nor from the community that occupies it, nor from superficial or mundane experiences […]. The essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centres of human existence.[275]

The fundamental question is not what this place or that place is like, but rather what makes a place a place? The emphasis lies on "place" as experience. Instead of focusing on abstract geometric space, the main concern of humanistic geographers is the human immersion of place. The definition of "place" is therefore based on the way we experience the world. As the humanistic geographer Fred Lukerman argues,

> The study of place is the subject matter of geography because consciousness of place is an immediately apparent part of reality, not a sophisticated thesis; […] Knowledge of place is a simple fact of experience.[276]

For Lukerman, knowledge of the world is gained from experience and not solely abstract thinking.

In addition, Tim Cresswell suggests that "place" is more than a question of ontology. Rather, it is a question of epistemology – how we know things. The fundamental issue is: "place" is not just a thing but it actually frames our way of seeing and understanding the world. He uses the homeless and refugees as examples of "people without place". By researching how the homeless and refugees see and understand the world, he explores the differences in perception of their world in relation to those who have homes and work.[277]

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[275] Edward Relph (1976) *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion) p.43.
[276] Fred Lukerman (1964) "Geography as a Formal intellectual Discipline and the Way in which it contributes to Human Knowledge". In *Canadian Geographer* Vol. 8 No. 4, pp.167-172; p.168.
[277] Tim Cresswell (2001) *The Tramp in America* (London: Reaktion)

Similarly, Yi-Fu Tuan argues that "place" is more than a geographic location because it entails a perspective as well as experience.[278] A perspective implies a way of understanding the world. Tuan also proposes the experiential perspective of "place". He connects the word "experience", with "experiment" and "expert". One obvious connection is that they all share a common root. He further explains that to experience in the active sense is to venture into the unknown, the unfamiliar and experiment with the uncertain. To become an expert involves the knowledge acquired by enduring new, even perilous experiences. Experience thus implies learning from what has happened.[279]

According to Tuan, the senses are crucial to acquiring experience because the experiential perspective requires participation. How do we humans experience the external world? We explore the world by means of our senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. However, we do not purely sense the world. We analyse and process the recordings attained by our senses and structure them. More than that, we censor these recordings, reorganize and restructure them into diverse structures. Environmental stimuli are organized to form structures that provide meaning to the one who senses them. Not only do they generate intellectual thoughts, these stimuli also evoke feelings.[280] We appreciate the fragrances of flowers but detest the odour of decay. Thoughts and feelings complicate experience.

Another related question is: How do our sensory organs enable us to experience space? Tuan argues that it is by means of movement, sight and touch.[281] Movement, as just mentioned, is fundamental to our awareness of space.[282] By having a room to move in, one can experience space directly. In addition, by touching objects, one experiences the separateness of oneself from the external things and becomes aware of relative spacing.

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[278] Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press)
[279] Tuan 1977, pp.8-18.
[280] Tuan 1977, pp.8-18.
[281] Yi-Fu Tuan (1974b) *Topophilia: A study of Environmental perception, attitudes, and values* (New York: Columbia University Press) p.12.
[282] See Section 3.3.

The Norwegian philosopher Jakob Meløe proposes the notion of agent perception to connect the relationship between activities, concepts and perception. By using the example of "the rock face",[283] he illustrates the difference in perception between an experienced rock climber and a novice even though the rock is physically the same. An experienced climber sees the rock face "in terms of routes" – a terrain that offers possibility of movement. Meanwhile, a novice sees very little because of his insufficient experience and lack of climbing technique. One may even extend this example to include those who are not interested in rock climbing and therefore may be regarded as "blind" to rock climbing since this activity does not exist in their world. To them, "the rock face" is just a part of a rock. This example once again draws our attention to how experience and perception transforms what is ordinary into the particular.

3.4.1.1 Positioning

On the other hand, place making may also be seen as positioning. To position a body in the universe is to find a place for oneself. This positioning implies first of all, a material localization. As Jean-Luc Nancy argues, "the material, local presence is here and there" and that "all presence is that of a body".[284] Such presence requires the local engagement of a body, be it human, animal or machine.[285]

My place is my positioning in the universe – my view of the world, my attempt to make sense of my existence. In finding a "place" for oneself, the subjective, personal, and emotional dimensions are implied. Therefore, positioning is more than a physical localization or the cartographic coordinates of two axes: the vertical and the horizontal. It is a view, a way of seeing, a human construction shaped by our senses and our understanding. The sky, the sea, the trees, and the mountains – all exist in nature without the need of human presence. However, a "place" is a human construction – an intentional interference by humans. To be removed from one's own place is therefore a traumatic experience because the sense of security and familiarity

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[283] Jakob Meløe (1988) "Some remarks on Agent Perception". In Lars Hertzberg and Juhani Pietarinen (Eds.) *Perspectives on Human Conduct* (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill) pp. 89-96.

[284] Jean-Luc Nancy (1991) *The Inoperative Community* P. Coonor (Trans.) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) p.339.

[285] See Edward Casey (1997) "By Way of Body" in *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press) about the relation between body, material and place.

is uprooted. To move from one office to another can be a problematic issue in many institutions, especially if the employee has occupied that office for a long time. The act of moving is itself symbolic. Often it is used as a measure by the management to show it has ultimate power over the employee because the office belongs to the company and not to the employees, and the management has the final say. The sense of ownership and belonging is symbolized in this physical place – the office.

Following a similar line of thought, the Norwegian philosopher, Anniken Greve, in her article on "place" philosophy ("stedsfilosofi"), points out that "place" is not just a physical, visual, and well-defined geographical spot.[286] She uses the example of resting place to illustrate the subjective, constructed and personal aspects of place.[287] The choice of a resting place for a certain human is deliberate, particularly selected because of its suitability to him/her – the height, the support, the atmosphere – and tailored particularly to that person's body and needs. A resting place for some may not be that for others. The Norwegian natural forest may be a haven to Norwegians who are used to the wilderness but it may be too rugged for Englishmen who prefer their cultivated, refined gardens. A Hard Rock café may be a resting place for youths but too noisy for retirees.

Tuan uses the child's place to illustrate the relation between place making and experience. Where is a child's place? We may consider that the child's place is the crib, his/her bedroom, the playroom, the nursery, or the school. Tuan however suggests that a child's place does not necessarily imply a physical location. He argues,

> If we define place broadly as a focus of value, of nurture and support, then the mother is the child's primary place. [...] a toddler leaves his mother's side to explore the world. [...] The mother is mobile, but to the child she nonetheless stands for stability and permanence. [...] A strange world holds little fear for the young child provided his mother is nearby, for she is his familiar environment and haven. A child is adrift – placeless – without the supportive parent.[288]

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[286] Anniken Greve (1996) "Kort om stedsfilosofi". In *Vinduet* 4: Stedet, pp.20-24.
[287] Greve 1996, pp.20/21.
[288] Tuan 1977, p.29.

The child's place is the affective connection with the parent rather than a definite geographic location. Under the presence of the parent, the child explores the unknown world by experience.

3.4.2   "Topophilia": humans and environment

3.4.2.1 Gaston Bachelard and "Topoanalysis"

The French philosopher Gaston Bachelard proposes to study images by means of "topoanalysis".[289] He argues that images may be seen as comprising a place world – a world of places with many rooms. He compares the study of poetic images to the poetics of the house. He argues that a house is not simply a building or a physical construction but rather a set of subjective images attached to the humans who are related to it. He suggests,

> Objects that are cherished in this way really are born of an intimate light, and they attain to a higher degree of reality than indifferent objects, or those that are defined by geometric reality. […] From one object in a room to another, housewifely care weaves the ties that unite a very ancient past to the new epoch. The housewife awakens furniture that was asleep.[290]

Objects and any geometrical forms including houses become special because of human care and affection. Our emotions awaken the house with its furniture and it becomes more than a geographic coordinate or a geometrical form.

In The Poetics of Space, Bachelard uses the house as the image and memory of our "first world", inhabited by the poet, the reader and the topoanalyst. The childhood home is special because it contains images that evoke emotions, both positive and negative. However, the house is not a homogenous place but rather a series of places with their own memories, imaginings and dreams. For Bachelard, the attic for instance is different from the basement. He says,

> We "understand" the slant of a roof. Even a dreamer dreams rationally: for him, a pointed roof averts in rain clouds. Up near the roof all our thoughts are clear. In the attic it is a pleasure to see the bare rafters of the strong framework.[…] As for the cellar, we shall no doubt find uses for it. It will be rationalized and its conveniences enumerated. But it is first and foremost the dark entity of the house, the one that

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[289] Gaston Bachelard (1994) *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press)
[290] Bachelard 1994, p.68.

partakes of subterranean forces. When we dream there, we are in harmony with the irrationality of the depths.[291]

Whereas the attic is a place of the intellect and rationality, the basement is the place of the unconscious and of nightmares. Bachelard calls this investigation "topophilia" because it involves the study of imagined and subjective images attached to space by humans.[292]

3.4.2.2 "Topophilia"

Inspired by Bachelard, Yi-Fu Tuan applies "topophilia" to the study of geographical places. To Tuan, "topophilia"

> Can be defined broadly to include all of the human being's affective ties with the material environment. These differ greatly in intensity, subtlety, and mode of expression. […] When it [topophilia] is compelling we can be sure that the place or environment has become the carrier of emotionally charged events or perceived as a symbol.[293]

Both Bachelard and Tuan suggest an affective emotional connection between humans, places and images.

Tuan uses the ritual possession of the New World by Europeans as an example to illustrate the transformation of a place. He says,

> But the ordering of nature – the conversion of undifferentiated space into place – occurred much earlier. It occurred with the first ritual of possession. […] Although the act was done primarily to establish legal-political possession, to the participants it no doubt also carried a religious-baptismal significance.[294]

This particular place becomes memorable because of the special event that happened. In order to remind them of the special event that happened, inhabitants often repeat the rituals and retell the tales associated to commemorate the happenings.

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[291] Bachelard 1994, p.18.
[292] Bachelard 1994, "Introduction: IX" p.xxxv.
[293] Tuan (1974b) *Topophilia: A study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press) p.93.
[294] Tuan (1991) "Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach". In *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 81, No. 4, 684-696; p.687.

In his ethnographic study of the people in the Trobriand Islands in New Guinea, Bronislaw Malinowski comes to a similar conclusion.[295] He argues that the shared narratives of these people, including their sayings, songs, myths and legends, perform a ritualistic function. Retelling these narratives thereby helps to reinforce the sense of belonging and a fellowship among the members of the group.

In addition, language performs a social function as a link in collective human activity as a "mode of action" rather than "an instrument of reflection".[296] By proposing "the phatic communication",[297] Malinowski argues that often our daily language including small talk, gossip and greetings, is fundamentally rooted in the cultural context and customs of a group of people. He concludes,

> When incidents are told or discussed among a group of listeners, there is, first, the situation of that moment made up of the respective social, intellectual and emotional attitudes of those present. Within this situation, the narrative creates new bonds and sentiments by the emotional appeal of the words.[298]

Even though the social function of language does not help us in abstract intellectual thought, it is crucial to the forming and reinforcement of social bonds.

Furthermore, to retell narratives related to certain places makes these places special and memorable. The place becomes a link between the past, present and future of this particular group of people. A mountain in Hong Kong is called "The Monkey Mountain" because a large number of monkeys inhabited that area. Moreover, this mountain is made special because of the famous Chinese legend – "the Monkey King".[299] This legendary monkey accompanied a Buddhist monk sent by the Tang Emperor to obtain sacred scripts from Tibet. Eventually the Monkey King became a Buddhist saint because it protected the monk and achieved the holy mission. Even though Hong Kong is not on the Silk Road – the route described in the legend that the Monkey King travelled, it is said that the monkeys who occupied the Monkey Mountain are descendants of the Monkey King and therefore this Mountain is special

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[295] Bronislaw Malinowski (1923/1969) Supplement I: "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages". In C.K. Ogden & I.A. Richards (Eds.) *The Meaning of Meaning – A study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (London: Routledge) pp. 309-316.
[296] Malinowski 1923/1969, p.312.
[297] Malinowski 1923/1969, p.315.
[298] Malinowski 1923/1969, p.312.
[299] See Cheng-En Wu (1500?/1993) *Chinese Classics: Journey to the West/Monkey* W.J.F. Jenner (Trans.)(Beijing: Foreign Languages Press)

and the monkeys there are protected instead of being evacuated to zoos. This story illustrates how a legend makes an unknown mountain special. The monkeys that live on that mountain have also acquired a symbolic existence and are thereby seen as protectors of the city.

Not only are narratives crucial in making a place special, symbols also play an important role. Symbol is a kind of concretization that helps to make visible something that is hidden. An ordinary place, for example, may be transformed to a sacred place by using images and symbols to remind people of what happened.[300] As Tuan remarks,

> Generally speaking, sacred places are the locations of hierophany. A grove, a spring, a rock, or a mountain acquires sacred character wherever it is identified with some form of divine manifestation or with an event of overpowering significance.[…] Holiness was centered on the shrine or on the tomb but the sacred aura diffused over the neighbouring space, and everything in it – the trees and the animals – were elevated by the association.[301]

Not only the specific rock or river becomes holy, the neighbourhood associated with this rock or river also becomes special. The place may also possess symbolic values if these symbols remind the people what has happened and thereby evoke their emotions or affections toward that particular place. The sacredness of a place is therefore often a result of human association.

Fatima in Portugal, originally an ordinary countryside with some villages and farms, becomes a holy place because three small children shepherds declared that they saw the Virgin Mary six times at that place. Afterwards, water sprang up near the Cova de Iria (the Cove of Peace) in Fatima where the Virgin Mary was stated to have appeared.[302] The Cove and the Water became lasting images to commemorate the sacredness of that place.

Unlike foreigners who have not heard of these narratives, the natives of Fatima recognize the distinctiveness of the Cove and the Water that cannot be replaced by other coves and springs. This example illustrates how a place is different to those

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[300] See Tuan 1974b, 1991.
[301] Tuan (1974b) *Topophilia: A study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press) pp.146-147.
[302] See John De Marchi (1952) *The Immaculate Heart* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Young)

who are familiar with its symbols and narratives when compared to outsiders who lack this intrinsic knowledge.

In order to comprehend the quality of a place, one has to understand the symbols and narratives that people use to express their feelings and thoughts referring to that place. As Tuan asks and suggests,

> How are the symbols maintained by ceremonial acts and discursive speech? What themes tend to dominate the inhabitants´ conversation? What are their favorite metaphors? The felt quality of a place can never be fully revealed by describing the physical structures and noting the ways people move in them.[303]

The symbols and narratives of a place provide insights into the exceptionality of that place. These insights may not be obtained by pure observation of physical structures.

3.4.3 Local and Global: boundaries and connections

The third approach views "place" as interplay between the local and the global. It is at the same time a locality with boundaries that define its particularity and also a link to global networks. By examining the dialectic of localizing and globalizing, this approach enables us to encompass the manifold and contradictory aspects of life in which the relationship between humans and environments is an integral part.

3.4.3.1 Boundaries

Localization implies to set in a particular place and time or to keep within a small area. In this sense, it also implies boundaries, borders and restrictions. However, the boundaries and limits as argued by Arturo Escobar are neither fixed nor natural but are constructed.[304] To use a neighbourhood again as an example, it may possess borderlines drawn on a map by the municipality. Nonetheless, to the inhabitants who live in that neighbourhood, what marks the neighbourhood is more than borderlines. Foreigners who live in that neighbourhood may still be regarded as outsiders rather than neighbours even though they live in the same geographical area.

In addition, locality is related to identity and solidarity. For instance, there have been arguments about who are "nordlendinger" in Northern Norway. People in Bodø, the

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[303] Tuan (1978) "Sign and Metaphor". In *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 68, No. 3, pp.363-372.
[304] Arturo Escobar (2001) "Culture sits in Place: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of Localization". In *Political Geography* Vol. 20, No. 2, pp.139-174.

biggest city in Nordland district, claim that "nordlendinger" refers only to people who live in Nordland and not other parts of Northern Norway. Meanwhile, inhabitants in Tromsø,[305] the biggest city in Troms region and also the biggest city in Northern Norway also call themselves "nordlendinger". By doing so, they refer to themselves as people who live in Northern Norway as opposed to those who live in other parts of Norway and especially to the inhabitants of Oslo, the capital city. In order to emphasize the collective identity among those who live in Northern Norway, "nordlendinger" is used even though this may disguise the internal localization within Northern Norway.

Instead of being static and rigid, boundaries and borders are often evolving, changing, and permeable. The existence of borders and boundaries leads us to reflect on limitations, obstacles, ambiguities, interactions and negotiations.[306] Gaston Bachelard suggests that in thinking about boundaries, the emphasis should be put on the flow between the "in" and the "out". This flow is continuous, a constant communication between the inside and the outside of the house, facilitated by doors and windows. For example, the outside of the house, even though it belongs to the outdoor environment, may be seen through the windows and thereby becomes a part of the inside. He argues that an apparent osmosis occurs between the intimate and undetermined space.[307] The dialectics of "in or out" therefore provides us with a fluid focus that brings us back to the dialectics of "open and closed".[308]

Bachelard also addresses the significance of thresholds and border crossing. The doorway leading to a house or a room in the house marks a threshold, a boundary that needs to be crossed. Thresholds are important because they give us a feeling of being inside or being outside and there is a felt difference of being inside and outside. Limits may be necessary to create the atmosphere of privacy and intimacy. By setting obvious boundaries in an inhabited room, the intimacy of a room can be preserved.

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[305] "Tromsøværinger" may be a more precise name for those who are born or raised in Tromsø.

[306] The interdisciplinary study of borders and boundaries includes disciplines such as social anthropology, political science, international law, ethnology, history, psychology, sociology, economics, literature, and art history. See for examples: Edward Said 1979, 1990; Emily Hinks 1991; Homi K. Bhabha 1994; Claudia Egerer 1996, 1997, 1999; Monika Reif-Hüsler 1999; Johan Schimanski 2000, 2003.

[307] See Bachelard (1994) "The Dialectics of Outside and Inside". In *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press) pp.211-231.

[308] See Bachelard 1994, "Introduction", p.xxxv.

For instance, some people use a wooden screen as a partition to separate the private sleeping area from the sitting area in a bachelor flat. This wooden screen may be seen as a border between the private and the public, the owner/occupant and the visitor.

In connection to the study of boundaries and borders, new metaphors of mobility also make us aware of the above-mentioned dynamics between the local and the global, the interplay between position and place, and the juxtaposition of the home and the wilderness. Some examples of these metaphors are displacement, diaspora, migration, and border-crossings. Notions such as the border, the threshold, and the in-between are significant issues for discussion in the study of national identity, post-colonial studies, as well as feminist and gender issues.[309]

3.4.3.2 Connections

The local is not simply a static place but a set of connections. A certain place may be seen as a locality in the universe that connects with other localities in the environment. The place, the human and the environment may then be seen as connected to each other.

Doreen Massey, a contemporary feminist geographer, argues for a progressive global notion of place by considering place as a way to combine bodies, objects and flows.[310] Echoing Bachelard, this notion encourages us to see the movements "in and out" of place and to think of place as connections rather than exclusions or fixity. Unlike Tuan who sees places as pauses,[311] Massey argues that places should be seen as connections. The crucial point is to understand the uniqueness of each place by linking that place to other places. As Massey claims, the need is to develop "a global sense of the local, a global sense of place".[312] According to Massey, place and non-place are more than contrastive modalities and they should not be seen as "either-or" entities.

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[309] See Benedict Anderson 1983; Edward Said 1979, 1990; Homi K. Bhabha 1990; Lila Abu-Lughod 1991; Diane Freedman 1992; Helen Verran 1998; Monika Reif-Hüsler 1999.
[310] Dorothy Massey (1997) "A Global Sense of Place". In T. Barnes & D. Gregory (Eds.) *Reading Human Geography* (London: Arnold) pp.315-323.
[311] See Section 3.3. See also Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) p.6.
[312] Massey 1997, p.323.

Similarly, Arjun Appadurai argues that the world can no longer be seen in terms of a centre-periphery metaphor in which the "developed modern nation-states" of Euro-American countries make up the core with the rest of the world as periphery. He argues that global capitalism should be rethought in terms of "global cultural flows".[313]

In short, "place" is regarded as meeting points where diverse particularities co-exist and reconstruct. Yet these constructions entail boundaries and negotiations. Instead of a local-global polarization or "centre-periphery" juxtaposition, the emphasis is on the flows and connections that link specific localities together in a network.[314]

3.5   Features of "Place"

From the above theoretical approaches to "place", we can devise three essential features that characterize a "place":

- A "place" is a human construction. It is an expression or a concretization of how we see, understand and experience the world.
- A "place" is made distinctive by symbols and narratives that humans attribute to it. These symbols and narratives reinforce the bonding between humans and the environment.
- A "place" is a kind of localization with boundaries and connections. It displays the dialectics between local and global.

These features should be seen as identifiers or criteria that distinguish those websites that may be regarded as "web-places" from random websites. In addition, the arguments that mark the differences between a "place" from a "site" once again confirm the centrality of these features. Concisely, a "place" differs from a "site" because it is "selective, familiar and enclosed".[315] "Selectivity" coincides with the feature of distinctiveness. "Familiarity" points to the bonding between humans and the place. "Enclosed" implies localization and boundaries.

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[313] Arjun Appadurai (1990) "Difference in the Global Cultural Economy". In Mike Featherstone (Ed.)(1990) *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (London: Sage) p.307.
[314] See Chap.1 Section 1.3.3.1.
[315] See Section 3.2.2.

I shall argue that only those websites that exemplify the above-mentioned features may be regarded as "places". This suggests the probability that not all websites are "places". Those websites that exhibit the "site" features of "anonymous, indifferent and open" remain random websites.

Before embarking on the two case studies, I find it necessary to introduce the concept of "placelessness", as a contrast to that of "place". By examining the opposite, our understanding of "place" will once more be sharpened.

3.6 "Placelessness" and "Non-Place"

According to researchers who study "placelessness" and "non-place",[316] three main features can be identified:

3.6.1 Lack of identity

The humanistic geographer Edward Relph argues that "placelessness" implies no sense of place or not belonging to anywhere.[317] He is concerned about the increasing difficulty for people to feel connected to the world through place. He makes the distinction between insideness and outsideness in the human experience of place. To be inside a place implies a strong identity connected to it, whereas to be outside involves an alienation from the place. The difference between the inside and outside is a difference between safety and danger, familiarity and strangeness, acceptance and alienation, enclosure and exposition.

He argues that in the modern world, we are surrounded by a condition of "placelessness" because of the media, mass communication, tourism, international corporations and urban culture. The media, in particular, encourages "placelessness" by means of "weakening the identity of places to the point where they not only look alike and feel alike and offer the same bland possibilities for experience".[318]

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[316] See Edward Relph 1976; Marc Augé 1995; Yi-Fu Tuan 1977; Lucy Lippard 1997.
[317] Edward Relph (1976) *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion).
[318] See Relph 1976, p.90.

Relph further elaborates and argues that mass culture creates transient and shallow landscapes such as railway stations, airports, and highways. These are not places but only transient connections that transfer people to elsewhere. They are constructed to look and feel almost the same to fit most people's habits, and to enable quick and easy mass transport.[319]   In other words, "placelessness" may be seen as replaceability. Any modern shopping mall looks and feels like any other in the same country. Most of these malls have similar chain stores and some of these chain stores – the Body Shop, H&M, Safeway and Starbucks Coffee – deliberately maintain the same look no matter where they are located in the world.

The anthropologist Marc Augé also argues that a "non-place" is characterised by a lack of identity. According to Augé, the characteristics of a place are relational, historical and concerned with identity. Being the opposite, a "non-place" is therefore marked by the lack of these three characteristics. Any space that does not possess these three characteristics may be seen as a "non-place". He says,

> In the situation of supermodernity, part of this exterior is made of non-places, and parts of the non-places are made of images. Frequentation of non-places today provides an experience – without real historical precedent – of solitary individuality combined with non-human mediation (all it takes is a notice or a screen) between the individual and the public authority.[320]

His hypothesis is that supermodernity produces non-places – a world that is "surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral",[321] where credit cards, slot machines, and bar codes communicate wordlessly.

3.6.2   Disconnectedness

Another feature that Marc Augé proposes of a "non-place" is its disconnectedness. As I have mentioned above, Augé's three characteristics of places are relational, historical and identity-oriented. Non-places, on the

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[319] See Relph 1976.

[320] Marc Augé (1995) *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London & New York: Verso) pp.117-118.

[321] See Augé 1995, p.78.

contrary, are characterized by isolation, disconnectedness and lack of identity. He argues that "non-place" points us to "two complementary but distinct realities: spaces formed in relation to certain ends (transport, transit, commerce, leisure), and the relations that individuals have with these spaces".[322] These relations may be described as inorganic, artificial and incoherent. It is important to realise that in today's world, places and non-places intertwine with each other: transit vs. residence, interchange (nobody crosses anyone's path) vs. crossroads (where people meet), communication (shared with its codes and images) vs. language (spoken).[323]

His argument is that "place" has traditionally been thought of as anchored in infinite time and intact soil. However, such places are now replaced by "non-places" such as airways, highways, shopping malls, and supermarkets where people coexist and cohabit without living together.

Compared to shopping malls and supermarkets, market places are distinct. Even though they may be located in similar areas such as the town centre and consist of similar structures – a gathering of stalls, the atmosphere, colour, combination of stalls, noise level, crowdedness and even the smells are different. A fresh food market in Hong Kong with fresh vegetables and live fish smells "fishy". Meanwhile the Shepherd Bush's Market in London, which also sells fresh vegetables and ethnic food, has another smell and taste because the spices, the food varieties, and the manner of cooking, are different from those in Hong Kong.

3.6.3 Lack of attachment

Yi-Fu Tuan proposes a third feature of non-places.[324] He argues that non-places are transient, mobile and that they do not connect or attach. As we have seen,[325] Tuan uses the business executive and his urban lifestyle as an illustration of "placelessness".

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[322] See Augé 1995, p.94.
[323] See Augé 1995, p.107.
[324] Tuan (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press) pp.182-185.
[325] See Section 3.2.2. Familiar vs. Indifferent.

> He [The businessman] moves around so much that places for him tend to lose their special character. What are the significant places? The home is in the suburb. He lives there, but home is not wholly divorced from work. It is occasionally a showplace for the lavish entertainment of colleagues and business associates[…]. The executive takes periodic trips abroad, combining business with pleasure. He stays at the same hotel, or with the same friends, in Milan, and again in Barbados. The circuits of movement are complex.[326]

This kind of life does not encourage people to develop attachment to a particular place because the feel of a place is mostly made up of banal repetitive experiences over a long period of time.

Although the above-mentioned "non-place" features are devised from critical reflections on physical places, it does not imply that they cannot be extended to the theoretical dimension. In the case studies that follow, I shall apply these features to the analysis of websites. In this way, we shall test their applicability in the digital realm.

3.7   Concluding Remarks

If "place" is a fundamental condition for human existence as many humanists and philosophers claim, then it cannot just disappear even though it may appear much eroded by rapid mobility in the modern age. Lucy Lippard has reflected on the relationship of "place" and the modern world and makes the following suggestion,

> Most of us move around a lot, but when we move we often come into contact with those who haven't moved around, or have come from different places. This should give us a better understanding of difference […]. Each time we enter a new place, we become one of the ingredients of an existing hybridity, which is really what all `local places´ consist of.[327]

According to her, mobility and "place" hang together. Mobility only supplies more ingredients to the mixed pot of "place". Despite the restlessness and multitraditionality of modern humans, "place" is still central to our need to have a sense of belonging and to guard us against hostile alienation.

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[326] Tuan 1977, p.183.
[327] Lippard (1997) *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicultural Society* (New York: The New Press) pp. 5-6.

The presence of these non-places may on the contrary create our awareness and ache for places – those places that our heart desires – where we feel at home and where we have emotional attachments. Since "place" is a human construction, we humans can transform a "non-place" to a "place" by means of personal effects or daily routines.[328] These personal effects help to create a familiar, personal atmosphere.[329] The fact of bringing these effects along, for example, during trips, indicates the need for a "place" and not just any anonymous space. Even though shopping malls may seem to replace traditional market places, the latter are still popular among locals as well as tourists.

Even though the experience of movement and the emergence of non-places may seem to be unavoidable in modern living. As Massey argues, "place" and "non-place" can co-exist in a kind of hybridization in a "global sense of place" that recognizes both global constructedness as well as local specificity.[330] Following the same line of thought, Escobar argues:

> This is because if the experience of movement and non-place has become fundamental for modern identity and everyday life, the experience of place continues to be important for many people worldwide. Place and non-place are more than contrastive modalities.[331]

What is significant, for him, is to accept this inevitable co-existence of these two approaches, the global and the local, and to examine the production of place and culture from both perspectives.

To conclude, I shall argue that the construction of "place" needs to be seen in the above-mentioned dialectic relationship of local and global, the sense of belonging and movement, and boundaries and connections. If "place" is seen as a human construction by perception, experience, conceptions, interpretations and narratives, could we then argue that websites – as a form of cultural product via Internet technology – may be seen as an example of such a place? By conducting case studies,

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[328] See Section 3.2.2.
[329] See Tuan's example of a business executive in Section 3.6.3.
[330] Dorothy Massey (1997) "A Global Sense of Place". In T. Barnes & D. Gregory (Eds.) *Reading Human Geography* (London: Arnold) pp.315-323.
[331] Arturo Escobar (2001) "Culture sits in Place: reflections on globalism and subaltern strategies of Localization". In *Political Geography* Vol. 20, No. 2, pp.139-174; p.147.

I shall correlate the discussed "place" theories with the two specific websites and see if they may be read as places.[332]

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[332] See Chap.1 Section 1.2.

4.   Case Study I: *World Tales*

(http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/frontpage.php)

Before proceeding to the case analysis, I would like to recapture the major questions that I intend to explore. Firstly, is it possible to read websites as "places"? Secondly, are there similarities and differences between non-digital place making and digital place making? Thirdly, what kinds of insights can we derive by reading websites as "places," especially in the context of digital documents and environments?

In order to answer these questions, my strategy is to analyse the *World Tales* website according to the features of "place" that I have proposed in Chapter Three.[333]   If the analysis shows that the website possesses these distinctive features, then I shall argue that there is no reason why this website cannot be regarded as a "place".

4.1   The features of "Place"

Although "place" is often referred to as a definite physical and geographic location, researchers from various disciplines have argued that "place" may also be seen as a complex theoretical notion.[334]   As previously mentioned, three major features of "place" may be derived from the discussed theories on "place":[335]

- A "place" is a human construction. It is an expression or a concretization of how we see, understand and experience the world.
- A "place" is made distinctive by symbols and narratives that humans attribute to it. These symbols and narratives reinforce the bonding between humans and the environment.
- A "place" is a kind of localization with boundaries and connections. It displays the dialectics between local and global.

If these three features are identified in the analysis of *World Tales*, I shall argue that this website may be read as a "place".

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[333] These features may also be seen as criteria or markers of "place". See Chap.1 Section 1.1 and Chap.3 Section 3.5.

[334] See Chap.3 Sections 3.1.

[335] See Chap.3 Sections 3.4 and 3.5.

4.1.1   A human construction: perspective and experience

Following the lead of major humanistic geographers such as Yi-Fu Tuan, Anne Buttimer, David Seamon, Edward Relph and Tim Cresswell,[336] as we have seen, a place is not merely a physical location or a set of geographical coordinates. Rather, a place is a human construction that expresses a perspective of seeing and understanding the world.

A website is obviously a human construction. However, to determine if a certain website may be seen as a place will require us to see whether the website provides us with a unique perspective of seeing, understanding and experiencing the world. In other words, to determine if *World Tales* fulfils this requirement, we need to examine the website and explore if it contains a perspective and how this is represented.

As I have mentioned before, I shall apply some functions proposed by Lisbeth Thorlacius in the Visual Communication Model for the analysis of the website.[337] This Model assists us to study the website as a holistic entity. According to Thorlacius, websites are visual communicative documents in which both the visual representation and also the interactive elements are crucial.[338] "Visual Communication" includes not only images but also graphic design such as the choice of typography and layout, colour combination, design of logo as well as the use of sound, illustrations and movements.[339]

Following this line of thought, I shall argue that by analysing the visual representation of a website as an example of a media product, we may be able to see its perspective. To examine what kind of perspective *World Tales* represents, I shall use the homepage as an example.[340]

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[336] Tuan 1974, 1977, 1991; Buttimer & Seamon 1980; Relph 1976; Cresswell 2004. See also Chapter 1 Section 1.3.1.

[337] See Chap.1 Section 1.4.3 and 1.4.4. See also Lisbeth Thorlacius (2005) *Visuel Kommunikation på websites* (Denmark: Roskilde Universitetsforlag)

[338] See Chap.1 Section 1.4.3 and Section 1.4.4.

[339] Lisbeth Thorlacius (2005) *Visuel Kommunikation på Websites* (Denmark: Roskilde Universitetsforlag) p.50; pp.61-62.

[340] See http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/frontpage.php. Homepage refers to the page designated as the main point of entry of a website. See Schwebs Ture & Hildegunn Otnes (2006) *Tekst.no: strukturer og sjangrer i digitale medier* (Oslo: Cappelen) See also Chap.2 Section 2.7.2.

4.1.1.1 Typography and Perspective

- Typography:

Typography implies how the diverse visual elements are placed on the website.[341] Its significance is twofold: it distinguishes one website from the rest,[342] and it is essential for users to experience the website.[343]

Figure 4: View An Animation: "Djinungs Koorngees"

When we click on the *World Tales* homepage, we are met with a brown stage with burgundy velvet curtains. The name of the site, *World Tales*, is put in the middle of the arch on top of the stage. This arch is further decorated with stars to create a blinking effect. At the top right hand corner of the stage is the head of a simplified smiling monkey while at the top left hand corner is the side profile of a bird with a

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[341] The present analysis follows the example of Thorlacius's analysis of the DSB's website. See Thorlacius 2005, pp.65-67 for more.
[342] See Section 4.1.2.
[343] See Section 4.1.1.2.

long beak. The stars, the smiling monkey and the bird give us an association with children. The stage connects us to performance and show.

Figure 5: The arch with the monkey and the bird

Below the arch, the stage is further divided into two areas: a small graphical home menu box in the form of a house on the left, together with a big screen window that occupies the central position of the stage.

The home menu box provides users with the major navigation points on the site. They include: "Home", "View an Animation", "Meet the Animators", "Read a Story", "Play", "Education" and "About".

Figure 6: The main menu box

The main screen window is further divided into two columns. The left column shows the image of one of the animations. Below the image is an invitation to view the animation. For example, the image shows two hopping elephants and a mouse with wings with the following text: "View An Animation: A Tiny Alliance/An alliance between mice and elephants proves that one good turn deserves another. View >". By clicking "View", one can access the animation mentioned.

In the right hand column, three options are available: "Meet the Animators", "Read A Story" and "Play". In the above-mentioned example, the "Meet The Animator" heading is followed by a brief text, "Square i found working in another language a satisfying creative experience. Meet >". When clicking "Meet", users are shown a short film of the animators who tell their stories about the making of the animation. "Read A Story" provides an alternative story in text. Here the available story is "Godasiyo The Woman Chief". A short text that follows introduces the story, "When America had first been created, a woman chief named Godasiyo ruled over… Read >". Clicking "Read" pulls the page that tells this story on screen. The third option – "Play" – offers three additional options: "Quiz", "Mini Games" and "Ecards". A short text explains how this section functions: "Step right up. Fun, wonder, amazement and awe await those who dare to play. Play >".

The homepage ends with the logos of Film Victoria and SBS together with the credit line: "Produced with the assistance of the SBS – Film Victoria New Media Project Accord. Credits". Clicking on the "Credits" internal link, we may access the information on the production team.

Figure 7: Credit line with logos

The homepage gives us an impression that this is a sophisticated site with rich graphics, mixed media illustrations and multiple links that allow easy access to other pages on the site. Apart from the text and graphics, the website offers film clips in the form of fairy tale animations and also filmmakers´ narrations on filmmaking.

• Perspective:
The Executive Producer of *World Tales*, Suzie Hoban, who acts as the spokesperson for the website, states that the objective of the website is to celebrate cultural diversity

by means of fairy and folk tales.[344] This statement echoes with the title of the website: firstly, "World" suggesting global or multicultural and secondly, "Tales" bringing us to the stories and fiction. We may extend this observation and argue that the two crucial perspectives that make this website unique are the global/multicultural and also the story.

Cultural diversity is reflected by the selection of the stories and also the composition of the animators. Stories are grouped under five continents: Asia Pacific, the Americas, Africa, Europe and the Middle East. There is no doubt that the stories come from a wide range of cultures. In addition, a number of the animators, as the Executive Producer informs us, are young Australians who are either immigrants themselves or from immigrant families. This suggests that they may possess at least two perspectives: the perspective as a young artist residing in Australia and also the perspective that reflects the culture they come from or are acquainted with. Consequently, the animations they made may be seen as their interpretations of the traditional tales that reflect their perspectives on the world at large.[345]
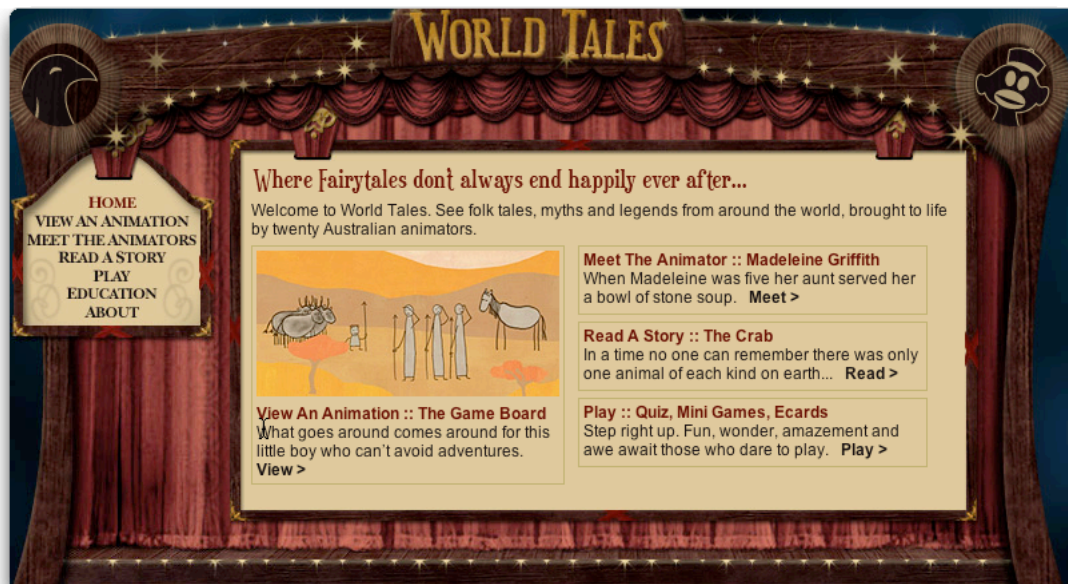
Figure 8: View An Animation: "The Game Board"

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[344] See *World Tales/About the Project*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/about.php.
[345] See *World Tales/About the Project:* http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/about.php.

The theatre stage design is the main frame of the core web pages in which animations are viewed. The stage design is crucial since it signals a performance, a show or a scene.[346] By using the stage as a central frame of the website, we are reminded of the "story" perspective. The suggestion of a performance also connects us with the notions of story telling as well as representation and interpretation. The animations may be seen as an interpretation of the story by the animator.
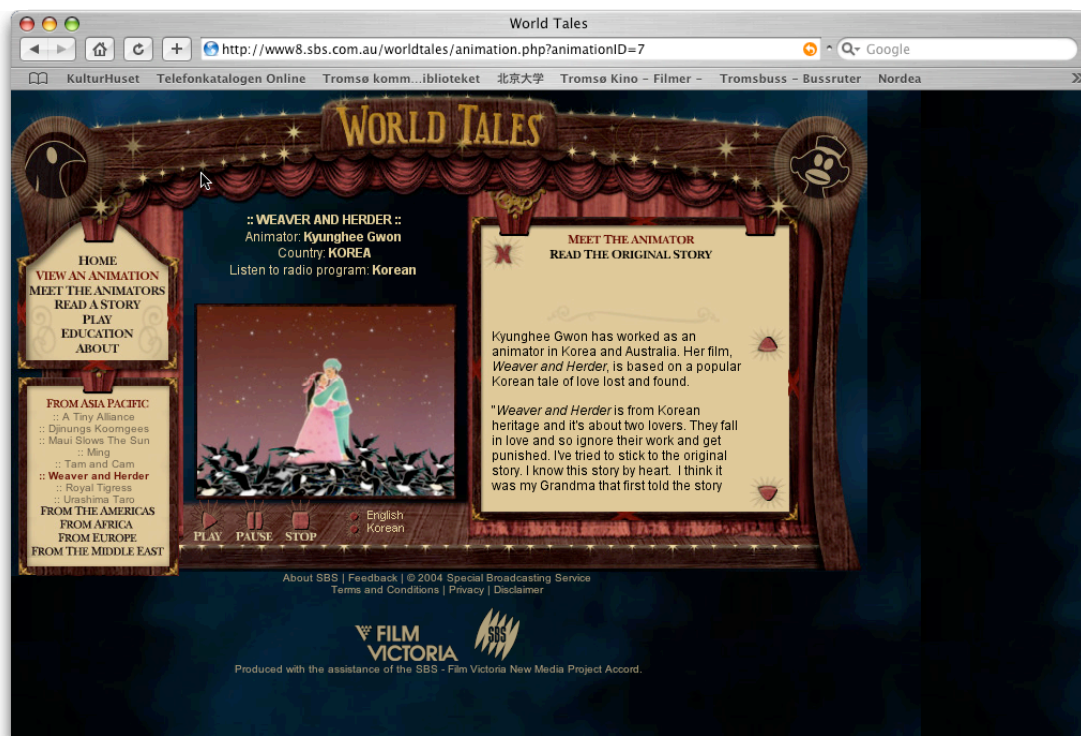

Figure 9: View An Animation: "The Weaver and the Herder"

"The Weaver and the Herder" is a good example to illustrate how these two perspectives – multiculturalism and story – are represented. This traditional tale is experienced, interpreted and represented by its animator, Kyunghee Gwon and reinterpreted by the audience/users.[347] When she was a little girl, Gwon first encountered this story as a bedtime fairy tale that her grandmother told her as an

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[346] The stage is a key symbol of the website, see Section 4.1.2 for more.
[347] This story has appeared in *World Tales* under different names: "The Weaver and the Herder", "The Herder and the Weaver" and "The Herdboy and the Weaver". To remain consistent, I shall use "The Weaver and the Herder" as the title of this story.

explanation of why it always rains on July 7th of the Lunar Calendar.[348] But Gwon said, "I had a different point of view about the same story when I was young. I thought how romantic it is and they're so in love and they couldn't care about anything else".[349] Now as an adult, the animator Gwon has another way of looking at the story. She comments, "Now I'm thinking they should have been punished because they didn't work. I don't care how much they were in love, I think human beings have to be responsible".[350]

We can see at least three perspectives from this example: the grandmother's perspective, the little girl Gwon as a listener, and the adult Gwon as an animator. Even though the story is a well-known folk tale, the focus is different in each perspective. To the grandmother, it is a special day on the Lunar Calendar and an explanatory tale about rainfall. To the little girl, it is a romantic story of two lovers so much in love that they forget everything else. To the adult animator, it is a story of irresponsible love that should be punished. I shall argue that this change in perspective is a consequence of the change in positioning of the animator. The little girl, Gwon, has evolved and become a working adult.

At the same time, we can also see how the two cultural perspectives influence Gwon in her production of the animation: the Korean tradition inspires her to use traditional Korean watercolour effects whereas the Australian culture encourages her to think independently as well as to enjoy freedom in creativity.[351]

Following this line of thought, I shall argue that each animation opens up several perspectives. The above example of "The Weaver and the Herder",[352] offers us the perspectives of the grandmother, the animator as a little girl, and the adult animator as

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[348] See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Kyunghee Gwon/Animation: Weaver and Herder*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animator.php?animatorID=8.
[349] See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Kyunghee Gwon/Animation: Weaver and Herder*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animator.php?animatorID=8.
[350] See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Kyunghee Gwon/Animation: Weaver and Herder*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animator.php?animatorID=8.
[351] See *World Tales/Meet the animator: Kyunghee Gwon/Animation: Weaver and Herder*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animator.php?animatorID=8.
[352] See *World Tales/View An Animation/Animation: Weaver and Herder*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=7.

well as my perspective as an adult web user.[353]   Other animations such as "the Thunder God", "the Stone Soup", and "Most Beautiful Chick" also serve as examples to show how these animations in *World Tales* express the animators´ perspectives and thereby evoke experiences among the audience.

4.1.1.2 Experience website with our senses

The discussed humanistic geographers argue that we understand the world by experiencing it and, as humans, we experience the world through our senses.[354]

If we apply this understanding of a place to websites, how do we then experience a website? We can see and hear it via the computer screen. We may even touch it to generate some effects if it is a touch screen computer. But to smell or taste the computer screen is out of the question, at least at the present technological phase. However, even if we see, hear and touch the computer screen where the website is shown, the screen cannot be equivalent to the website. The screen is only a medium in which the site is displayed.   A similar example is watching a film on a TV screen played by a DVD player or a computer. We may see and even touch the image of a delicious blueberry pie displayed on the screen, yet we still do not actually taste the pie. The pie looks delicious on the screen and we need our imagination together with our previous experience of tasting pies to make the association between the pie on the screen and the pie we eat. Nevertheless, when we see a blueberry pie, our previous experience together with the visual image will provide us with a reference and a judgement to whether this pie is delicious or not. On the other hand, the image of this pie may not ring any bells to those who have never tasted this kind of pie before. The visual images evoke feelings from the audience by means of their previous sensual experiences and the associations they have by relating the visual image to their previous experiences. In addition, the stories contained on the website may also generate our associations and connections. These stories are particularly significant if they form part of our previous experiences. In other words, the stories we encounter on the websites evoke our former experience with other similar stories. We recall not only the stories but also our experience of the stories.

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[353] See Section 4.1.1.2.
[354] See Chap.3, Section 3.4.1.

I shall argue that we experience the *World Tales* website by means of two major elements: firstly, the visual images and typography, and secondly, the tales. The typography, including the visual representations, layout, navigation icons and the use of images, sound and movement helps to evoke our experiences via our five senses. In addition, the stories together with their multicultural interpretations connect the website to users.

I shall apply Thorlacius's aesthetic functions to *World Tales* to show how we experience the website. Before embarking on the analysis, it may be beneficial to briefly review the theory that informs these functions. David Favrholdt argues that there are two kinds of experiential qualities: the primary and the secondary.[355] The primary qualities are those that can be measured by length, weight and numbers. For example, the size, units, speed, length and breadth that allows a physical description by means of measurement. The secondary qualities are those that cannot be measured but can still be experienced by the human senses. For example, our senses of colour, sound, smell and taste. However, the experience of these secondary qualities may be different from one individual to another. If we consider the example of a bar of dark chocolate, some adults may regard it as delicious but most children will consider it too bitter when compared to a bar of white chocolate. Nevertheless, even though differences exist in how people experience by means of their senses, it does not imply that there is no common ground for the secondary experience qualities. As Favrholdt argues, passion and grief are emotions that people share even though the descriptions and expressions of these emotions may be different.[356] Some people express their grief by crying or screaming while some others cope with grief in bitter silence.

Thorlacius adopts Favrholdt's primary experiential quality as the formal aesthetic function ("den formale funktion") and his secondary experiential quality as the indescribable aesthetic function ("den uudsigelige funktion") in her Visual Communication Model.[357] The formal function is the visual representation's ability to create a kind of aesthetic experience that is sensational as well as cognitive and therefore can be classified. The indescribable function is, however, the artwork's

[355] David Favrholdt (2000) *Æstetik og filosofi: Seks essays* (København: Høst Humaniora)
[356] Favrhodt 2000, p.134.
[357] Thorlacius 2005, pp.113-116.

capability to create an aesthetic experience based on non-verbal senses and emotions and is therefore difficult to be classified or explained by words.

Figure 10: View An Animation: "Ming"

If we watch "Ming", animated by Sijun Zhou, the aesthetic experience is very different from reading the text story – "The Thunder God".[358] The story is about how the Thunder God made a terrible mistake by punishing an innocent woman because it was too dark for him to see.

The animation is represented in black and white with puppet figures in spot light effects. When the Thunder God strikes, you can hear the sound effects that mimic thunder and heavy rainfall. The Chinese musical instrument, yang comb, together

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[358] See *World Tales/View An Animation/Animation: Ming*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=8;
and *World Tales/Read the Original Story: The Thunder God* :
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/read_story.php?storyID=111.

with gongs accompanies the animation and creates a legendary atmosphere.[359] Zhou himself says,

> Visually it's different from my student films because I've used silhouettes instead of Chinese watercolours. I think this visual style suits the story because it's traditional.[360]

The effect of lightning is reinforced by the black and white contrasts. Instead of using colours, the silhouettes give us an impression of ancientness since they remind us of the traditional ink block cuttings. This is all the more so because the figures are created in the style of paper puppets that are seen in traditional Chinese puppet theatres. By making it look and sound Chinese, users are transported into another dimension, far away from their present existence.

If we apply Thorlacius's distinction of the formal function and the indescribable function to "Ming", we can argue that the employment of silhouettes, paper puppets, Chinese instruments and rapid movements, falls into the category of the formal function. All these elements provide us with an aesthetic experience that is both sensational and cognitive. Meanwhile, the indescribable function is present in the legendary atmosphere that is created in this animation. We feel awe towards the gods mentioned in this legend even though this impression may be difficult to explain or classify. The visual representation together with sound arrangements and movements evoke our senses as users and draw us to the world represented by the website. "Ming" is only one example of an animation that forms part of the website narrative.

In addition to animations, literary narratives in the form of legends and tales enable users to experience the website. The animation, "The Weaver and the Herder", shows us Gwon's perspective on love and work.[361] This story is also a well-known legend in China to celebrate the festival of the Weaver on July 7th of the Chinese Lunar Calendar. According to the Chinese custom, girls gather together at night to give their offerings to the Weaver so that she will help them with their sewing and weaving

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[359] See *World Tales/View An Animation/Animation: Ming*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=8.
[360] See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Sijun Zhou/Animation: Ming*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animator.php?animatorID=14.
[361] See *World Tales/View An Animation/Animation: Weaver and Herder*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=7.

since these are essential skills to make a good wife, according to traditions. As a little girl, my grandmother told me this story as a moral tale about disobedience. Like Little Red Riding Hood, "The Weaver and the Herder" may be seen as a tale of warning – urging little girls to listen to their parents. The heavenly gods punished the Weaver because she disobeyed the rules: as a fairy, she should not fancy life on earth and, of course, it is forbidden to fall in love with a human.

The difference between the Korean version according to Gwon and the Chinese version is the work attitude. In the Chinese version, the reason why the Weaver fell in love with the Herder is because he was hardworking and sympathetic to animals. She felt sorry for him because, despite his diligence, he lived in poverty. Even though they fell in love, their love was not irresponsible because the couple continued to work extremely hard after they were married. They even raised a family with two small children. In contrast to the Korean version, the love between the Weaver and the Herder is not careless but responsible. These two versions of this tale reflect cultural differences and alternative perspectives on love and work.

This example illustrates how the animation as part of the website evokes experience among the audience. As I have argued earlier, one way of experiencing the website is by connecting the narratives as well as the visual images from the website to our previous experience.[362] This folk tale triggers the animator and users' different interpretations to the tale that is based on their cultural backgrounds as well as their life experiences. To another user from another cultural background and work attitude, the animation may generate other kinds of responses.

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[362] See Section 4.1.1.2 for more.

Other elements of *World Tales* such as the information pages and games make use of different techniques to draw users' attention. The "Education" page, for example, serves as additional resources for teachers who use the website to supplement their teaching plans.[363] This page is heavily loaded with information and graphics is reduced to a minimum in contrast to other sections. The information is the appeal of this section.
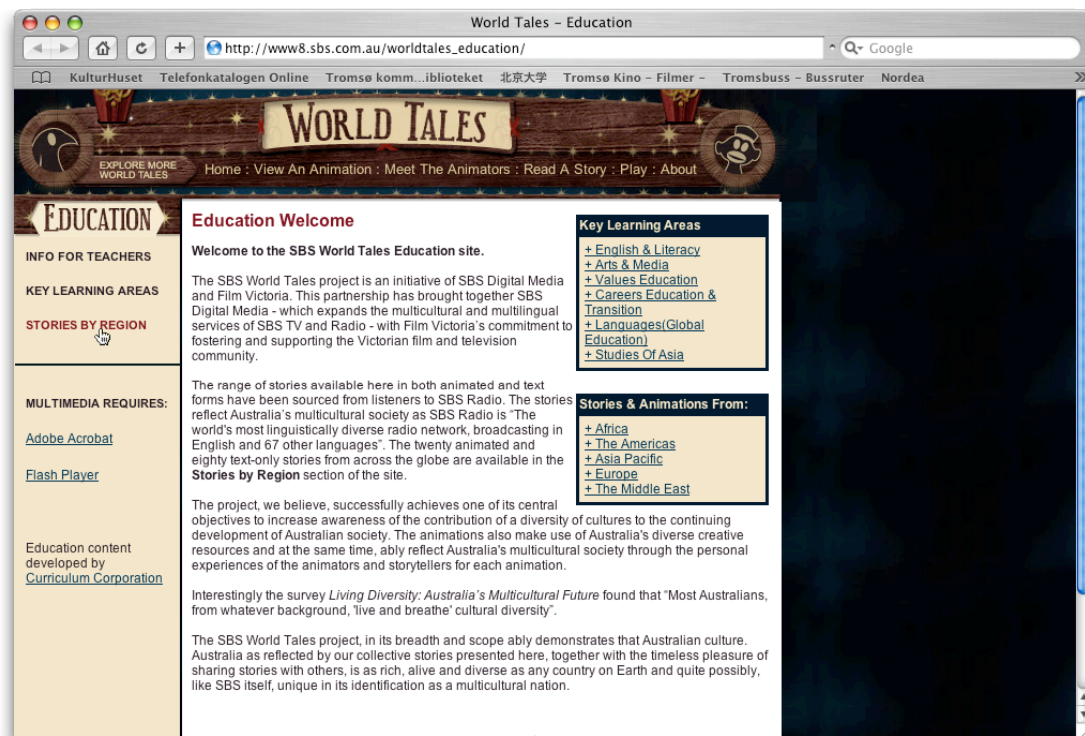

Figure 11: The "Education" Page

[363] See *World Tales/Education*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales_education/

On the contrary, the "Play" Section focuses on entertainment.[364] The devices applied here encourage interaction between users and the web page. The "Quiz", the "E-cards" and also the "Mini-Games" require active participation since users need to select and make decisions.
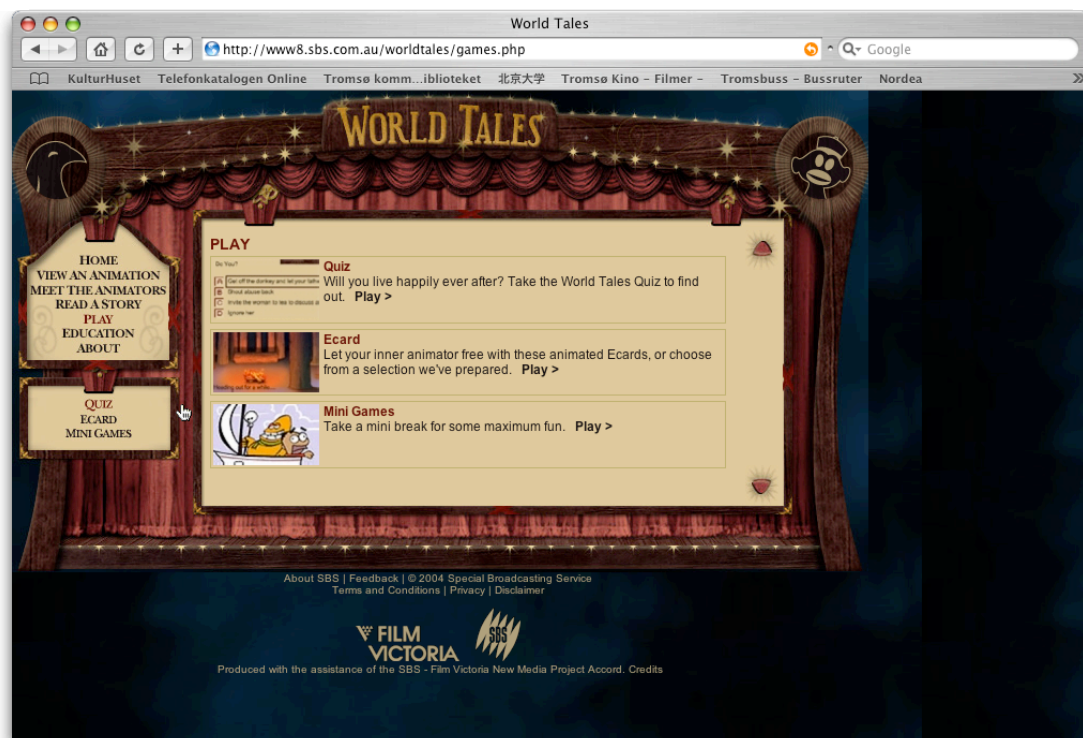
Figure 12: The "Play" Section

To make this section interesting, visual images and characters in the animations are borrowed. Users are reminded of the animations even though the games are not strictly related to the animations. For example, the game "Cannibals and Sailors" uses the characters in Marzooq.[365] The "Play" Section therefore reinforces the "Animation" Section. These diverse techniques in different sections of the website further reinforce the possibility for users to experience the website.

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[364] See *World Tales/Play*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/games.php
[365] See *World Tales/View an Animation/Animation: Marzooq*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=1

Figure 13: Mini-Game: "Cannibals and Sailors"

To sum up, a "place" is a human construction that expresses a way of seeing and understanding the world according to the humanistic geographers. A website may be regarded as a "place" only if it offers us a perspective of looking at the world that may be experienced by our senses. *World Tales,* by means of its visual representation, the use of animations and other multimedia elements, offers us new perspectives in understanding and experiencing the world. I shall argue that each animation entails a certain perspective via the animator's interpretation of the story. These interpretations thereby give us multiple perspectives instead of one coherent single perspective. This plurality may be seen as embracing the intention, spirit and signature of *World Tales* claimed by the Executive Producer of *World Tales* under the umbrella of cultural diversity. The plurality of perspectives reflects the complexity of *World Tales* as a website without denying it as a "place". The wide range of visual, audio and multimedia techniques employed by the animators directly address our senses that enable us to experience the website. I shall therefore conclude that *World Tales* meets the first requirement for a website to be read as a "place".

4.1.2 "Topophilia": symbols and narratives

According to some humanistic geographers, humans transform random space into specific place by giving meaning to it.[366] "Place" is therefore a human construction and may be seen as a carrier of emotional attachment and symbolic meaning.[367] Inspired by the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard,[368] Yi-Fu Tuan applies the notion of "topophilia", as we have seen, to describe "the affective bond between people and place or setting".[369]

Tuan argues that our metaphorical thinking ignores the objective criteria of places as physical geographical locations. Places, including architectures, landscapes and gardens, achieve a symbolic interpretation and even the attribution of sacredness because of human emotions and affections towards them. He argues that a sacred place is made special because of the stories circulated about that place.[370] Often these stories are connected to significant events that happened at that place. In addition, symbols associated to the events remind us of the specific place. As I have mentioned before,[371] the monkeys in "The Monkey Mountain" in Hong Kong are symbolic in the sense that they represent the legendary "Monkey King" from the Tang Dynasty.[372]

We shall now examine *World Tales* to explore how some key symbols and narratives make the website distinctive. Users are then able to see how this website differs from other websites because the symbols and narratives help to create a certain identity.

4.1.2.1 Symbols

- The stage

When we look at the homepage of *World Tales*, we are immediately confronted with a stage. This page illustrates the central graphic design of the website – a brown stage

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[366] See Tuan 1974, 1977, 1991; Buttimer & Seamon 1980; Relph 1976.
[367] See Chap.3 Section 3.3.
[368] Gaston Bachelard (1994) *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press)
[369] See Chap.3 Section 3.4.2 and also Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (New York: Columbia U. Press)
[370] Tuan 1974, pp.146-148; and also Tuan (1991) "Language and the Making of Place: A Narrative-Descriptive Approach". In *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol.81, No.4 (Dec. 1991) pp.684-696.
[371] See Chap.3, Section 3.4.2.2.
[372] See Wu Cheng-En (1500?/1993) *Chinese Classics: Journey to the West/Monkey* (Trans. W.J.F. Jenner)(Beijing: Foreign Languages Press)

with burgundy velvet curtains with the name of the site, *World Tales*, hanging in the middle of the arch on top of the stage.[373]
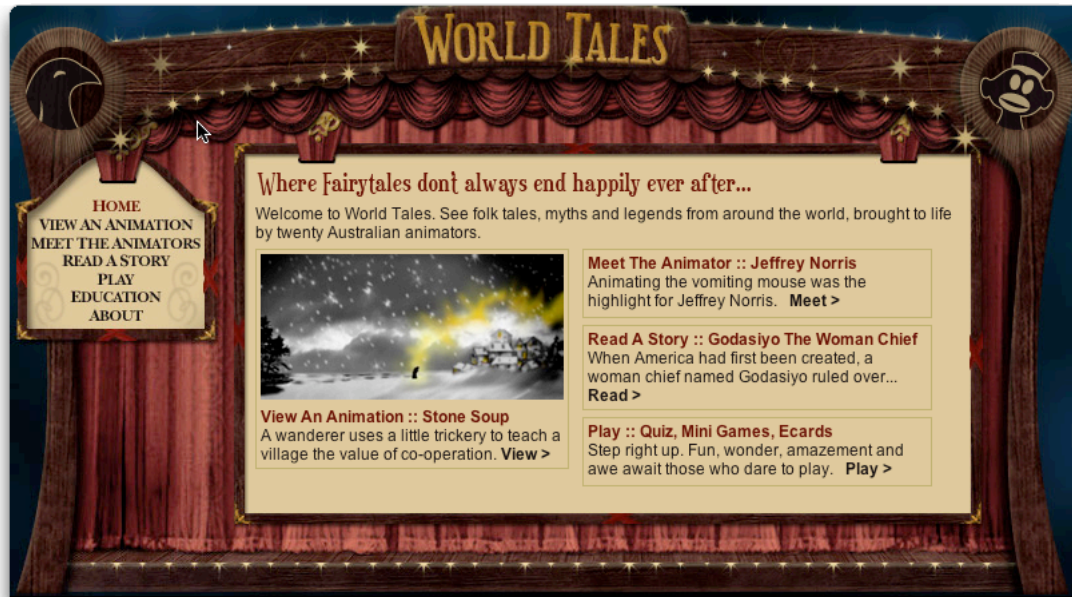

Figure 14: View An Animation: "Stone Soup"

As in a theatre, the stage is the centre of action. Here, the stage is situated in a rectangular window. The apparently dark colours stand in contrast to the lively cartoon figures shown in the changing image. The only image together with the written text, "View an Animation", draws our attention. Like watching a film in a darkened cinema, the film is the central image and the only light source. The web designers create a zooming effect by means of the composition, layout, choice of colours and typography. Even though we are given choices to select other alternatives such as "Meet The Animator", "Read A Story" or "Play", our natural reaction is to look at the image and click "View" to see more. The link to "View" catches the users' attention because of its contrast to the rest of the homepage since it offers the only image among words on the whole page.

By representing the website as a stage, users are expected to see a show or a performance. What kind of performance is this? On this stage, we are shown the animations that are recreations of folk and fairy tales. Initially, these tales are told

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[373] See Section 4.1.1.1: Typography.

orally in social gatherings or public places such as teahouses as social entertainments. In some cultures, the storytellers are professionals who memorize the stories instead of relying on written texts.[374] Contemporary storytelling, like talk shows, is often regarded as a kind of performing art where the arena for storytelling may be on stage and among an audience.

To use Peirce's three aspects of sign, the stage setting of *World Tales* may be seen also as an icon and an index in addition to that of a symbol.[375] It is an icon because it resembles an actual stage. It is also an index because the stage indicates a performance and arouses our expectations to watch a show. At the same time, the stage may also be seen as a symbol that reminds us of the cultural implications as well as the social setting. This particular stage, for instance, with its dark brown frame, blinking lights effect and burgundy velvet curtains may be seen as a symbol for classical theatre. One may argue that folk and fairy tales belong to the classical and the traditional. However, in the case of *World Tales*, these traditional tales are represented in multimedia animations accessed via the Web. This stage therefore suggests a connection between the past and the present.

- The smiling monkey and the bird

The smiling monkey and the bird are the two figures that are present both on the homepage as well as the pages that contain the animations. The smiling monkey reminds us of the clown. There are at least two different types of clowns: the circus clown and the theatrical clown. The circus clowns are popular among children because they are usually friendly and funny and perform in circuses as well as at birthday parties. On the contrary, the theatrical clowns are serious, reflective characters that are often associated with tragedy and tears. Apparently, the smiling monkey in *World Tales* belongs to the circus clown category that is mischievous and children-friendly. The bird is shown as a sharp-beaked dark creature. It is not a small, harmless bird such as the sparrow. Nor is it the singing type such as a magpie. This specific bird reminds us of the crow.

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[374] See for example, Linda Degh (1969) *Folktales and Society: Story-telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community* (New York: Indiana University Press)
[375] Charles Sanders Peirce (1998) "What is a Sign?" In *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings.* Book 2 (1893-1913) (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) pp. 4-10.

Figure 15: The opening sequence with the monkey and the bird

These two animals do not appear simply as isolated figures on the web pages. They are in fact the leading characters for the opening film sequences leading to the animations. The interaction of these two animals in these film sequences deserves some attention.

There are a total of five opening sequences showing either the monkey or the bird or both.[376] One version shows the bird pecking at corn and is suddenly captured by the monkey.[377] Another sequence shows the bird walking to the middle of the stage and stopping abruptly. Its body is suddenly cut into two halves from which the monkey hops out.[378] A third version shows the monkey's tail swinging in the air and suddenly dancing by itself.[379]

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[376] The five versions of the opening sequence: (i) Crow pecks corn that falls from the sky and suddenly turns into the dancing monkey ("Bird King" and "Goha´s Donkey"); (ii) Monkey swings tail and dancing ("A Tiny Alliance", "Weaver and Herder", "Tam & Cam", "Djinungs Koorngees", "Royal Tigress", "Maui Slows the Sun"); (iii) Bird pecks corn and suddenly caught by a cage. Monkey then appears and laughs. ("The Traitor Friend" and "Marzooq"); (iv) Crow walks and stops abruptly. Its body is cut into two halves and the monkey hops out from the bird's body. ("The Great Fox" and "The Magic Drum"); (v) Monkey appears and attacks the bird that is imprisoned in the cage. After some struggles, the monkey runs away. ("Most Beautiful Chick", "Stone Soup", "Black School", "The Twelve Months")
[377] See "Marzooq", "Bird King" and "Goha´s Donkey".
[378] See "The Great Fox" and "The Magic Drum".
[379] See "A Tiny Alliance", "Weaver and Herder", "Tam and Cam" and "Urashima Taro".

Despite the variations in the opening sequence, the ending sequence is always the same. It shows the monkey opening the door of the cage to release the bird. They then shake hands and become friends again.

Figure 16: The ending sequence where the monkey shakes hand with the bird

One way of interpreting these sequences is even though these two animals may belong to different cultures and habitats, they become friends in the end. It may be a way to reinforce the "multicultural" perspective that remains a central theme of the website.

- Navigation icons

Patrick Lynch and Sarah Horton argue that a recognizable, consistent typography, layout, and design with repetitive navigation icons help to create a distinctive identity of the website.[380] In their own words,[381]

> Repetition is not boring; it gives your site a consistent graphic identity that creates and then reinforces a distinct sense of "place" and makes your site memorable. A consistent approach to layout and navigation allows readers to adapt quickly to your design and to confidently predict the location of information and navigation controls across the pages of your site.[382]

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[380] This does not imply that the interfaces of all web pages are the same. The homepage has a different layout from the "Education" web page or the "Play" Section.
[381] Patrick J. Lynch & Sarah Horton (2001) *Web Style Guide: Basic Design Principles for Creating Web Sites* (2nd Ed.)(New Haven & London: Yale University Press)
[382] See Lynch & Horton 2001, p.84

In addition, Thorlacius proposes that navigation icons increase the functionality of websites since they assist users in accessing the information they require. Inspired by Peirce's three aspects of signs,[383] Thorlacius proposes that icons that are chosen as search buttons on websites should help users to associate them with their functions.[384]

Following this line of thought, I shall argue that examples from *World Tales* support the argument that navigation icons carry indexical or symbolic associations. For example, the major menu of *World Tales* is represented as a small house.[385]

Figure 17: The home menu box in the shape of a house

This sign can be seen as both an icon as well as a symbol. The function of the main menu is to facilitate users in clicking on the different links in order to access different chunks of information. Like a house that has many rooms, each click can be seen as opening the door to enter a new room where different contents are located. The house image associates with home. However, an image of a small house is inadequate without the written text – "Home". The text enables a certainty that by clicking this link – "Home", we will be back at the homepage.

If we turn our attention to the ">" sign that follows key words such as "View", "Meet", "Read", "Play", this sign clearly illustrates an iconic function.

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[383] Peirce 1998, pp. 4-10.
[384] Thorlacius 2005, pp.147-148 and pp.153-155.
[385] See http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/frontpage.php

This sign – ">" – suggests more to come. By clicking on it, users may encounter another chunk of information that is related to the above-mentioned key words.

4.1.2.2 Symbols and the phatic function

Proposed by Thorlacius, the phatic function is significant because it serves as an essential thread that ties the diverse parts of the website together. Inspired by Bronislaw Malinowski's notion of the "phatic communication",[386] the phatic function is at work when the contact between sender and receiver is maintained. If we examine the navigation structure of *World Tales*, we can see how the major symbols such as the stage, the monkey and the bird, together with the navigation icons perform the phatic function.[387] I shall argue that the recurrent features of the navigation structure, including the central stage design, the home menu box, the main window in the middle that displays the four sub-sections,[388] the text-only menu located under the stage, and also the two logos and the credit line — are also key images of the website. These features perform the phatic function and help to shape the website into a specific locale.

According to Thorlacius, rhythm and variation are the most relevant elements in maintaining this contact. If we examine the *World Tales* website, the interplay between the monkey and the bird again illustrates this notion of variations within the rhythm.[389] Each animation is introduced by an opening sequence, like the opening credits of films, that prepares the audience for the animation. Also, these sequences perform the phatic function since the monkey and the bird are key symbols of this website; their appearances help to assure the users that the contact between them and the website is confirmed.

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[386] Bronislaw Malinowski (1923/1969) Supplement I: "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages". In C.K. Ogden & I.A. Richards (Eds.) *The Meaning of Meaning – A study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (London: Routledge) pp.312-315; See also Thorlacius 2005, pp.161-165.
[387] See Thorlacius 2005, pp.160-168.
[388] The four subsections are: "View An Animation", "Meet the Animator", "Read a Story" and "Play".
[389] See Section 4.1.2 Symbols: "The smiling monkey and the bird".

4.1.2.3 Narratives

The significance of narrative, as Malinowski argues, is to reinforce the social and emotional bonding among groups of people. Telling and retelling of narratives related to a place makes this place special. He also argues that narratives such as tales, myths, legends and song, serve a ritualistic function.[390] Echoing Malinowski, Tuan argues that narratives contribute to making a certain place special by reinforcing a sense of belonging among the inhabitants of that place.[391]

As I have mentioned before,[392] the term "narrative" is complicated because it refers to literary narratives and also serves as an overall inclusive term to describe website narrative sequences.[393] It is therefore essential to examine how these two kinds of narrative sequences operate on the website. I shall argue that they complement each other and help to develop the distinctiveness of *World Tales*. Consequently, they contribute to maintaining the bonding between users and the website.

Following the lead of Malinowski and Tuan, I intend to use the Australian aboriginal legend, "Djinungs Koorngees" (Footprints in the Mud), as an example to illustrate how tales as literary narrative sustain the bonding between tales and people.

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[390] Malinowski 1923/1969, pp. 312-315.
[391] See Chap.3 Section 3.4.2.2. Tuan 1974b, 1991.
[392] See Chap. 1 Section 1.1.
[393] See Chap.2 Section 2.7.5: "Hypernarrative".

Figure 18: View An Animation: "Djinungs Koorngees"

According to the animators, this story was previously circulated orally within the Wurundjeri tribe. They explained how this oral tale became written,

> Nick: "There was a lot of consultation with Joy Murphy Wandin. Joy is an Aboriginal Elder of the Wurundjeri people. She had an important role in making sure the script was in keeping with the oral tradition."
> Michael: "Joy actually put the story onto paper for us basically because I don't think it's ever existed on paper".[394]

In the "Learn about the Story" section, we are given background information about the Wurundjeri tradition and their beliefs. Bunjil the Eagle, for example, is the spiritual being who created all living things from the land. It also raises the significance of connection and sacredness according to aboriginal beliefs,

> There is a connection between all of these elements – land, story, and people – and at the centre is Bunjil, making all things sacred. […] While in many cultures stories can be told to anyone, anytime, in Aboriginal traditions stories are told by the storyteller to those who respect the story. Just as this story belongs to the Wurundjeri people, other Aboriginal stories can belong to all kinds of groups.[395]

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[394] See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Fraynework/Animation: Djinungs Koorgees*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animator.php?animatorID=17.
[395] See *World Tales/Learn about Djinungs Koorngees*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/story_background.php?storyID=96

Gary Saunders, the indigenous animator of "Djinungs Koorngees", remarks that he feels the sacredness and connection because of his indigenous background.

> Gary: "Being Indigenous, the story has huge meaning for me. Although we have different stories for different areas, they all basically revolve around the same concepts so I would say, the connection I have with the story is spiritual".[396]

By sharing this story with the white people, the aboriginals invite the whites into their fellowship. This sharing of the story is often seen as a gift and a sign of fellowship,

> This story is now being retold as a `public´ story. Before white people came to Australia, stories were only shared with family. In this century Aboriginal people want to share their stories to teach us about their history, traditions and beliefs.[397]

By this act of sharing, the social bonding is extended to others who do not belong to their cultures. Since this animation is now accessible on the World Wide Web, this sharing and bonding is extended to web users who sympathise with the essentials expressed in the animation.

4.1.2.4 Narratives and the phatic function

Inspired by Malinowski, Thorlacius proposes narrative sequences as a second form of performing the phatic function in visual communication media, especially the website.[398] The narrative structure holds the attention of receivers even though it does not carry forward any specific message. Similar to navigation structures, most narrative structures are also constructed with different rhythms and variations. Thorlacius proposes the "wave-model" ("bølgemodellen") as an example that illustrates the rhythms and variations of narrative structures. Like tidal waves, this model creates an ebb-and-flow rhythm in which audience expectations are encouraged and frustrated.[399]

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[396] See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Fraynework/Animation: Djinungs Koorgees*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animator.php?animatorID=17.
[397] See *World Tales/Learn about Djinungs Koorngees*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/story_background.php?storyID=96.
[398] Thorlacius 2005, pp.160-168.
[399] See Thorlacius 2005, p.166.

As I have just mentioned, *World Tales* consists of literary narrative sequences in the form of animations and text stories, as well as website narrative sequences. I shall argue that these two kinds of narrative sequences perform the phatic function proposed by Thorlacius. For example, the animation – "The Game Board" from Ethiopia – illustrates the rhythm and variation of a narrative structure.[400]

Figure 19: View An Animation: "The Game Board"

In the story, the child receives a Board from his father to keep him away from mischief. Every time the Board changes hands, it is replaced by something else – a knife, a horse, an axe and so on. After a series of misfortunes and regains, the child finally receives the Board again. At first glance, this is a simple story with a repetitive structure – the Board is exchanged to something else. The "something else" gives us the variations to maintain the rhythm that keeps the story going. By means of using stick figures and stick animals, the animator provides an iconic representation of the repetitive motif of this story. The circular narrative structure, together with the variations, propels the story forward and holds the attention of

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[400] See *World Tales/View an Animation/Animation: The Game Board*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=2.

receivers. The repetition of the Board performs the phatic function since it reminds us that we are still following the same story despite new occurrences.

In addition to the stories, the website narrative sequences that include the standard layout, the interface designs and navigation structure also perform the phatic function.

The statement – "Where Fairytales don't always end happily ever after…"[401] – meets us when we click on the homepage. Below the introduction, an image of one of the animations together with a key phrase encourages us to view the animation. On the right, we encounter three options: "Meet The Animator", "Read A Story" and "Play". This standard layout repeats itself every time we click on the homepage although the animation changes at each click. This illustrates the rhythm and variation elements of the phatic function proposed by Thorlacius.

Another example of the website narrative sequence that confirms the operation of the phatic function is the "Quiz", a sub-category of the "Play" Section.[402] The "Quiz" contains ten questions that the user has to answer. The opening sequence of the "Quiz" says,
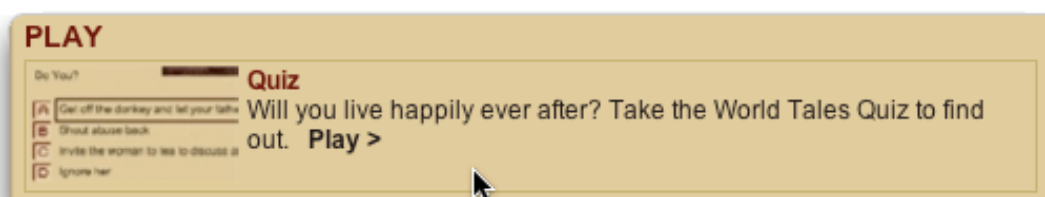
And the reward is a moral in the form of a comment – "A word of caution" – illustrated in an animation.[403] Even though the questions and the moral at the end of

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[401] See *World Tales/homepage*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/frontpage.php
[402] See *World Tales/Play/Quiz*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/quiz.php?action=play
[403] See *World Tales/Play/Quiz*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/quiz.php?action=play

the Quiz are different, the opening and the ending comment remains the same.

Figure 20: The ending comment of the "Quiz"

Once again, the rhythm and variation elements are obvious in this narrative sequence.

The above analysis shows that symbols and narratives contribute to the formation of uniqueness of a website. Instead of a collection of ancient tales, the animators transform these ancient tales into contemporary interpretations. The tales serve as links that connect the traditional storytellers, the animators and also web users. In addition, the consistent navigation icons, the standard layout and interface designs as well as key website narrative segments also mark the distinctiveness of this website.

4.1.3   Localization: boundaries and connections

Localization implies the dialectic between the local and the global. Each locality exemplifies idiosyncrasy and is marked by some kind of borders even though these borders may not necessarily be rigid or static.[404]

On the other hand, localization also suggests connection – how one finds one's place in a network that connects the particular with the rest of the environment. It has its own place but it is also related to the rest of the universe. This may even be more relevant in the digital environments that are characterized with links, web and the

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[404] See Chap.3 Section 3.4.3.

Internet.[405] To argue that a website is a "place" therefore requires examining not only the website itself but also its boundaries and connections.

4.1.3.1 Boundaries and interactive functions

To occupy a particular place implies to draw boundaries around the place and mark its locality. Websites are often regarded as open, expandable and even unstable entities. I shall argue that by restricting interactivity, websites are able to mark their boundaries and therefore remain relatively stable.

It may be beneficial to briefly review the five interactive functions proposed by Thorlacius with reference to Jens F. Jensen's four interactive communication patterns that may be observed in digital environments.[406] These functions help to determine the interactivity of a website.

- The transmissible non-interactive function:

    This refers to one-way communication of the transmission type in which users' participation is restricted to reception only. Film sequences that do not permit alternations are examples.

- The conversational interactive function:

    This suggests a kind of "conversation" between senders and users. Typical examples are e-mail, mailing lists and newsgroups.

- The consultative interactive function:

    This indicates active selection by users among various possibilities. Examples are on-line information resources.

- The registration interactive function:

    This function occurs when users need to supply data in the form of information collection. Obvious examples are surveys and questionnaires conducted via the Net.

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[405] See Chap.2 Section 2.5.
[406] Thorlacius 2005, pp.82-90. See also Jens F. Jensen (1998b) "'Interactivity': Tracking a new concept in Media and Communication Studies". In *Nordicom Review* Vol.19, No.1, pp.185-204.

- The transactional function:

   This is an extra function devised by Thorlacius to cover e-shopping and other transactions via the Internet.

Following the lead of Thorlacius in her analysis of DSB website, I shall apply these interactive functions to *World Tales*.[407] I shall argue that these functions help to mark boundaries of the website by restricting its interactivity.[408]

- The transmissible non-interactive function.[409]

Both the animations and the animators' interviews are represented in the form of short films that cannot be changed by users during the process of watching. These animations and interviews are examples of the transmissible non-interactive function of this website. In addition, when we click on the "Read" section, we will come across a number of fairy and folk tales in written text. These stories cannot be altered either.
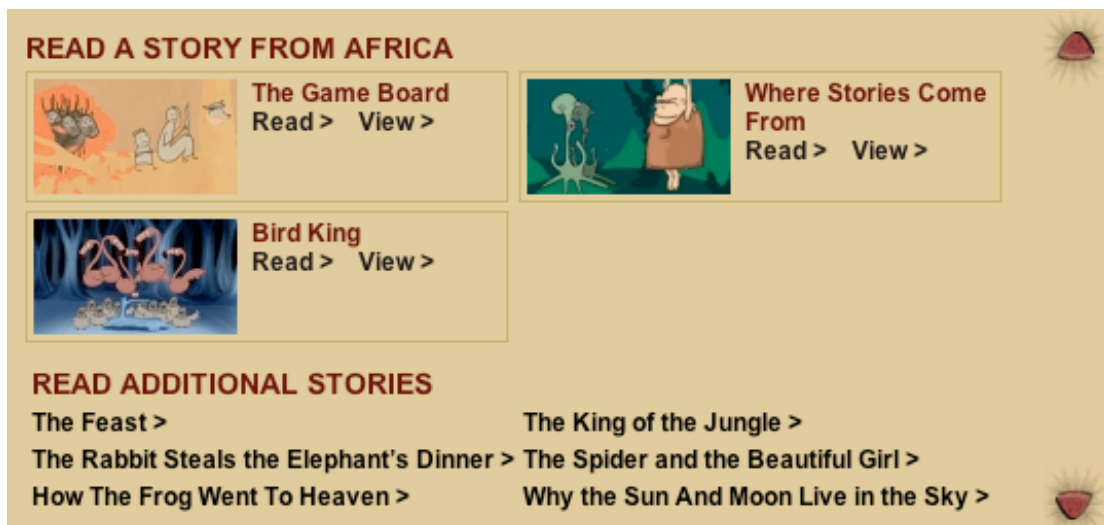
Figure 21: The "Read a Story" Section

We can conclude that among the four different sections – "View An Animation", "Meet The Animator", "Read A Story", and "Play", only the last section, "Play", is

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[407] Thorlacius 2005, pp.92-93.
[408] Two functions proposed by Thorlacius cannot be identified on this website. They are: the transactional interactive function ("Den transaktive interaktive funktion") and the registration interactive function ("Den registrerende interaktive funktion")(My translations.) To those who are interested in these two functions, see Thorlacius 2005, pp.88-90.
[409] See Thorlacius 2005, "Den transmitterende ikke-interaktive funktion", pp.85-86.

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interactive. The transmissible non-interactive function is therefore rather predominant on this website.

- The conversational interactive function.[410]

This function can be identified in the form of e-mail functions. The "About" web page introduces the project and also provides an e-mail address: worldtales@sbs.com.au for comments and feedback.[411] One may argue that the given e-mail address is a kind of formality rather than a positive encouragement for interaction.

- The consultative interactive function.[412]

This function enables users to search for information. Even though there is no search box for users to key in words, there are several clicking possibilities on the web pages that allow further surfing. These clicking possibilities are represented by means of the home menu box on the left together with the various imperatives located in the main window. Once a user clicks "View>" in the main window or "About" in the home menu box, the required information appears on a new page. One can nevertheless argue that the choice is still restricted because without a search box, one cannot search for what one intends to. One is confined by the designated choices created by the web designers.

With reference to the above discussion, the transmissible non-interactive function is prevalent in *World Tales*. Most of the animations and written texts on this website do not permit users' participation. Users can watch and read but they cannot change or write anything. Although one can participate in the "Play" Section by making some selections, the sequences are designed in such a way that the answers are predetermined. For example, when one plays the "Quiz", the reward introduces the user to another animation.[413] The "Play" Section thus refers back to the "Animation" Section. This circular, internal-referral structure is another example that demonstrates

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[410] See Thorlacius 2005, "Den konverserende interaktive funktion", p.87.
[411] See *World Tales/About the Project*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/about.php?aboutID=2
[412] See Thorlacius 2005, "Den konsultative interaktive funktion", pp.87-88.
[413] See Section 4.1.2.4 for details on "Quiz". See also *World Tales/Play/Quiz*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/quiz.php?action=play

internal control of the website and may be seen as another feature to mark the boundary of the website.

From the interactive functions as well as the navigation structure, one may argue that *World Tales* is to a great extent a "closed" website in the sense that direct interaction with web users is reduced to a minimum. By means of restricting interaction, *World Tales* marks its boundaries and thereby maintains a kind of relative internal stability.

4.1.3.2 Connections and intertextuality

Intertextuality suggests connections. A story is not an isolated event but is related to other stories, historically in the continuum of time; thematically in terms of similar topics as well as representational in terms of how the story is recreated. *World Tales* positions itself as a website that consists of fairy and folk tales from all over the world. It connects the past and the present by including the original story as written text as well as the present interpretation in the form of animations. As I have already illustrated in previous examples such as the "Weaver and the Herder" and "Ming",[414] the animators do not simply repeat the story that they have heard when they were children. They interpret the stories from their perspectives as adults and as humans living in the present era. Their creations are not isolations but show linkages to other work.

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[414] See Sections 4.1.1.1 and 4.1.1.2.

Figure 22: Meet the Animator: Sijun Zhou – "Ming"

For instance, Zhou, the animator of "Ming", states that intertextuality is part of the creation process. In his own words,

> I did a search on the Internet under `Thunder God´ and I got a picture of the actor, Russell Crowe and that inspired me to transform the Thunder God into a warrior.[…] I was inspired by a lot of artists for this project, especially Lotte Reiniger. She made the first animated film in the history of cinema and it's called The Adventure of Prince Achmed.[…] I have a research box that weighs 20 kilos – it's got lots of things in it like books and CD´s and some of these are from China.[415]

Inspiration comes from other artists, films, CDs, books and materials. Zhou himself remarked that a picture of Russell Crowe gave him the idea of changing the Thunder God from a god of terror to a warrior. At the same time, the representation of "Ming" is also heavily influenced by traditional Chinese art.[416] Zhou's interpretation of the traditional tale, "The Thunder God", illustrates linkages that are both historical and representational.

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[415] See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Sijun Zhou/Animation: Ming*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=8.
[416] See Section 4.1.1.

In addition, "Ming" also illustrates how a legend evolves to become a cultural product that embraces contemporary interpretations. The traditional south-China legend, "The Thunder God", is a warning tale that parents tell children as a moral lesson against wrongdoing. As a symbol of justice, the Thunder God strikes and punishes those who perform evil deeds.[417] Zhou's contemporary interpretation introduces new elements into the ancient tale. By changing its name to "Ming" (which literally means "brightness"), the Mother Lightning becomes the focus instead of the Thunder God. Also, instead of a powerful god-figure, the Thunder God man is humanized and vulnerable, capable of making mistakes and of romantic love.[418]

Apart from representational and historical connections, thematic connections are clearly illustrated among the animations. The Cinderella theme is given in two versions: the Vietnamese "Tam and Cam" and the Russian "Twelve Months". Both versions offer unexpected twists that make them unique in their own ways.[419] Meanwhile, the Japanese story, "Urashima Taro" echoes the myth "Pandora's Box". The creation theme is exemplified by "Djinungs Koorngees",[420] and shows similar traits as other creation tales.[421] This story tells us how Bunjil the Eagle and Pally Yan the Bat, the two creator spirits of Wurundjeri people,[422] create the first man and woman. The initiation theme is also prominent among folk stories. "The Magic Drum",[423] for example, is an initiation tale about how an isolated young boy becomes accepted as a man in his community.

• Intertextuality and structure of websites

Intertextuality is nevertheless not restricted to thematic connections. Thorlacius, in her Visual Communication Model for websites, argues that all visual media in one

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[417] Zhou´s parents told him this legend to warn him against wasting food. See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Sijun Zhou/Animation: Ming*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=8.
[418] See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Sijun Zhou/Animation: Ming*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animator.php?animatorID=14.
[419] See Alan Dundes (Ed.) (1982) *Cinderella: A Folklore Case Book* (New York: Garland)
[420] See *World Tales/View An Animation/Animation: Djinungs Koorngees*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=21.
[421] See creation stories in Virginia Hamilton (1992) *In the beginning: creation stories from around the world* (London: Pavilion)
[422] See *World Tales/Learn about Djinungs Koorngees*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/story_background.php?storyID=96
[423] See *World Tales/View an Animation/Animation: The Magic Drum*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=4

way or another reflect the time period they are in by sharing similar typography, design or colours. The visual representations frequently reveal the connection that they have in common.[424] By showing how a website connects to its diverse parts internally as well as to other websites externally, one may argue that a website is a distinct place with global connections.

Links

Links connect the website internally and externally. According to Thorlacius, most websites consist of three types of links: firstly, links to different pages of the same site; secondly, links to other websites; and thirdly links to an English version or other language versions of the site.[425] By means of these links, a website is globally connected.

World Tales, for example, shows that it has links that belong to the first kind, the internal links, as well as the second types, links to other websites that contain fairy and folk tales.[426] Although *World Tales* does not have a foreign language version of the site that fulfils the requirement as the third type of link, it has an external link that connects to the SBS broadcasting that provides radio programs in 68 languages.[427] I shall argue that to a certain extent, this link serves as a foreign language connection.

Navigation conventions

It is also important to follow general interface designs and navigation conventions. As Lynch and Horton suggest,

> The user interface for your Web site should follow the general navigation and layout conventions of major Web sites because your users will already be used to those conventions.[428]

According to them, users generally do not appreciate highly unconventional interfaces or unusual navigation patterns because they are not used to the new patterns and it

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[424] See Thorlacius 2005, pp.157-158.
[425] See Thorlacius 2005, pp.165-167.
[426]See for example, *World Tales/Education Section/Studies of Asia* for websites that offer stories from a diverse number of countries:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales_education/learning_areas.php?learnID=6&section=resource_pack.
[427] See http://www9.sbs.com.au/radio/index.php
[428] Lynch and Horton 2001, p.23.

takes extra time and effort to locate the information they require.[429] We may therefore argue that the shared conventions with other websites once again illustrate the connections among websites.

World Tales follows the familiar navigation conventions. For example, sub-menus are hidden in additional boxes and are accessible when users click and select the options offered in the Main Menu.

Figure 23: The submenu box showing additional options

To conclude, *World Tales* manifests itself as a locality with boundaries and global linkages. By means of navigation and interactive restrictions, boundaries are recognizable. Connections are implied by historical, thematic and representational intertextuality and are facilitated by diverse internal and external links. *World Tales* exemplifies a flow where local and global dynamics are encountered. It therefore fulfils the third requirement of "place".

4.2   Features of "Placelessness" and "Non-Place"

To see if websites are places also involves an understanding of notions that indicate the opposite, for example, "placelessness" and "non-places".[430] Do websites and in particular *World Tales* reveal features of non-places? Researchers who study the

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[429] See Lynch and Horton 2001, pp.23-24.
[430] See Chap. 3, Section 3.6.

condition of "placelessness" and "non-places" propose that a "non-place" demonstrates the following features:[431]

4.2.1 Lack of identity

Edward Relph, as we have seen, suggests that "placelessness" implies a lack of sense of belonging and a lack of one's identity.[432] Following a similar line of thought, Marc Augé also concludes that a "non-place" implies a lack of identity.[433] He suggests that places such as shopping malls, supermarkets or airports may be seen as non-places because they display a functional uniformity that make them non-distinctive.

4.2.2 Disconnectedness

As mentioned earlier, Marc Augé proposes disconnectedness as the second feature of a "non-place".[434] "Places" are related to solid ground and intact soil whereas "non-places" are fleeting and unrelated. People visit non-places for functional reasons but they do not live there. Augé also points out that many traditional places such as market places are now replaced by non-places such as shopping centres.

4.2.3 Lack of attachment

Yi-Fu Tuan, as discussed, brings forward a third feature that characterizes "non-place": temporality and non-attachment. He uses the business executive as a symbol for the mobile and transient urban lifestyle.[435] This floating and temporary lifestyle discourages people from developing feelings or attachment to any place.

Does *World Tales* demonstrate these three features of "non-place"? I shall argue that *World Tales* demonstrates the contrary to these "non-place" features and therefore reinforces the already discussed "place" features.

- Identity vs. Lack of identity

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[431] See for examples, Edward Relph 1997; Marc Augé 1995.
[432] See Chap. 3 Section 3.6.1. Edward Relph (1997) *Place and Placelessness* (London: Pion)
[433] Marc Augé (1995) *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London & New York: Verso)
[434] See Chap. 3 Section 3.6.2. See also Augé 1995.
[435] See Chap. 3 Section 3.6.3. See also Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press)

World Tales illustrates a strong sense of identity. The title itself directs us to its identity. *World Tales* promotes itself as a website that celebrates multiculturalism by means of gathering tales from diverse cultures. We may argue that "multiculturalism" and "tales" may be seen as the two crucial identity markers of this website.[436] Unlike websites that advocate multiculturalism by offering legal and social information, *World Tales* promotes multiculturalism by means of animations and folk tales.

- Connectedness vs. Disconnectedness

Rather than demonstrating features of disconnectedness, I shall argue that *World Tales* resembles places in the sense that it is relational and connects with other contexts such as websites. These connections are shown, as I have just mentioned, in terms of links, navigation icons, and features of intertextuality.[437] In addition, the narratives of *World Tales* suggest cross-cultural connectedness and associations among the Cinderella stories, the Creation tales and the Initiation tales.[438]

- Attachment vs. Lack of attachment

Instead of a lack of attachment, I shall argue that *World Tales* displays the opposite. For example, the core animations of this website show strong attachment to the cultures in which the animations originated from. The animators' descriptions of their creation processes also provide us clues to their attachment to their original cultures. These animations are therefore rooted in the traditional folk stories, customs and beliefs.[439]

The above analysis confirms the argument that *World Tales* may be seen as a "place" rather than a "non-place".

4.3 "Place" or "Site"

As I have argued before, some websites may be seen as more than "sites".[440] Edward Casey discerns a "place" from a "site" by three dichotomies: selective vs. anonymous;

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[436] See Section 4.1.1.
[437] See Section 4.1.3.2.
[438] See Section 4.1.3.
[439] Some examples are: "The Weaver and the Herder", "Ming", "Stone Soup", "Twelve Months", "Djinungs Koorngees", "The Magic Drum".
[440] See Chap.1 Section 1.1.

familiarity vs. indifferent; enclosed vs. open.[441] I shall argue that if *World Tales* is a "place" and not a "site", it has to display that it is "selective", "familiar" and has the ability to "enclose". And if *World Tales* exhibits these three qualities of a "place", this further supports its status as a "place".

4.3.1 Selective vs. Anonymous

As discussed before, one cannot distinguish a construction site of a residential block from that of a school.[442] Almost all construction sites look similar whereas buildings are recognizable. This exemplifies how a place is selective whereas a site is anonymous. *World Tales* has clearly shown evidence of its distinctiveness: firstly, by the unique combination of "multiculturalism" and "tales";[443] secondly, by the decipherable typography and interface designs;[444] and thirdly, by the exclusive symbols,[445] and the multimedia animations that are based on ancient folk and fairy tales.[446] In addition, the "Play" Section and also the "Education" Section are elements that distinguish it from other websites.[447]

4.3.2 Familiar vs. Indifferent

Familiarity, as we have seen, is important for place making because it helps to develop a sense of belonging and also a sense of attachment.[448] As noted before, the major symbols of *World Tales* such as the stage symbol,[449] together with the monkey and the bird, create a kind of acquaintance for users.[450] In addition, the consistent layout, the same navigation icons and the repetitive navigation options provide users with predictability.[451] This familiarity and consistency advance the possibility of revisiting and also intensify the bonding between users and the website.

4.3.3 Enclosed vs. Open

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[441] See Chap.3 Section 3.2. See also Edward Casey (1987) "Place Memory". In *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) pp.185-203.
[442] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.2.
[443] See Section 4.2. Identity vs. Lack of Identity
[444] See Section 4.1.1.1.
[445] See sections 4.1.2.1 and 4.1.2.2
[446] See section 4.1.2.3 and 4.1.2.4.
[447] See Section 4.1.1.2
[448] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.2.
[449] See Section 4.1.2.1.
[450] See sections 4.1.2.1 and 4.1.2.2.
[451]See sections 4.1.2.1 and 4.1.2.2. See also Lynch & Horton 2001, p.24.

Last but not least, we have also discussed that a place is seen as an enclosure or a shelter as contrasted to a site that is characterized by its openness and inhabitability.[452] As previously argued, the boundaries of *World Tales* are set by means of control mechanisms such as the transmissible non-interactive function.[453] Although users have the liberty to repeat their experiences as viewers, readers or participants in the "Mini-Games", they are not permitted to make alterations directly on the Web. Thus *World Tales* is able to contain its diverse web pages.

4.3.4 Place and memory

Edward Casey, as we have seen, corresponds memory and place. He argues that memory is supported by place and proposes that they share three similar features: horizon, pathway and things.[454] In order to explore the relationship between place and memory, I shall now try to identify these three features as we examine *World Tales*. This will help us to reconfirm that *World Tales* may be seen as a place.

- Horizon

Casey argues that horizon is twofold: the internal and the external.[455] I shall argue that the internal horizon of *World Tales* consists of all the web pages. In other words, the website proper may be seen as its internal horizon. On the other hand, the external horizon includes the other websites that *World Tales* connects to by means of external links such as related fairy tales websites and educational websites.

- Pathways

As mentioned before, Casey argues that internal and external pathways are essential for a place because they facilitate exploration as well as provide access.[456] The external and internal links may be compared to pathways. The external inks of *World Tales* may be seen as external pathways since they facilitate access to external websites. Then again, the internal links may be seen as internal pathways that allow users to navigate the website in many different ways.[457]

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[452] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.2.
[453] See Section 4.1.3.1.
[454] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.3. See Casey 1987, pp.203-206 for his arguments on why and how memory and place share similar features.
[455] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.3.
[456] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.3.
[457] See Section 4.1.3.2. Links.

- Things

Following Casey, things are not just objects but images and items that help us to remember a place. Without the things that are related to the place, it is difficult to recall what the place looks like.[458] When we examine *World Tales*, the key symbols may be seen as the pivotal points of *World Tales* since they make it easier for us to remember the website.[459]

4.4 Transforming "non-place" to "place"

Finally, I shall use the animation, "Maui slows the sun",[460] to suggest how a "non-place" may be transformed to a "place" by human intervention. This concludes my arguments on "place" as a human construction and that *World Tales* as a website fulfils the criteria of a "place".

Originally a legend from Polynesia, the animator Morgan Simpson recreates this legend in a modern contemporary setting. The animation shows a mechanical, industrial world where everybody gets up at the same time and marches to a central building in town that shows a burning furnace that reminds us of a big factory but is in fact a large casino – the Fire Mountain Casino. Inside the Casino, everybody is doing the same thing, namely playing the Fruit Machine. There is no time for anything else.

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[458] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.3.
[459] See Section 4.1.2.1 and Section 4.1.2.2.
[460] See *World Tales/View An Animation/Animation: Maui Slows The Sun*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=11.

Figure 24: View An Animation: "Maui Slow the Sun"

Like everybody else, Maui's mother returns home at sunset, and has to dry clothes without the sun. She then complains to Maui, "Ah, Maui, if only you could slow the Sun!"[461] The boy Maui gets an idea about how to make the sun move slower. He enters the Casino disguised as one of the customers and cuts the power supply. Suddenly all fruit machines stop and everyone leaves the Casino. Outside the Casino, they hear the birds singing and see the sun shining with new leaves swinging on the trees. Suddenly there is time for everything else.

The Casino may be seen as a mechanical, repetitive and monotonous non-place in which people follow daily routines and repeat the same tasks without thinking. Only Maui, the innocent boy, thinks.[462] His thinking and his actions transform the world – from a mechanical non-place to a place where the senses can react. In this place, the people as well as us, the audience, can see new leaves growing on the trees and can

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[461] See *World Tales/View An Animation/Animation: Maui Slows The Sun*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=11. According to the ancient legend, Maui is a kind of super-hero who can fix almost everything – from dragging the Hawaiian Islands out of the sea to slowing the sun down. In the animation, Maui is represented as a boy.
[462] Morgan Simpson shows how Maui´s brain is working by drawing a mechanical device in his head. See *World Tales/View An Animation: Maui Slows The Sun*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=11.

hear birds singing.[463] Visual representations and in particular colour application are significant in this animation. The industrial non-place is shown in black and white with shades of grey. Colour is introduced only at the end of the animation when the people are outside the Casino: the blue sky, the green leaves and the yellow sun.

Like Maui, humans can transform "non-places" to "places". The business executive, for instance, transforms an anonymous hotel room into his personal space by imposing his identity on it.[464] Similarly, a Japanese garden may be created in a Norwegian backyard if the owner of the house follows the distinctive landscape pattern in arranging the stones, the plants and the channels of water. Thus, any placeless wasteland can be turned into special landscape that holds memories and attachment by human construction.

4.5 "Place", "non-place" and place making

Before the analysis, I have identified three major features that are prerequisites for a website to be read as a "place".[465] They are:

- A "place" is a human construction. It is an expression or a concretization of how we see, understand and experience the world.
- A "place" is made distinctive by symbols and narratives that humans attribute to it. These symbols and narratives reinforce the bonding between humans and the environment.
- A "place" is a kind of localization with boundaries and connections. It displays the dialectics between local and global.

The above analysis has shown that these three features are discernable in the *World Tales* website. This implies that *World Tales* may be regarded as a "place".

At the same time, *World Tales* does not display characteristics of a "non-place", namely, lack of identity, disconnectedness and lack of attachment.[466] Neither does it

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[463] See *World Tales/View An Animation: Maui Slows The Sun*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=11.
[464] See Chap. 3 Section 3.6.3.
[465] See Section 4.1.
[466] See Section 4.2.

manifest the traits of a random site: anonymous, indifferent and open.[467] The reading of *World Tales* as a "place" is thus further confirmed.

How does this reading better our understanding of digital place making when compared to traditional place making?

Firstly, the discussed humanistic geographers regard place making as a complex theoretical process rather than a mere physical and material practice. "Place" is therefore seen as a human construction and an expression.[468] I shall argue that in this context, digital and traditional place making is comparable. Websites, like other cultural products, may also be seen as a concretization of human expression.[469] As *World Tales* has demonstrated, the website expresses perspectives of seeing and understanding the world.[470] These perspectives are discernable by means of the animations that may be seen as the animator's interpretation of the world by means of tales. In addition, the website invites users to experience the world in the sense of relating their former experiences with the manifold animations. The multimedia effects trigger our senses and encourage us to make associations.[471]

Secondly, the humanistic geographers also argue that place making is by means of symbols and narratives since these elements shape the distinctiveness of the particular. As Tuan argues that a rock, a river or a mountain range becomes special because it becomes a reminder of an emotional event that has happened.[472] Likewise, Edward Casey also argues that memory relies on images and is often place-related.[473] I have argued that key symbols and narratives of a website also serve similar functions. As *World Tales* has illustrated, its identity lies in the key symbols such as the stage, the smiling monkey and the bird.[474] Narratives, both in the form of multimedia animations and also website narrative sequences, contribute to making *World Tales* special.[475]

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[467] See Section 4.3.
[468] See Chap.3 Section 3.4.1.
[469] See Chap.1 Section 1.1.
[470] See Section 4.1.1.
[471] See Section 4.1.1.2.
[472] See Chap.3 Section 3.4.2. See also Tuan 1974b, 1991.
[473] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.3. See also Casey 1987.
[474] See Section 4.1.2.1
[475] See Section 4.1.2.3.

Thirdly, if a "place" is differentiated by random space by borders, I also argue that *World Tales* as a website has well-defined boundaries. By means of the transmissible non-interactive function, the stability of *World Tales* is maintained. Users are not allowed to make direct alterations on the website even though they may access the information provided, view the animations and participate in playing the games.[476] On the other hand, a locality is not isolated because it is connected with the rest of the network. If place making implies making connections, I argue that websites, because of their digital nature, possess a vast capacity for networking. As the web image implies, any website is related with almost endless documents in digital environments. *World Tales* exemplifies this nature via its multiple external inks. Moreover, its navigation conventions reveal its affiliation with other websites. Last but not least, elements of thematic and representational intertextuality are displayed in the animations of *World Tales*. Thus, connections are not restricted to websites but also are extended to other non-digital cultural products.[477]

In short, this analysis shows the possibility of place making in the digital realm by means of seeing "place" primarily as a theoretical concept rather than a physical location. Following this line of argument, other related notions such as "topophilia" that investigate the relationship between humans and environments may also be applicable to digital environments.

4.6   Digital documents and digital environments

As a website, *World Tales* demonstrates the essential features of a digital document that exists in digital environments. In this section, I attempt to summarize the findings that may enhance our understanding of the digital phenomenon. Since we have already reviewed some major theories,[478] I shall only refer to those propositions that are most relevant to our present discussion.

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[476] See Section 4.1.3.1.
[477] See Section 4.1.3.2.
[478] See Chap. 2 for the major digital theories.

4.6.1 Nature of digital documents

Some researchers see traditional and digital documents as polarities that demonstrate opposing characteristics: fixed vs. fluid, stable vs. transient.[479] However, others propose to see digital documents as extensions of traditional ones.[480]

When examining the *World Tales* website, I shall argue that the website supports the evolutionary perspective of documents rather than the paper-digital dichotomy. Although the animations are examples of multimedia digital documents, they are based on traditional folk tales in written or oral forms. These animations are therefore new interpretations of the traditional since they provide us with a contemporary perspective on these folk tales. Their forms of representations also illustrate the multimedia digital dimension. One concrete example is "Tam and Cam", the Cinderella story from Vietnam.[481] The animators have deliberately recreated this ancient tale in a modern Vietnamese context by opening the animation with flying choppers and representing the prince as a military hero in uniform. The Mid Autumn Festival or the Moon Festival is decorated not by traditional lanterns but by red flags. As one of the animators, Adam says,

> We've set our version in the era of the Vietnam War, particularly at the end, because it's a time of change for Vietnam and it reflects what's going on in Tam's life. When she's in trouble or there is a change we tend to see the artefacts of the war going on. Although it's not centre stage at all, you might hear choppers or you might see a jeep drive past.[482]

Despite the universality in theme, the representation is deliberately recreated to provide a contemporary and Vietnamese context by employing Vietnamese music, and voice actors as well as images resembling Vietnamese nature and landscape. Even the offering – Betel nuts – is a popular local fruit.[483] The vivid sound effects such as the chopper's landing sound bring us to the Vietnamese war context, informed

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[479] See Chap. 2 Section 2.3. See also Jay D. Bolter 1991.
[480] See David Levy 1994, 2001; Espen Aarseth 1997.
[481] See *World Tales/View an Animation/Animation: Tam and Cam:*
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=19
[482] See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Square i/Animation: Tam and Cam*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animator.php?animatorID=22
[483] See *World Tales/Learn About Tam and Cam*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/story_background.php?storyID=59

by other familiar American Vietnamese war films.[484]   Although multimedia effects are borrowed from previous media forms, the act of borrowing does not reduce their effectiveness.   Also, these effects are not direct copying or mere transference from one medium to another.   Rather, they are the culmination of new mixtures of existing elements.   Thus, they should be seen as a kind of transformation from existing to new formats.

Figure 25: View An Animation: "Tam and Cam"

This example reminds us of the evolutionary aspect of document development.   As Espen Aarseth argues after his study of a wide range of paper and digital documents,

> The emerging new media technologies are not important themselves, nor as alternatives to older media, but should be studied for what they can tell us about the principles and evolution of human communication.[485]

The case analysis therefore supports the perspective of seeing digital and non-digital forms as related to one another in a continuum.

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[484] Some examples of war films are: Apocalypse Now 1979, Blue Thunder 1983, Deer Hunter 1978, Full metal Jacket 1987, Good Morning Vietnam 1987, and Platoon 1986.
[485] See Espen Aarseth (1997) *Cybertext: perspectives on ergodic literature* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press) p.17.

4.6.2 Digital narrative: modes of reading

As previously mentioned, Marie-Laure Ryan argues that one of the major changes in the transition of narrative from paper-based documents to digital is the role of the reader.[486] Instead of solitary immersion reading, the readers are encouraged to explore and investigate the digital environment as if they are playing jigsaw puzzles. Ryan argues that the role of the reader is "external" and "exploratory".[487] I shall argue that the "jigsaw puzzle" reading mode is applicable to *World Tales* and the reader's role may be seen as "exploratory" and "external".

The navigation structure of *World Tales* is constructed to provide multiple paths so that users may enter the website at diverse navigation points and search for the information they require.[488] Users who are not interested in the stories and animations may click "Play" and enjoy the games. This flexibility of searching confirms Ryan's argument that reading is "exploratory" since users are free to access the information they need and also explore further if they are interested in that area by means of clicking on the links.

Meet The Animator :: Square i
Square i found working in another language a satisfying creative experience. **Meet >**

Read A Story :: The Crab
In a time no one can remember there was only one animal of each kind on earth... **Read >**

Play :: Quiz, Mini Games, Ecards
Step right up. Fun, wonder, amazement and awe await those who dare to play. **Play >**
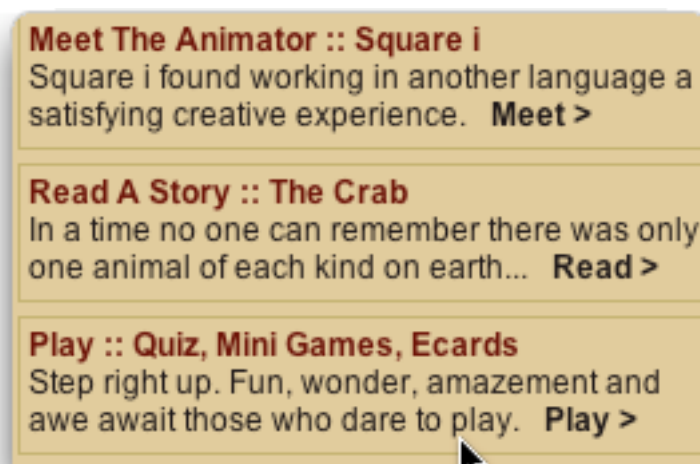
Figure 26: The diverse clicking possibilities

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[486] See Chap.2 Section 2.4; See also Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) "Will New Media Produce New narrative?" In Ryan (Ed.)(2004) *Narrative Across Media* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press) pp.337-359.
[487] Ryan 2004, p.339.
[488] See Section 4.1.1.1 Typography.

In addition, reading is "external" because users are not permitted to change the website directly while they read.[489]   Ryan's proposal that the user's role is "exploratory" and "external" is confirmed by this website.[490]

4.6.3   Hypertext: links, nodes, connections and boundaries

Web documents are discernable by their overt nodes and links that show inter-related connections. As noted before, Gunnar Liestøl argues that linking is based on notions of integration and reference.[491]

If we examine the *World Tales* website, we can see that it illustrates the features of a digital document since it provides multiple links – both internal and external – to other web documents.[492]   More importantly, *World Tales* shows aspects of inter-references, as we have seen, in terms of thematic and representational connections to other documents.[493]

On the other hand, Thorlacius proposes the meta-communicative function and the inter-semiotic function in communication when the focus is on code and "metalanguage".[494]   To put it briefly, the meta-communicative function refers to those occasions when an image is taken out of the original context and placed in another. The inter-semiotic function is operative when we interpret signs from a code system by means of signs from another code system. I shall argue that the above-mentioned meta-communicative function and the inter-semiotic function illustrate inter-reference in terms of shared cultural meaning.

Both the meta-communicative function and the inter-semiotic function may be identified at *World Tales*. For example, the image of the skeleton woman may be seen as a specimen in a medical laboratory and also from horror movies. In the animation, "The Magic Drum", this image refers first of all to love and passion even

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[489] See Section 4.1.3.1.
[490] Ryan suggests the "Internal/External involvement" as an alternative mode of reading for interactive websites. See Ryan, p.339. See also research on interactive websites: Espen Aarseth 1997, 2003; Ragnhild Tronstad 2003 and Anders Fagerjord 2003.
[491] See Chap.2 Section 2.5. See also Liestøl 1995, pp.191-221.
[492] See Section 4.1.3.2. Links.
[493] See Section 4.1.3.2. Connections and Intertextuality
[494] Thorlacius 2005, pp.174-192

though the connotation of death is also implied as in the above-mentioned contexts.[495]
Also, the inter-semiotic function is displayed in this animation. To use "The Magic
Drum" as example again, the drum – initially part of the Inuit sound code system – is
now employed in the title of the animation, "The Magic Drum", suggesting suspense
and mystery.[496] It is transferred from the sound code system to the linguistic code
system.

Figure 27: View An Animation: "Magic Drum"

Even though connections and linkages are obvious in *World Tales*, this does not imply
that the website may not be seen as self-contained. *World Tales* maintains its stability
by restricting the interactive possibilities and thus marking its boundaries.[497]

4.6.4   Nature of digital communities

Instead of geographical or national borders, Benedict Anderson argues that
comradeship or fellowship depends on "imagination" or symbolic associations.[498]

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[495] See *World Tales/View an Animation/Animation: The Magic Drum*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=4
[496] See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Lindsay Cox/Animation: The Magic Drum*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animator.php?animatorID=5#
[497] See Section 4.1.3.1.

Following this line of argument, the "imagined communities" are pertinent in the digital context because communities are formed via the Internet with little regard to physical proximity.[499]

When we examine *World Tales*, a website in digital environments, could we argue that it has features to generate a virtual community? I have previously in this chapter argued that *World Tales* is a "place" because of the symbols and narratives that it contains.[500] These symbols and narratives give *World Tales* a "sense of place", in accordance with what the humanistic geographers suggest.[501] I will extend this argument and suggest that the symbols and narratives of a website encourage revisiting and may be seen as features that assist in forming a community.

Like "Djinungs Koorngees" that we have discussed,[502] "The Magic Drum" is another example that illustrates how legends establish and strengthen the fellowship among those who share them. The original title of "The Magic Drum" is "The Skeleton Woman", which is a well-known tale among the Inuit community. Despite this familiarity, the Inuit people still look forward to hearing it. This is observed by the animator Cox who further remarks that to a western audience, repetition implies boredom and this attitude contrasts with the Inuit's attitude to the repetition of the tale.[503] This indicates a noticeable difference between those who are within the community and those who are foreign. It also reinforces the social bond among members of the same culture in which the tale belongs.

Following a similar line of thought, I shall argue that *World Tales* forms its community by means of a shared interest in fairy and folk tales packaged in the form of animations. The sense of fellowship relies on symbolic association rather than physical contact. Users revisit the website because of the interesting and amusing animations and stories that this website offers.[504]

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[498] Benedict Anderson (1983/1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London & New York: Verso)(Revised Ed.)
[499] See Chap.2 Section 2.6.
[500] See Section 4.1.2.
[501] See Tuan 1974, 1991; Cresswell 2004.
[502] See Section 4.1.2.3 and Section 4.1.2.4.
[503] See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Lindsay Cox/Animation: The Magic Drum*:
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animator.php?animatorID=5.
[504] See Section 4.1.2.

Unlike online chats, MUDs and MOOs that allow direct participation and interaction, I shall also argue that issues of "identity performance",[505] and role-playing are not relevant to websites such as *World Tales* because this kind of website does not offer opportunities for users to interact as role-players. To a certain extent, one may argue that the *World Tales* website is even more democratic than MUDs and MOOs since it is open to all kinds of users and does not use regulations or hierarchies to form barriers. In addition, issues around "homogeneity" and "lifestyle enclaves" do not apply here because tales are for all,[506] regardless of race, gender, culture, and even age. Perhaps the only factor that may prevent joining this "community" is access since websites are web documents that require plug-in on the World Wide Web.

4.7   Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have argued that the three distinctive features of a "place" may be identified from the website, *World Tales*. Firstly, *World Tales* is a human construction that expresses perspectives of seeing and experiencing the world. Secondly, it maintains its uniqueness by means of the ensemble of symbols and narratives that form an integral part of the website. And thirdly, it is a locality with boundaries as well as connections. On the other hand, it does not exemplify the features of a "non-place", namely, lack of identity, disconnectedness and lack of attachment. Contrary to a "site", it is not anonymous, indifferent or open. As discussed, when "place" is seen as a theoretical conception, it can also be applied to the digital dimension. Place making in the digital realm is therefore comparable to that of the non-digital. At the same time, by reading this website – *World Tales* – as a "place", we are able to achieve the following confirmation concerning digital documents and their environments: digital documents may be seen in an evolutionary perspective as extensions of traditional documents; the "external" and "exploratory" mode of reading is applicable to the reading of this website; the website does not lose its particularity even though it is connected to other websites by external links; and

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[505] See David Trend (2001) "Performing Identity in Cyberspace". In D. Trend (Ed.) *Reading Digital Culture* (Mass. & Oxford: The Blackwell Publishers) pp.183-184; p.184.

[506] See Dave Healy (1997) "Cyberspace and Place: The Internet as Middle Landscape on the Electronic Frontier". In David Porter (1997) (Ed.) *Internet Culture* (New York & London: Routledge) pp.55-68; and Robert Bellah et. al. (1985) *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press)

although not an interactive website, *World Tales* forms its community by means of shared cultural interest and symbolic associations.

In the next chapter, I shall apply similar methods to the analysis of a second website, *Dim Sum*. Despite the obvious similarities, these two websites also have fundamental differences.[507] It is my intention to use a second case to compare and contrast with the first and thereby see to what extent the empirical findings correspond with the selected theories.

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[507] See Chap.1 Section 1.2.3.

5.   Case Study II: *Dim Sum*

 (http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/chinadimsumaconnection.html)

In Chapter Four, I have analysed the website *World Tales* to illustrate how a website may be read as a "place" and thereby give us insights into, firstly, place making and secondly, digital documents and digital environments. I intend to use another website, *Dim Sum*, as a second case study. Even though these two websites belong to the category of "exploratory" text,[508] there are recognizable differences between the two.[509]

My strategy is to analyse *Dim Sum* following the same methods with which I have analysed *World Tales*,[510] and see if *Dim Sum* may also be read as a "place". If *Dim Sum* fulfils the requirements of a "place", what kind of insights may we obtain from this reading? As I have mentioned before, the comparative perspective is employed throughout the process of case analysis.[511] By employing the same "place" and digital theories to the two websites, the analysis thus generated will reveal their similarities and differences.

Since a website contains many diverse parts, I will only analyse those segments that are most relevant in response to the major queries.[512] As in the previous chapter, I shall first outline the features of a "place" and then proceed to the analysis of *Dim Sum* to see if it may be regarded as a "place". If it possesses these features, I shall argue that *Dim Sum* may also be read as a "place".

5.1   The features of "Place"

As I have mentioned before, I have identified three distinctive features that qualify a "place":[513]

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[508] See Chap.2, Section 2.7.3. See also Michael Joyce (1995) "Siren Shapes: Exploratory and Constructive Hypertexts". In *Of Two Minds: Hypertext Pedagogy and Poetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press) pp.39-59.
[509] See Chap.1 Section 1.2.
[510] See Chap.1 Section 1.4.
[511] See Chap.1 Section 1.4.2.
[512] See Chap.1 Section 1.4.3.
[513] See Chap.3 Section 3.5.

- A "place" is a human construction. It is an expression or a concretization of how we see, understand and experience the world.
- A "place" is made distinctive by symbols and narratives that humans attribute to it. These symbols and narratives reinforce the bonding between humans and the environment.
- A "place" is a kind of localization with boundaries and connections. It displays the dialectics between local and global.

As in the previous case, I shall argue that if *Dim Sum* possesses these major features of "place", it may be read as a "place".

5.1.1   A human construction: perspective and experience

A "place" is not just a physical location or a set of geographical coordinates but an expression of a certain perspective of seeing and understanding the world.[514] The humanistic geographers such as Tuan and Cresswell, as discussed previously, argue that we understand the world by experiencing it with our senses.[515] As in Case One, I argue that to experience a website requires visual images as well as our previous experience.[516] If we use the *Polaria* website as an example, the website shows five changing images with a central focus: "Polaria – an Arctic Experience".[517]

Figure 28: The building of the Polaria Research Centre

The five images are: the distinctive architecture, two children looking at swimming seals, the spectacular wilderness of Svalbard, Arctic food and the souvenir shop. These images pinpoint the main attractions of Polaria.

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[514] See Chap.3 Section 3.4.1.
[515] Tuan 1974, 1977 & 1991; Cresswell 2004.
[516] See Chap.4 Section 4.1.1.2.
[517] See *Polaria* website: http://www.polaria.no/en/.
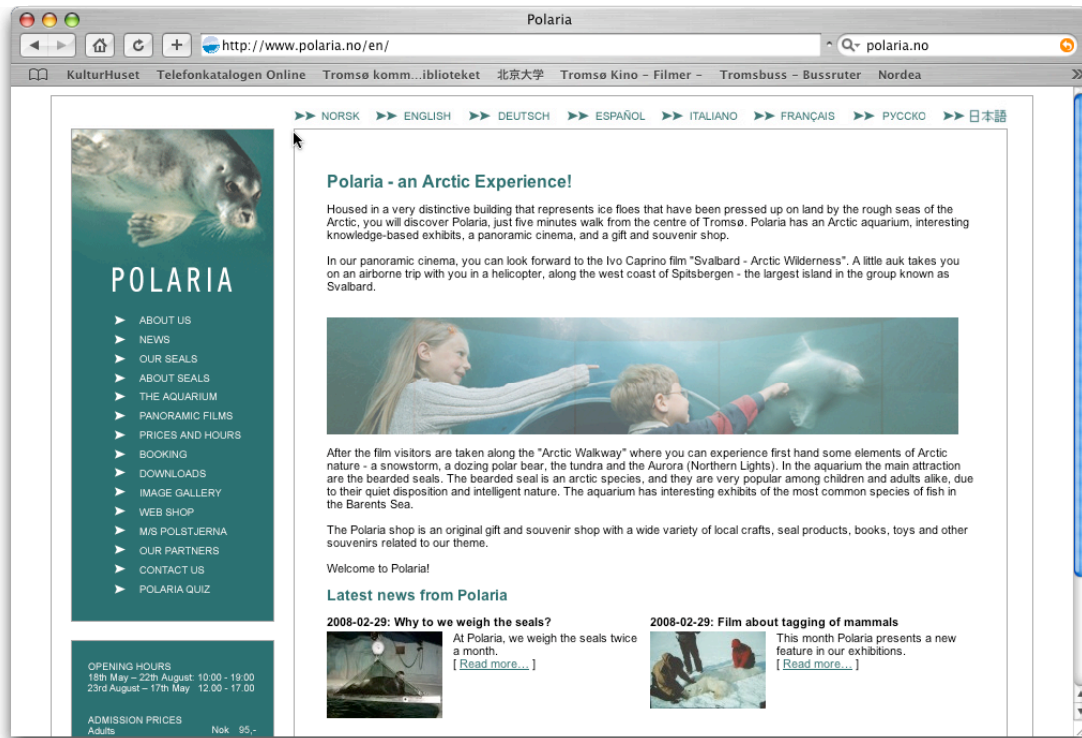
Figure 29: Children looking at swimming seals

Even though one may not have seen seals swimming in captivity, the images of seals trigger our previous encounters of similar pictures from brochures, magazines or TV programs. These images therefore generate associations to the possible encounter. For those who have visited Polaria, these images recall our memories of seeing them swimming and performing daily training during feeding time. How we experience the *Polaria* website depends on our senses, especially the visual senses, as well as our experience of similar locations. The series of images attempts to offer an arctic perspective to visitors by showing the nature, animals, and food of this region and also products that are made from raw materials and by local artists in this region.
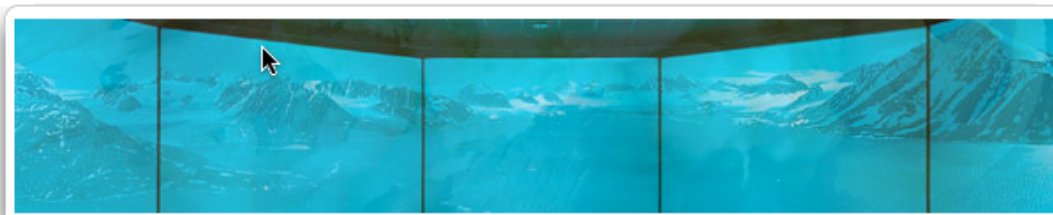
Figure 30: The spectacular nature of Svalbard

The crucial difference between the *Polaria* website and the *Dim Sum* website is that the former relies on a physical location – the Research Centre – for its existence. The images as well as the perspective that informed the *Polaria* website are directly borrowed from the Centre.

The question then is: does *Dim Sum* offer us a distinctive perspective on how we can perceive the world? If so, what kind of perspective is that and how are we able to discern it from the website?

Obviously, the perspective of *Dim Sum,* as with that of *World Tales,* is not possible to observe from a concrete location. As I have argued in the previous case, the website conveys this perspective via its visual representation and the interactive elements.[518] The visual representation of a website, following Thorlacius, includes the choice of typography and interface layouts, the use of sound, illustrations and movements, the choice of colour and colour combination.[519] Once again, I shall use the homepage of *Dim Sum* as an example to illustrate the given perspective.[520]

5.1.1.1 Typography and Perspective

As in the previous case, the analysis is grouped under these two major categories:[521]

- Typography:

When we click on the image of "the dragon with a pearl", we enter the homepage.[522] On top of the page is the main title: "China", followed by the subtitle: "Dim Sum: A Connection to Chinese-American Culture". Then we are shown a table of contents with the subjects listed in three columns. Each of these subject areas is an internal link that allows entry to that specific area. Additional information includes the funding proposal, awards, feedback and conditions for use are also provided. This information is again listed in three columns. Similar to the subjects, each of these

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[518] See Chap.4 Section 4.1.1.1.
[519] Thorlacius uses "den ekspressive funktion" (the expressive function, my translation) to cover the visual elements of a website. She argues that the expressive function may be directly analysed from the cultural product. See Thorlacius 2005, p.62.
[520] See Chap.2 Section 2.7.6. See also Schwebs Ture & Hildegunn Otnes (2006) *Tekst.no: strukturer og sjangrer i digitale medier* (Oslo: Cappelen)
[521] See Chap.4 Section 4.1.1.1. See also Thorlacius 2005, pp.67-69.
[522] See *Dim Sum/Homepage*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/DimSum%20T.ofCon.HomePg.html

categories is a link that offers access to related materials. For example, when we click on "Internet Resources", we enter a page with external links that provides supplementary resources such as the "China Resources for Teachers". This page ends with a link referring back to the presentation of the website. In this way, users can find their way back to the presentation page.[523]
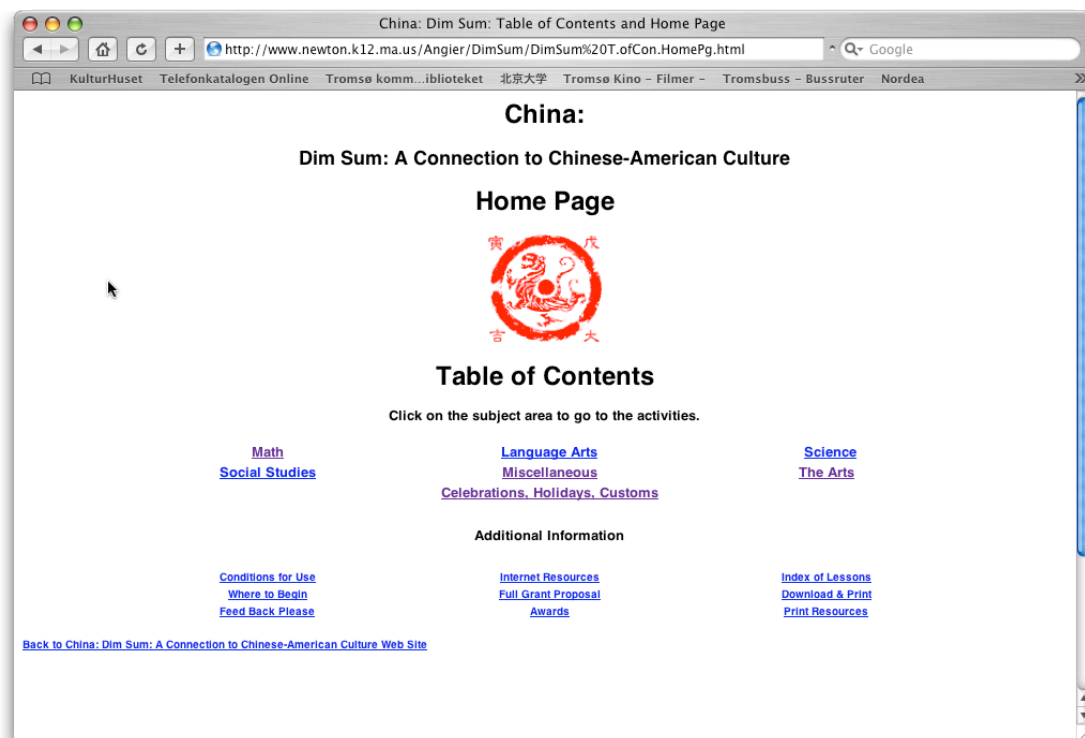

Figure 31: *Dim Sum* homepage

The homepage functions as a well-structured map that indicates the internal links so that users can locate the specific information they require. Without the homepage, users may be lost because the website is heavily loaded with a wide range of information.

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[523] See *Dim Sum/Presentation*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/chinadimsumaconnection.html

Systematic, logical and consistent design encourages users to visit the website. As Patrick Lynch and Sarah Horton advise,

> For maximum functionality and legibility, your page and site design should be built on a consistent pattern of modular units that all share the same basic layout grids, graphic themes, editorial conventions, and hierarchies of organization. The goal is to be consistent and predictable; your users should feel comfortable exploring your site and confident that they can find what they need. The graphic identity of a series of pages in a web site provides visual cues to the continuity of information.[524]

Most of the web pages of *Dim Sum* consist of only one image. The homepage, for example, has only the "dragon with a pearl" image. Below the central image are the various subjects and the section that consists of additional information about the website. Each subject is a sub-category and an internal link that leads users to the subject web page. This reflects the standard layout of most web pages of *Dim Sum*. Even though there is a limited number of images on this website, it does not imply that images are insignificant.[525]

• Perspective:

What kind of perspective does the *Dim Sum* website offer us? From the visual representation of the website, including the typography and the arrangement of images, I shall argue that the perspective of *Dim Sum* is an adult-oriented, information-based perspective, although the end users of the suggested activities are children.

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[524] Patrick J. Lynch & Sarah Horton (2001) *Web Style Guide: Basic Design Principles for Creating Web Sites* (2nd Ed.)(New Haven & London: Yale University Press) p.24.
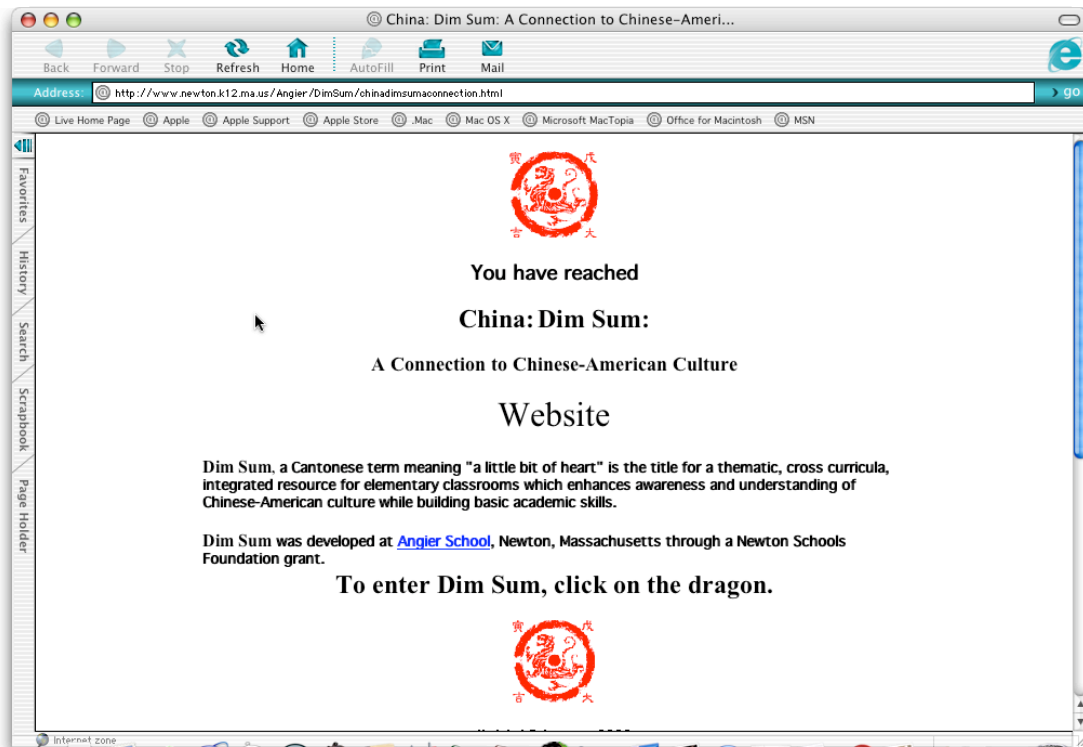[525] See Section 5.1.2.2 for more.

Figure 32: The "Presentation" page

More significantly, the pedagogic perspective of *Dim Sum* is explicit. This website is more than a collection of information about China because the information gathered under each subject category is tied to detail teaching plans and classroom activities. As it claims, it is

> a thematic, cross curricula, integrated resource for elementary classrooms which enhances awareness and understanding of Chinese-American culture while building academic skills.[526]

It attempts to assist integration of Chinese immigrants to the American culture as well as promoting acceptance and goodwill among Americans. From the "Rationale" of the Project Description, it explains the need for this particular Chinese-American connection.

> Evidence to support the need for and potential benefit of a Chinese cultural kit targeted for the K-5 audience lies in the growth of China initiatives within the Newton schools and city demographics which indicate a growing Chinese/Chinese-American

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[526] See *Dim Sum/Presentation*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/chinadimsumaconnection.html

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population. According to a recent Newton TAB article, Chinese is the second most frequently spoken language in Newton homes.[527]

Because of a growth in the number of Chinese immigrants to the Newton area of the United States, there is a need to enhance awareness and understanding of the Chinese-American culture. However, there is a lack of available resources and this website attempts to fill this gap in classroom teaching. Based on this objective, one can see how the themes and activities are selected and organized.

I shall argue that the perspective on China offered by *Dim Sum* is a restrictive, controlled view because it chooses to ignore controversial topics and avoid possible conflict zones. If we take the "Social Studies" page as an example,[528] we can see the following themes and activities: "Mapping: China", "Great Wall of China", "Geography Terms" and "Continents". But "Social Studies" is a curriculum that focuses on the study of society. One will expect the study to include the political system, the organization of society, demographics, social institutions and ethnicity. Could it be possible that the absence of mentioning any political and human aspects of China is a result of avoiding unnecessary controversies among American parents and teachers aroused by the fact that China is a communist state? Restricting this subject area to physical geography provides a safe neutral ground for teachers and parents to discuss China with their children.

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[527] See *Dim Sum/Full Grant Proposal*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Full%20Grant%20Proposal.html
[528] See *Dim Sum/Social Studies*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Soc.%20St.%20Table%20of%20Contents.html
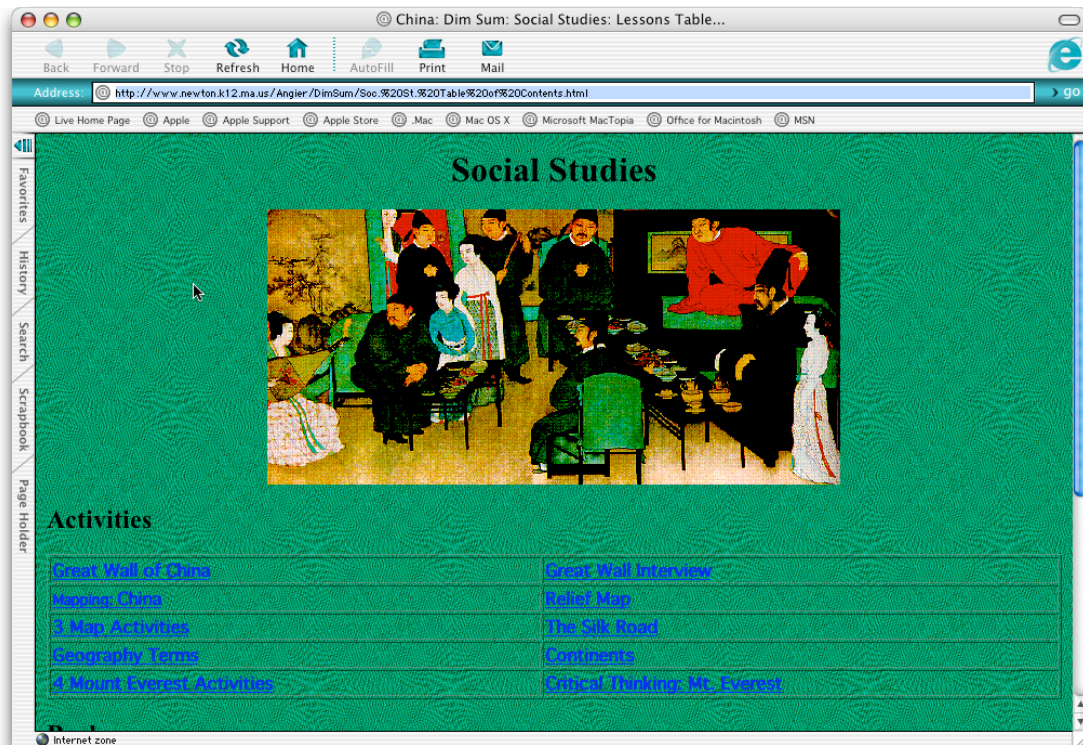
Figure 33: The "Social Science" page

5.1.1.2 Experiencing website with our senses

As I have mentioned in Case One, it is not possible to smell or taste a website.[529] However, the visual elements represented by websites enable us to experience the websites since these elements trigger our senses and recall our previous experiences.[530]

If we examine the website *Dim Sum*, does the analysis validate the above argument? Since *Dim Sum* is primarily a text-based website with limited pictures and images, the multimedia interactive visual elements suggested by Thorlacius are not fully employed.[531] For instance, none of the web pages contain special effects, sound or movement.

To take the web page about the Moon Festival as an example, we can analyse how the website evokes our previous experiences without depending on visual or special effects.

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[529] See Chap.4, Section 4.1.1.2.
[530] As illustrated by the example of seeing seals swimming in captivity, see Section 5.1.1.
[531] Thorlacius 2005, pp.113-118 and pp.136-138.

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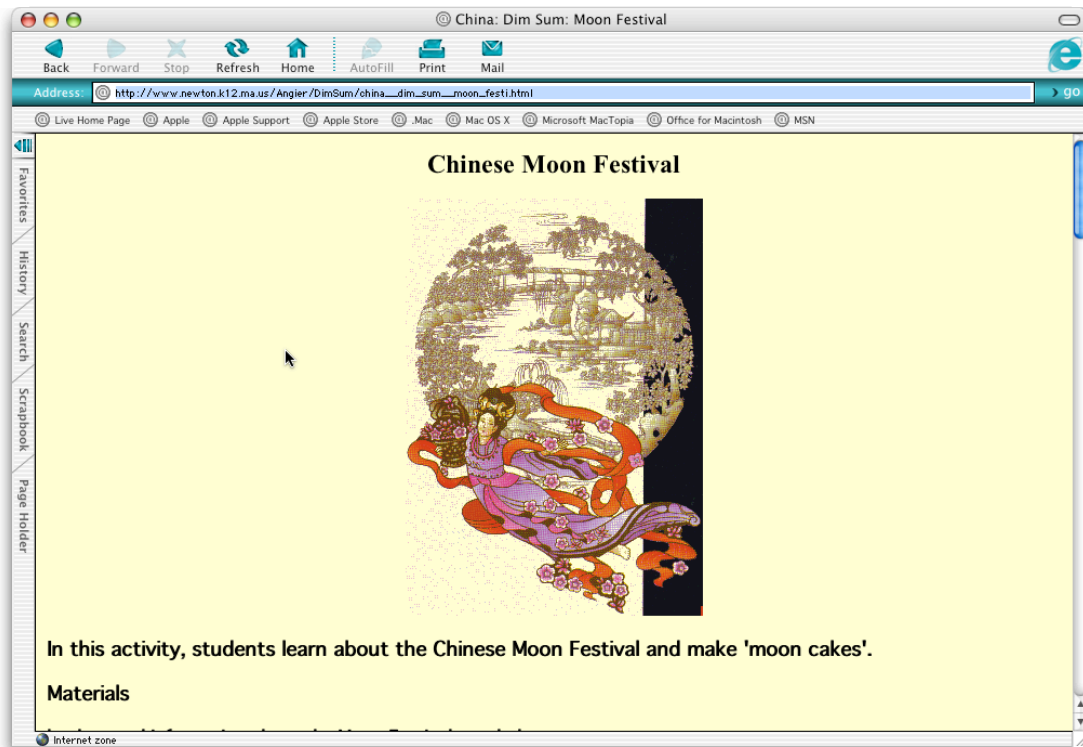
Figure 34: The "Moon Festival" page

On this web page, the proposed activities related to the Moon Festival are: reading the legend and making moon cakes. A detailed recipe is provided to show how moon cakes are made.

> If using home made dough, roll out to about 1/4" thickness [sic]. Cut into rounds with a cookie cutter. If using prepared dough from the tube, roll 1/4" thin and shape or cut into 2" rounds. Place the rounds on a cookie sheet and let rest for a few minutes. Prick the rounds with a fork to prevent puffing while cooking. Have an adult bake the rounds or 'moon cakes' until puffed, light golden in color and cooked through. The adult should carefully remove the sheet from the oven to a cooling rack with oven mitts. Let cool. With a spatula, remove the 'moon cakes' to a plate. Spread jam or bean paste on one moon cake and top it with another moon cake. If the moon cakes are thick, split them in half then spread jam or bean paste inside. Celebrate![532]

To those who have never tasted moon cakes, it may be difficult to imagine how they taste. To those who have tasted other types of moon cakes like myself, it may also be a challenge to imagine how these American homemade moon cakes really taste. The website presented the moon cakes as "round pastries filled with red bean paste, fruit

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[532] See recipe of moon cakes at *Dim Sum/Celebrations, Holidays and Customs/Moon Festival*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/china__dim_sum__moon_festi.html

or jam". This example points to the significance of context. Being outside the United States context, one may wonder how the American version of moon cakes tastes.

Following the same line of argument, one may also wonder how this activity can be applied in the user's context. If I am considering employing this activity to learn more about the Moon Festival, how can I modify the making of moon cakes? If the red bean paste is unavailable in the country where the user lives, what kind of alternatives are available? The variety of moon cakes I am used to consist of a cooked egg yolk together with the red bean paste and therefore has a sweet and savoury taste. But to those who have never tasted moon cakes, it may be difficult to imagine the taste and flavour. Will this create a barrier to choosing this activity? Or conversely, may it actually encourage the use of this activity since it helps to stimulate the students' imagination? In Norway, there are many different kinds of bread spreads and some very particular ones such as goat cheese and salmon spread. Will they still be moon cakes if the paste is goat cheese or salmon spread?

This example illustrates that experiencing the website by recalling former experiences is not a simple task. Since users have diverse experiences, it may not be easy to evoke a certain kind of sensual experience. Moon cakes may be delicious to some but not others depending on what kind of moon cakes and what kind of flavour the user is accustomed to. The exceptions may only be those fundamental emotions such as the death of a loved one.[533]

My argument is that literary narratives such as legends play a crucial role in recalling our previous experience and also inducing our emotions. Although not everyone has read – "The Legend of Chang-O" – one of the many legends related to the Moon Festival,[534] most of us have read some legends with similar motifs. In this legend, Hou Yi built a beautiful jade palace for the Goddess of the Western Heaven and was rewarded with a magic pill. As in the Pandora Box legend, his wife Chang-O became curious. She took the pill and swallowed it without telling her husband. The Goddess became so furious that she punished Chang-O by sending her to live alone on the

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[533] See David Favrholdt 2000, pp.135-138.
[534] See *Dim Sum/Celebrations, Holidays and Customs/Moon Festival*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/china__dim_sum__moon_festi.html

moon. According to traditional folk beliefs, we can see Chang-O's beautiful face on the moon at the Moon Festival when the moon is most clear and round.

The emotions described in this legend are curiosity, disappointment, abandonment, isolation and anger. Most users, regardless of race and nationality, would have experienced these emotions in their previous experiences. Even small children understand Chang-O's curiosity – finding the mysterious pill that the Goddess gave to her husband is like finding a hidden treasure. Her action – swallowing the pill – can be seen as an act of possessing the treasure. Her disappointment when she discovered that the treasure was not as she expected is also another sentiment easily shared among humans. Like a small child who peeps at the Christmas presents lying at the feet of the Christmas tree, she wonders what are inside the beautiful wrappings. Sometimes the child is disappointed when she opens the gifts because her wishes are not materialized.

Stories, as I have argued, may be regarded as the vital element that evokes users' emotions in response to websites.[535] These stories may appear as multimedia creations such as animations in *World Tales*. They may also appear as text-only stories without any graphics or audio-visual elements. Nevertheless, stories speak about universal themes that arouse our emotions and make connections to our previous experiences. It is not difficult for us to imagine ourselves in Chang-O's position: to find the mysterious pill, to steal it and finally to be forced to live with the consequences of our actions.

Unlike *World Tales* that depends on multimedia effects to trigger our senses, I shall argue that *Dim Sum* employs other means. We are encouraged to experience *Dim Sum* by engaging our imagination and previous experiences during our encounters with these legends and stories.

To sum up, *Dim Sum* represents itself as a collection of information about China that enhances the understanding of China for children from kindergarten to elementary school. It offers us a pedagogic perspective of China that is filtered by teaching

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[535] See Chap.4 Section 4.1.1.2.

activities and subject orientations. The perspective of Chinese culture offered by *Dim Sum* is distinctive from other cultural websites.[536]

Since perspective suggests a certain view, it also implies restrictions. As I have mentioned earlier, the perspective offered by the website is a selected and limited version of Chinese culture. Despite this restrictiveness, it does not change the fact that the particular perspective sharpens our awareness of certain aspects of the world. *Dim Sum* may therefore be regarded as meeting the first requirement necessary to be read as a "place".

5.1.2 "Topophilia": symbols and narratives

A "place" is a human construction not only in the sense that it is an intellectual conception but also as an emotional entity. For example, to most people, a house may be simply a building. But for those who live in the house, it is their home. The difference between house and home is not the physical appearance or construction but the affective relationship between the inhabitants and the house.

As I have discussed earlier,[537] Tuan applies the notion of "topophilia" to study the affective, emotional connection between humans, environments and images. He argues, "When it [topophilia] is compelling we can be sure that the place or environment has become the carrier of emotionally charged events or perceived as a symbol."[538] If we extend this argument to the study of websites, can we argue that a website may be seen as a "place" if it reveals itself as a carrier of symbolic associations.

To argue that a website may be seen as a "place" will therefore require an examination of the major symbols. Although *Dim Sum* is fundamentally a text-oriented website with a limited number of images, the images are crucial and may be regarded as possessing symbolic values.[539] These symbols help to create an identity that distinguishes this website from others.

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[536] See also Section 5.2 Identity vs. Lack of identity.
[537] See Chap.3 Section 3.4.2.
[538] Yi-Fu Tuan (1974) *Topophilia: A study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (New York: Columbia University Press) p.93
[539] See Section 5.1.2.2.

5.1.2.1 Symbols

• The dragon

Among the various symbols in *Dim Sum*, the most significant is the symbol of the dragon. The importance of the dragon is illustrated by the numerous accounts of its appearance in many different variations on this website. Dragons are used as the sole image on many web pages such as the "6 Chinese Folk and Fairy Tales" page,[540] and the "Dot to Dot Dragon" Exercise.[541]
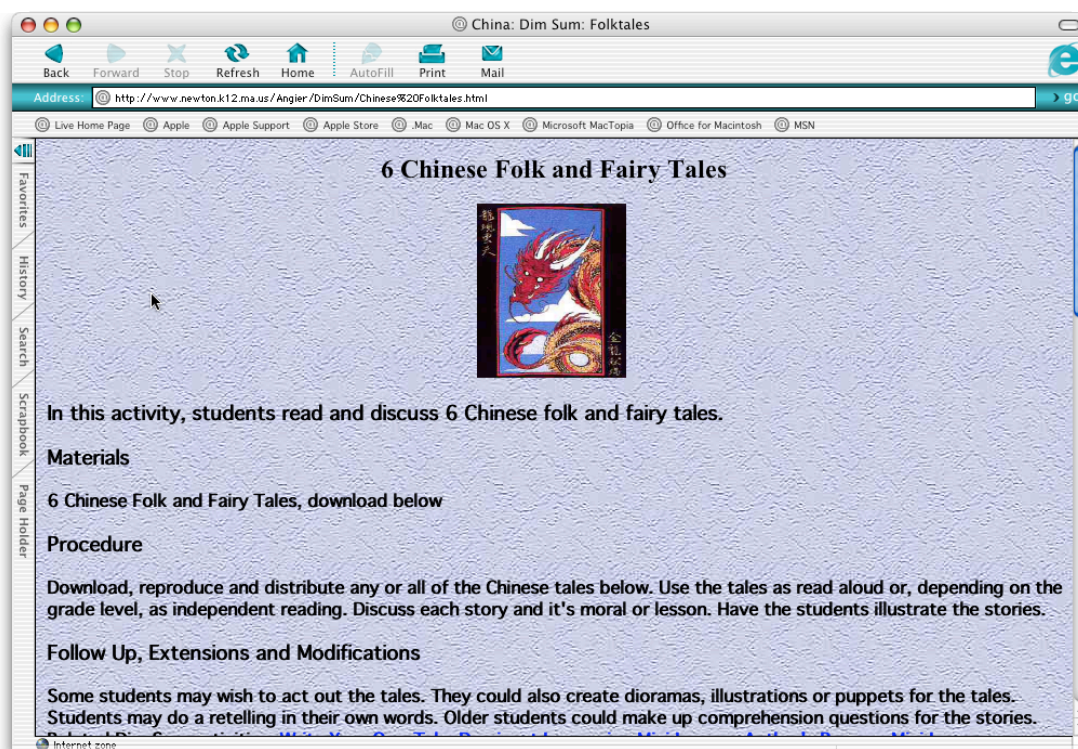

Figure 35: The "6 Chinese Folk and Fairy Tales" page

However, strictly speaking, the dragon image does not directly correlate with the terms, "dim sum". Instead of using the images relating to "dim sum" as the key images of this website, "the dragon with a pearl" image is chosen. This choice

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[540] See *Dim Sum/Language Arts/6 Chinese Folk and Fairy Tales*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Chinese%20Folktales.html
[541] See *Dim Sum/Math/Dot to Dot Dragon*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Dot%20to%20Dot%20Dragon%20Lesson.html

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reflects the importance of using the dragon as a symbol of the Chinese and their culture.[542]

- "The Dragon with a Pearl" – the identity symbol and the phatic function

Among the various images of dragons found in *Dim Sum*, "the dragon with a pearl" image may be seen as the identity symbol of this website. It functions as a kind of signature of this website. This image consists of a dragon with a pearl floating on its back dancing within a ring where four Chinese characters are displayed. The two characters on top signify a particular year according to the Chinese calendar, whereas the two characters in the bottom literally mean a lot of luck. This symbol is probably extracted from a Chinese Zodiac or a traditional Chinese calendar.

Figure 36: The "Dragon with a Pearl" symbol

According to legends, each dragon has a pearl inside him and this pearl is his soul. The pearl represents wisdom and also power.[543] The more powerful the dragon, the brighter is the pearl. Before the dragon dies, he will throw this pearl out so that other dragons can fight for it. The pearl increases the dragon's wisdom, power and energy.

The repetition of this image indicates its significance. This image serves as an identity symbol since we need to click on this symbol to gain access to *Dim Sum*. On the "Presentation" page, the image is shown two times: first, it is put on top of the page before any words, and secondly, it is repeated again at the bottom of the page

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[542] See "The Chinese Dragons". In Tao Tao Liu Sanders (1994) *Dragons, Gods and Spirits from Chinese Mythology* (New York: P. Bedrick Books) pp.48-49; and also http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0215373/History/historyhome.htm

[543] See "The dragon´s pearl". In Tao Tao Liu Sanders (1994) *Dragons, Gods and Spirits from Chinese Mythology* (New York: P. Bedrick Books) pp.58-59 and also http://library.thinkquest.org/CR0215373/Types/Wisdompearl.htm

with the following text: "To enter *Dim Sum*, click on the dragon".[544] We may regard the first dragon as a kind of heading of this web page whereas the second dragon functions as a navigation icon since it facilities further surfing. Apart from the second dragon on the "Presentation" page, this image does not facilitate navigation on the other pages even though it may still be the only image of that page and thus functions as a signature.[545]
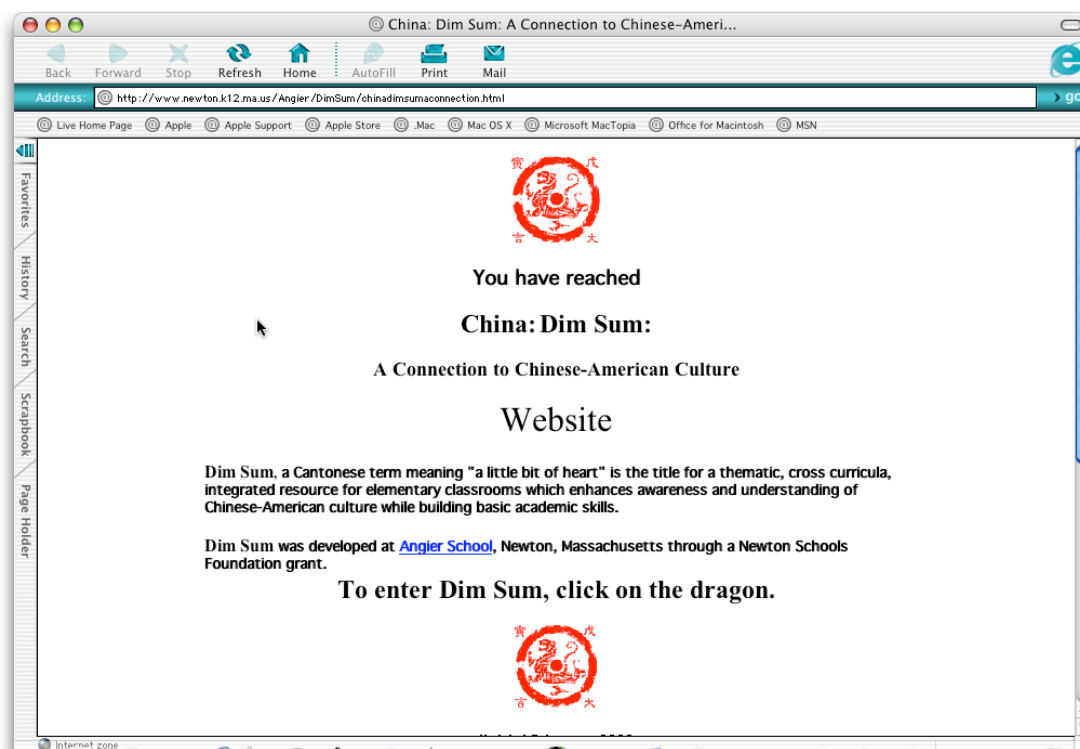

Figure 37: The "Presentation" page with two "Dragon with a Pearl" symbols

In addition to seeing it as an identity symbol, we may also argue that this image performs the phatic function as Thorlacius proposes.[546] As discussed before,[547] the centrality of the phatic function is to maintain contact between sender and receiver. Unlike the other images that occur only once, the dragon image appears on many web pages.[548] The presence of this image therefore offers a kind of assurance to users that

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[544] See *Dim Sum/Presentation*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/chinadimsumaconnection.html
[545] See other pages with the dragon image: "Conditions For Use", "Where to Begin", "Feedback Please", "Full Grant Proposal", "Index" and "Print Resources".
[546] Thorlacius 2005, pp.160-168.
[547] See Section 4.1.2.2.
[548] Some examples are: "Conditions For Use", "Where to Begin", "Feedback Please", "Full Grant Proposal", "Index" and "Print Resources".

we are still within the *Dim Sum* website and have not wandered off. This feature also corresponds with Patrick Lynch and Sarah Horton's argument about the significance of consistency in website design. This consistency generates credibility and reliability among users.[549]

- The term "dim sum"

The choice of using the Cantonese term, "dim sum", as the title of this website is interesting and suggestive.[550] Literally, this term means "a little bit of heart" and usually refers to the small dishes of delicacies that one can order at Chinese restaurants. Therefore, the general associations of "dim sum" are food, delicacies, tea drinking and restaurants.[551] However, the *Dim Sum* website has no teaching plans in Chinese cooking.[552] Nor has it any information on customs and traditions related to tea drinking. Apparently, "dim sum" is used as a metaphor to indicate that the various web pages are like delicacies. "Dim Sum" is therefore selected as a term to connect the seemingly unrelated elements together.

- The Yin and Yang symbol

The yin and yang symbol is also a distinctive Chinese symbol that is associated with the notions of harmony and balance. According to ancient Chinese philosophers, nature is composed of two opposing elements: yin and yang.[553]

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[549] Patrick Lynch & Sarah Horton 2001, p.20. See also Section 5.1.1.1. Typography.
[550] See *Dim Sum/Presentation*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/chinadimsumaconnection.html
[551] Dim Sum is inextricably linked to the Chinese tradition of "yum cha" or tea drinking. See "Teahouses: The Far South". In John Blofeld (1997) *The Chinese Art of Tea* (Boston: Shambhala) pp.66-67.
[552] The exception is the Moon Cake activity. See Section 5.1.1.2.
[553] See Robin D.S. Yates (Trans.)(1997) *Five lost classics: Tao, Huang-lao and Yin Yang in Han China* (New York: Ballantine Books)

As the background information in *Dim Sum* suggests,

> The idea of Yin and Yang is represented as a circle of two curved and equal parts. The Yang section is the warm, positive, masculine, and sunny side, often colored red. The Yin side is black and is described as feminine, mysterious, dark, and negative.[554]

These two elements are opposite yet they co-exist in everything to maintain stability, harmony and balance. Whenever one element is stronger than the other, the balance is lost and destructive consequences will occur such as wars, sickness and famines. Although notions about binary oppositions are also discussed in the West,[555] the focus is often on the oppositions rather than the balance between the two elements as in the notion of "yin-yang".

5.1.2.2 Essence of symbols and the Greek "method of loci"

As Bachelard argues, primal images or symbols give us a focus, a kind of stability and concentration.[556] For example, the diagram of a pair of hands holding the chopsticks is the central image of the "Chopsticks" page.[557] Even though operations of chopsticks rely on the given instructions in written texts, the image of a pair of chopsticks helps users to focus on the theme of this web page.

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[554] See *Dim Sum/Celebrations, Holidays, Customs/Yin and Yang/Background Information*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Yin%26Yang%20Define
[555] See Claude Lévi-Strauss work on binary oppositions: *Structural anthropology* (1993/1994) (Harmondsworth: Penguin); See also Yi-Fu Tuan´s argument about analogous pairs such as light and darkness, life and death, as complementary universal principles. Tuan (1974) *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes & Values* (New York: Columbia University Press) p.25.
[556] See Chap.3 Section 3.4.2. Gaston Bachelard (1994) *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press)
[557] See *Dim Sum/The Arts/Chopsticks*:
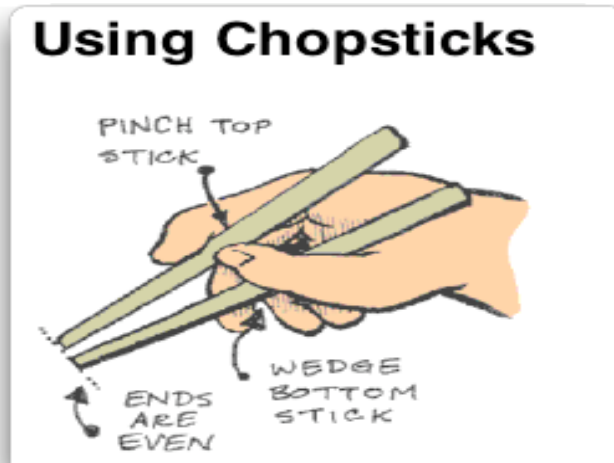http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Using%20Chopsticks%20Lesson.html

Figure 38: Diagram showing how to use chopsticks on the "Chopsticks" page

The essence of the symbols in this website – the Great Wall of China, the Giant Panda and the Chinese Flag – is that they provide a focus for users so that they can concentrate on the distinctiveness of the Chinese culture. Most of these are chosen as key images for the web pages in *Dim Sum* because they possess symbolic values. For example, the Great Wall of China is unique as an architectural monument and simultaneously also has symbolic value.
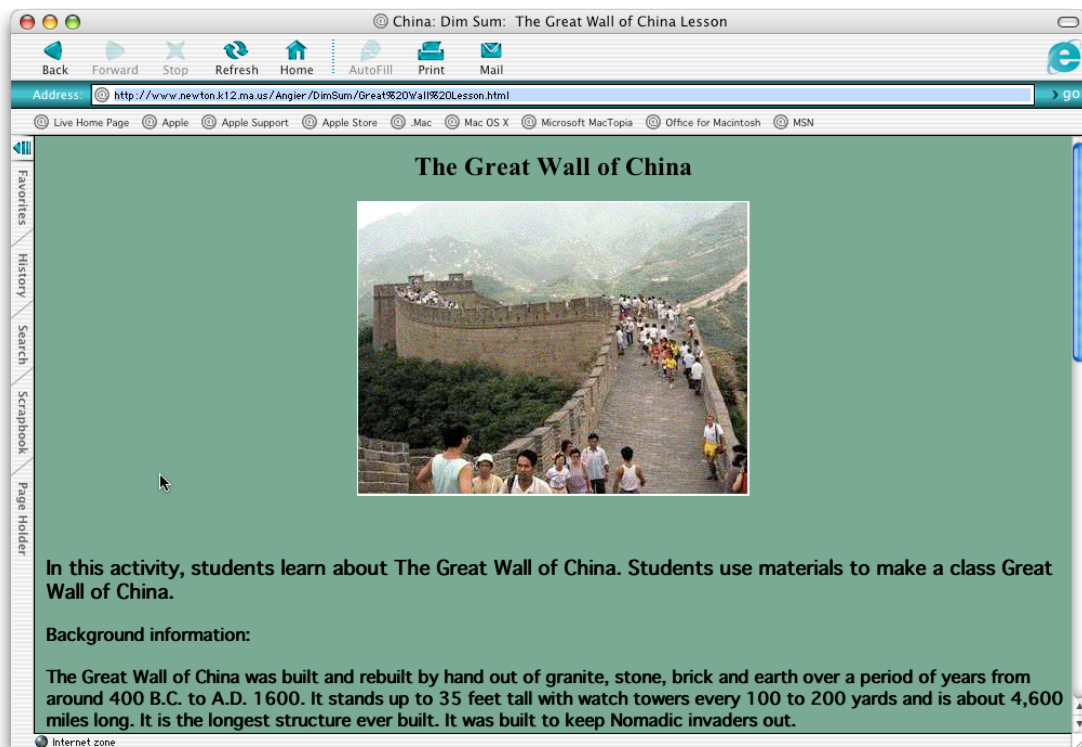

Figure 39: The "Great Wall of China" page

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In the background information provided by *Dim Sum*, it says,

> The wall was built to shape and fit the Chinese landscape it passed through. In the hilly areas, it twisted and turned like a dragon and in the desert, it ran straight. At its eastern end, the Great Wall of China ran into the sea.[558]

By comparing the physical shape of the Great Wall of China to a dragon, the emphasis is on the symbolic value of the Wall and not as a physical construction. As I have just discussed, the dragon is often used as a representation of the Chinese race. Like other monuments that become identity symbols of a certain place – the Eiffel Tower of France, the Pyramids of Egypt, Fuji Mountain of Japan and the Statue of Liberty of the United States, the Great Wall of China is a monument that marks the distinctiveness of China.

- The Greek "method of loci"

Echoing Bachelard, the philosopher Edward Casey, as discussed, argues that images are crucial to evoking memories because we remember a certain place, a person or an event by means of the images related to them.[559] By means of a "method of loci" devised by ancient Greeks for memory training, humans recall a certain place by connecting images of items that are found in that particular place systematically. For example, when we recall our bedroom as a child, we begin by remembering where the bed was situated, where the favourite teddy bear sat as well as the colour, fabric and pattern of the curtains. Thus, the image of our childhood bedroom becomes more and more precise.

To use the Greek "method of loci", each of the sub-categories may be seen as a locus. Each sub-category web page is equipped with a key image that helps to evoke users' memory to the related topic of that page.[560] For example, the "M&M Fractions" has an image of two M&M candies, a red one and a yellow one, holding a bowl

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[558] See *Dim Sum/Social Studies/The Great Wall of China/Background Information*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Great%20Wall%20Lesson.html
[559] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.3. Edward Casey (1987) "Place Memory". In *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) pp.182-183.
[560] Examples of sub-category web pages are: "Origami", "Following Directions: Flag", "Time Zones", "Design a Flag".

together.[561]   In this activity, students learn fractions by sorting out the M&M candies according to colours.

The image of this page is directly related to the activity since it contains the M&M candies and the bowl. By connecting a mathematical problem – "fraction" – to the concrete and delicious candies, apparently the teachers hope to enliven the lesson.
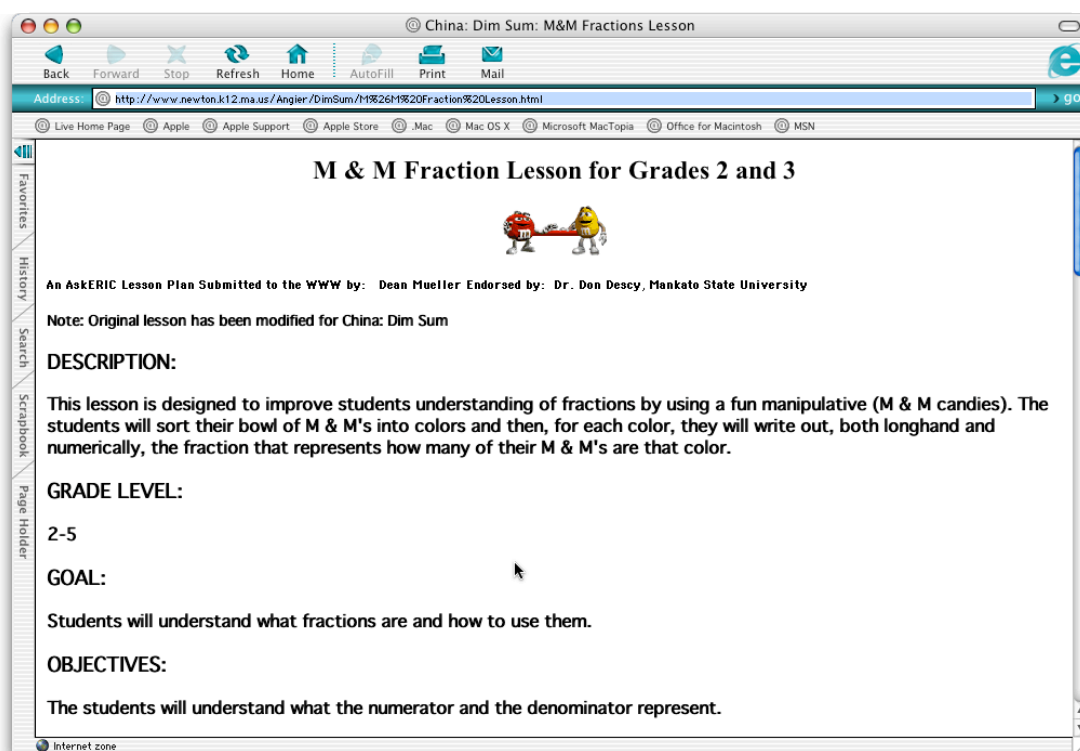

Figure 40: The "M&M Fractions" Lesson Plan

As the "Closure" of this activity suggests, the students are allowed to enjoy their candies after they have completed the exercise. The candies therefore serve as a reward for the students' hard work. "M&M Fractions" is an illustration of the

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[561] See *Dim Sum/Math/M&M Fractions:*
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/M%26M%20Fraction%20Lesson.html

teaching plans in *Dim Sum*. It provides clear goals for that lesson, the concepts to be learned and very practical run-down of the necessary materials as well as the procedures. To experienced teachers, the well-structured lesson plan becomes a blueprint for the lesson they are planning to execute. All the sub-headings – goal, concepts, materials, procedures, closure – perform similar functions as items-to-be-remembered in a certain order. As Casey argues, "The subsequent remembering of these items occurs by revisiting the place-grid and traversing it silently step by step in one's mind".[562] Although it is not absolutely necessary for teachers to memorize their lesson plans, this blueprint with the subheadings certainly facilitates execution of the teaching plan.

The Greek "method of loci" once again strengthens the argument that symbols and key images offer us a concentration that induces our memories. These images make it easier for us to associate the website with our former experiences.

5.1.2.3 Narratives

As discussed before, narratives strengthen the bonding among people and often they also perform ritualistic functions.[563] By sharing a repertoire of tales, legends and songs related to the place they live, the inhabitants make the place special.

Even though not as extensive as in *World Tales*, literary narratives such as folk and fairy tales are collected on the *Dim Sum* website.[564] As I have mentioned earlier,[565] both literary narratives and website narrative sequences contribute to forming the distinctiveness of this website. These website narrative sequences include background information about the customs, landmarks and symbols,[566] explanatory sequences for teaching plans and classroom activities.[567] Narrative sequences are crucial because like symbols, they perform the phatic function, namely to maintain

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[562] Casey 1987, p.183.
[563] See Chap.3 Section 3.4.2.2 and Chap.4 Section 4.1.2.3.
[564] For example, see *Dim Sum/Language Arts/6 Chinese Folk and Fairy Tales*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Chinese%20Folktales.html
[565] See Chap.1 Section 1.1. See also Chap.4, Section 4.1.2.3.
[566] See for example, *Dim Sum/Celebrations, Holidays and Customs/New Year or Spring Festival*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/china__dim_sum__spring_fes.html.
[567] See for example, *Dim Sum/Math/Origami*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Origami%20Lesson.html.

contact between websites and users.[568] I shall now examine some of these two types of narrative sequences in *Dim Sum*.

We shall use the tale, "We are all One" as an example.[569] Among other tales, this tale is significant because it highlights the importance of harmony in nature, among people, insects and animals. An old peddler accidentally saved an ants' nest and consequently, the Queen Ant assisted him in his quest for an herb that brought him wealth. In this story, the central message – "We are all one, you and I" – is repeated several times by the old peddler to the ants, the centipede, and the rich man's gatekeeper. The Queen Ant also echoed this message when she revealed herself to the old peddler in his dream,

> Trembling, the old peddler fell to his knees and touched his forehead against the floor. But the queen ordered him to stand and said, "Like the great Emperor Yu of long ago, you tamed the great flood. We are all one now. You have only to ask, and I or any of my people will come to your aid".[570]

Instead of pointing at the differences, the old peddler understood the connection between rich and poor, insects and humans, magical and non-magical creatures.   The focus is on connection and not differences and this reflects the fundamental Chinese belief of harmony in the universe – a harmony that includes everything and embraces all. Among Chinese, to achieve harmony and balance among diverse elements in the universe is regarded as an absolute necessity.[571] This tale therefore underlines an essence of Chinese culture.

On the other hand, website narrative sequences also perform the phatic function. The opening statement of the "homepage" serves as an example,

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[568] See Chap.4 Section 4.1.2.4. See also Thorlacius 2005, pp.160-168.
[569] See *Dim Sum/Language Arts/6 Chinese Folk and Fairy Tales/We are All One*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/We%20Are%20All%20One%20Folk%20Tale.html
[570] See *Dim Sum/Language Arts/6 Chinese Folk and Fairy Tales/We are all One*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/We%20Are%20All%20One%20Folk%20Tale.html
[571] See Robin D.S. Yates (Trans.)(1997) *Five lost classics: Tao, Huang-lao and Yin Yang in Han China* (New York: Ballantine Books) and also *Dim Sum/Celebrations, Holidays and Customs/Yin Yang/Background Information*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Yin%26Yang%20Define.html

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Together with the identity symbol – "the dragon with a pearl",[572] this sequence repeats itself on the "Presentation" page and also the "Where to Begin" page.[573]

I shall argue that these three web pages exemplify how the interface designs and website narrative sequences support Thorlacius's notion of the phatic function with rhythm and variation.[574] Even though the major statement and the identity symbol repeat themselves, the rest of the page demonstrates variation. The repetition helps to reinforce contact between website and users.

To conclude this section, let us return to Malinowski and his argument about language use as a pragmatic act that communicates collectiveness. He argues,

> In its primitive uses, language functions as a link in concerted human activity, as a piece of human behaviour.[…] When incidents are told or discussed among a group of listeners, there is, first, the situation of that moment made up of the respective social, intellectual and emotional attitudes of those present. Within this situation, the narrative creates new bonds and sentiments by the emotional appeal of the words.[575]

The significance of narratives such as legends, folk and fairy tales is to recreate and reinforce the emotional bonds and shared sentiments. The folk and fairy tales in *Dim Sum* serve as a link to connect the essence of Chinese values and beliefs with the universal and help to create new bonds or deepen existing ones.[576] As previously discussed,[577] the significance of the folk tale narratives is that they strengthen the website narrative by illustrating the distinctiveness of the Chinese culture.

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[572] See *Dim Sum/Homepage:*
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/DimSum%20T.ofCon.HomePg.html
[573] See *Dim Sum/Presentation:*
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/chinadimsumaconnection.html; and See *Dim Sum/Where to Begin*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/china_dim_sum__author's_re.html
[574] Thorlacius 2005, pp.160-168.
[575] Malinowski 1923/1969, p.312.
[576] See Section 5.1.3 for more.
[577] See Chap.1 Section 1.1. and Chap.4 Section 4.1.2.3.

Both symbols and narratives are significant in creating the "sense of place" and this sense of place makes the place special.[578] From the above analysis, I shall argue that it fulfils the second requirement of "place".

5.1.3 Localization: boundaries and connections

As a document that exists on the World Wide Web, a website is connected to the global network by its multiple linking possibilities. However, a website is also a locality and therefore manifests the necessary borders for discerning itself as an entity from the rest of the digital environment.[579]

5.1.3.1 Boundaries and interactive functions

As in Case One,[580] I argue that the interactive functions of a website mark its boundaries and serve as a gatekeeper that controls the accessibility to the website. Once again, I shall apply the interactive functions proposed by Thorlacius to show how they help to mark the boundaries of the website.[581]

- The transmissible non-interactive function.[582]

Almost all the web pages of *Dim Sum* consist of written text, in the form of classroom activities, background information or legends and stories. However, contrary to interactive fiction that allows users to participate in creating the story, most of the information and stories on this website cannot be changed directly. This illustrates that the transmissible non-interactive function is predominant in *Dim Sum*. The worksheets for classroom activities require filling in either individually or in groups but they are not interactive.[583] These worksheets are not supposed to be redirected to the web authors. The interaction therefore happens in the classroom – between the teacher and the students – and not on the website.

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[578] See Chap.1 Section 1.3.1 and also Yi-Fu Tuan (1974a) "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective". In *Progress in Human Geography* Vol. 6, pp.211-252.
[579] See Chap.3 Section 3.4.3.
[580] See Chap. 4 Section 4.1.3.1.
[581] Among the five interactive functions that Thorlacius proposes, two are not found on the *Dim Sum* website. They are: the registration interactive function ("den registrerende interaktive funktion") and the transactional interactive function ("den transaktive interaktive funktion"). See Thorlacius 2005, pp.88-90.
[582] See Thorlacius 2005, "Den transmitterende ikke-interaktive funktion", pp.85-86.
[583] Examples of worksheets may be found in the following activities: "Dot to Dot Dragon", "Immigration Interview Worksheet" and "Invention Planning Paper".

- The conversational interactive function.[584]

This function enables users to interact with the senders, for example by means of e-mail. In addition to an e-mail address, a specific "Feed Back Please" web page is designed to encourage response. It states,

> As part of our grant, we will assess the usefulness of the activities. We respectfully request your feedback on what you tried, how the lesson can be improved and how your students responded to the activities. Please submit suggestions, comments and feedback on the form provided.[585]

By clicking on the "Feedback" link, users are offered an immediate e-mail address to the personnel responsible for the website.
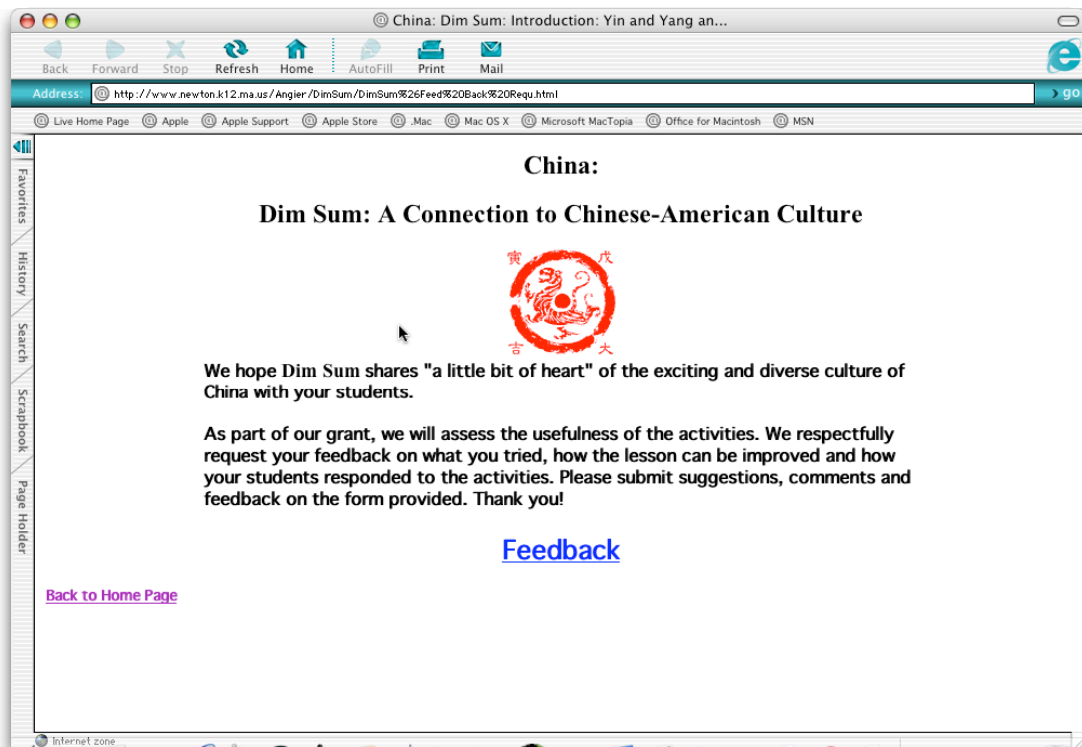
Figure 41: The "Feedback" page

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[584] See Thorlacius 2005, "Den konverserende interaktive funktion", p.87.
[585] See *Dim Sum/Feed Back Please*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/DimSum%26Feed%20Back%20Requ.html

Also, an additional link to the e-mail address is included in the "Where to Begin" Section.[586] By clicking on "let us know", one can send in comments related to activities and improvements. It appears that the web authors are eager to receive response from users since several feedback possibilities are provided.

- The consultative interactive function.[587]

This function refers to the possibility of consulting relevant sources. The multiple clicking possibilities facilitated by the navigation structure and the links serve this purpose. Most of the activities contain additional resources in the form of external and internal links. External links usually provide additional reference materials to the topic whereas internal links offer worksheets for students to fill in. To use the "Miscellaneous" page as an example, it provides a series of external links for reference purposes.[588] Depending on users' needs, they may consult these Internet resources to retrieve the information they require.
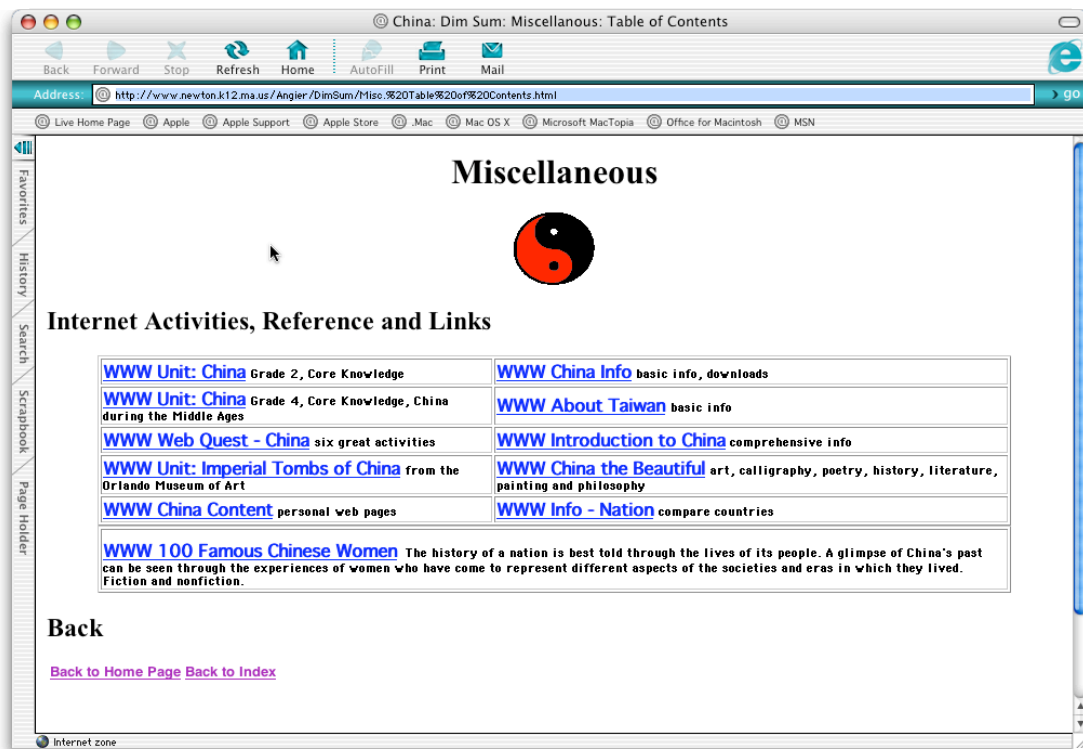

Figure 42: The "Miscellaneous" page

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[586] See *Dim Sum/Where to Begin:*
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/china_dim_sum__author's_re.html
[587] See Thorlacius 2005, "Den konsultative interaktive funktion", pp.87-88.
[588] See *Dim Sum/Miscellaneous:*
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Misc.%20Table%20of%20Contents.html

In short, we can see that the transmissible non-interactive function is predominant in *Dim Sum*. Like *World Tales*, this website is also relatively "closed" since there is only restrictive interaction between users and websites. The only possible contact is by means of e-mail feedback. However, it appears that e-mail contact is seen as a positive gesture at *Dim Sum* when compared to *World Tales*. Besides, limits are also set by the official constraints stated on pages such as "Conditions For Use", "Where to Begin" and "Full Grant Proposal".[589]

5.1.3.2 Connections and intertextuality

Dim Sum presents itself as a website for connections – "a connection to Chinese-American Culture".[590] One activity that focuses on the connection between China and the West is "The Silk Road" in the "Social Studies" Section.

Figure 43: The Silk Road Map showing connections between East and West

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[589] See *Dim Sum/Conditions For Use*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Conditionsof%20use.html; also *Dim Sum/Where to Begin*: http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/china_dim_sum__author's_re.html; and *Dim Sum/Full Grant Proposal*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Full%20Grant%20Proposal.html
[590] See *Dim Sum/Presentation*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/chinadimsumaconnection.html

This exercise is designed to help students to link ancient Chinese culture with Europe,

> Have students draw pictures of the camel driven caravans. Have them list things a merchant from Rome might want to buy from China and what a merchant from China might want from Rome. Critical thinking: discuss why the Silk Road was important for spreading information about different cultures.[591]

By making arrows, students are shown the possible route of Marco Polo and the caravans: from Osaka in Japan, across China – from Shanghai to Dunhuan – to Kash in Central Asia and finally arriving at Rome in Italy. In addition to commodities, this exercise points out the significance of cultural exchange and information among the various countries along the Silk Road. The connection between China and Europe is put in a multicultural perspective.

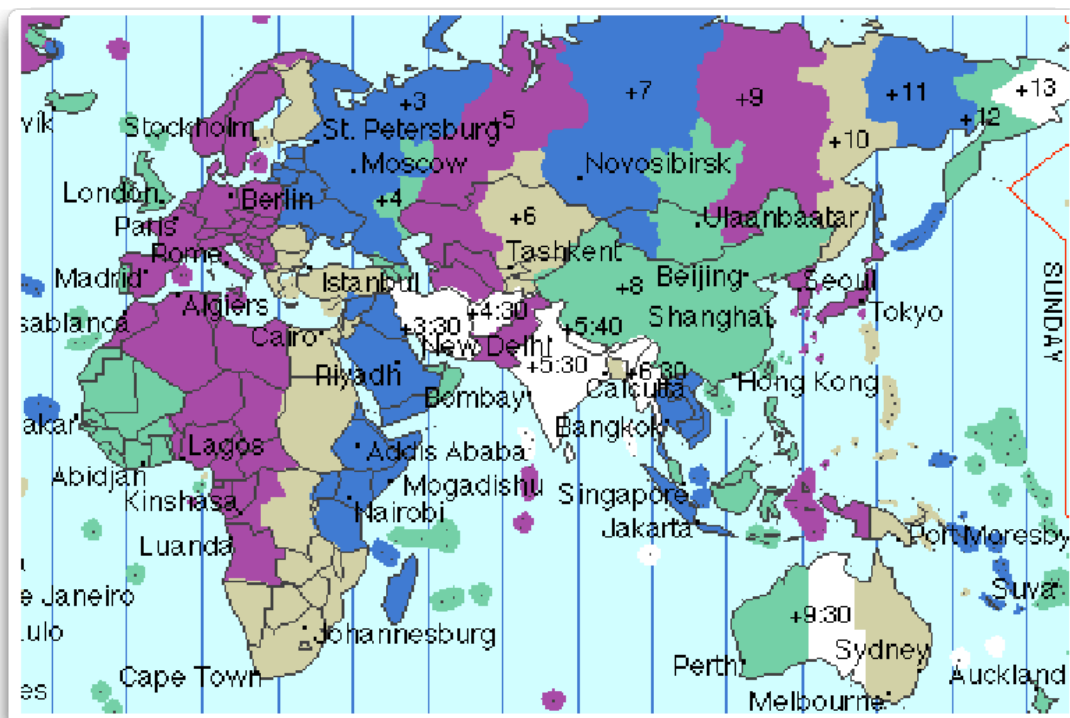Another activity, the "Time Zones", aims at making temporal connections.

Figure 44: The "Time Zones" diagram illustrating temporal connections

The students are encouraged to think about what other people who live in a different

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[591] See *Dim Sum/Social Studies/The Silk Road*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Silk%20Road%20Lesson.html

time zone might be doing at a certain time:

> When they are finished computing the time differences, students could make a list of the things a person would be doing at a certain time in a specific country and compare and contrast that with what the people in a different time zone might be doing. Younger students could draw pictures. Critical thinking: What would happen if there were no clocks or calendars? Students could research the earliest attempts by man to keep track of time. They could also look at keeping track of time from the plant and animal point of view and make a list of how the plant and animal kingdoms accomplish this.[592]

In addition to the present, students are requested to make connections to the past by investigating how early man tried to keep track of time before clocks or calendars were invented. Not only is time crucial to the human lifestyle, it also affects plants and animals. This exercise therefore proposes the study of time from geographical, historical and also biological perspectives. It enhances inter-disciplinary connections as well.

- Intertextuality

Apart from the apparent strong cultural connection, *Dim Sum* also connects with other texts and contexts by means of intertextuality. The essence of intertextuality, as I have pointed out before,[593] is that a text never stands alone by itself. Any text may be seen as a concrete expression of a whole spectrum of texts, both historically and culturally. The tale "We are all One" is an obvious example of intertextuality.[594] By referring to this well-known legend, the old peddler's kindness is compared to that of Emperor Yu.

In fact, most of the subject web pages of *Dim Sum* rely on thematic connections to link the legend, customs, classroom activities and background information together. The "New Year or Spring Festival" page, for example, makes use of two classroom activities, a legend and some background information about the related customs to introduce the festival.[595]

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[592] See *Dim Sum/Math/Time Zones*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Compute%20Timezone%20Less.html
[593] See Chap.4 Section 4.1.3.2.
[594] See Section 5.1.2.1. See also Haiying Zhang (2006) *Chinese Tale Series: Da Yu Conquered the Flood* (U.K: Little Bird Publishing)
[595] See *Dim Sum/Celebrations, Holidays and Customs/New Year or Spring Festival*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/china__dim_sum__spring_fes.html

- Intertextuality and structure of websites

As discussed before, intertextuality is more than thematic connections.[596] It is also revealed by the navigation structures that allow users to surf in and out of different contexts rapidly via diverse links.

Links

If websites are to be seen as places, the capability of making connections is crucial. Links are important because they connect the website with other documents, both digital and non-digital. As seen before,[597] most websites consist of at least two kinds of links, internal and external.

If we examine the homepage of *Dim Sum*, we can see that the subjects given are all internal links. These links lead us to the respective subject pages. Both internal and external links are provided on most of these subject pages. To use the "Calligraphy" page as an example, together with its links to other pages on the "The Arts" subject page, it supplies us with three external links: WWW Splendor of Chinese Art, WWW Cultural Heritage, and WWW Learn How to Write the Name for each World Country using Chinese Ideograms.[598]

Nevertheless, the third kind of link suggested by Thorlacius is not apparent.[599] Even though *Dim Sum* provides users information on diverse aspects of Chinese culture, this information is given mainly in English. Chinese ideograms are only used as sub-headings or graphics. One example is the "Origami" page where the Chinese character "paper" is used as an illustration for the paper folding activities.[600]

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[596] See Chap.4 Section 4.1.3.2.
[597] See Chap.4 Section 4.1.3.2.
[598] See *Dim Sum/The Arts/Calligraphy*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Chinese%20Caligraphy%20Lesson.html
[599] Thorlacius 2005, pp.165-167.
[600] See *Dim Sum/Math/Origami*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Origami%20Lesson.html

Figure 45: The "Origami" image with the Chinese ideogram "paper"

This website is therefore a predominantly English one and does not provide any language alternative.

<u>Navigation sequences</u>

Websites are built around basic structural themes. Architectures of websites shape users' expectations of how information is organized. According to Patrick Lynch and Sarah Horton, websites consist of three basic navigation structures: sequences, hierarchies and webs.[601] Meanwhile, Thorlacius proposes the "Bar" structure as a fourth type of navigation structure.[602] She argues that most websites are a combination of these four structures.[603]

Following this line of argument, *Dim Sum* also consists of these basic navigation structures. I shall argue that both features of bars and hierarchies may be found in *Dim Sum*'s navigation structure. Bar structures fit into *Dim Sum*'s navigation construction because each bar contains a different theme and may be seen as a category. By using the bar structures, users move easily from one category to another without confusion. On the other hand, hierarchies help to create an information architecture that may be comparable to an organization chart, of which the major and

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[601] Patrick Lynch and Sarah Horton (2001) *Web Style Guide: Basic design principles for creating web sites.* (2nd Ed.)(New Haven & London: Yale University Press) pp.42-43.

[602] Bar structures divide different themes into categories. Users can move from the main menu to the subordinate menus. Bars are most often used to organize websites that contain a large amount of information. See Thorlacius 2005, pp.170-172.

[603] See Thorlacius 2005, p.172.

secondary categories as well as sub-categories are clearly arranged in order of importance.[604]

Navigation conventions

According to website designers, as we have seen, the navigation and layout conventions of a minor website need to follow the general conventions of major websites because most users are familiar with those conventions.[605] Also, they advise that it is crucial to choose familiar and user-friendly interface metaphors since eccentric designs are usually unpopular among users. Navigation conventions therefore illustrate intertextuality. *Dim Sum* shows its affiliation with other websites by following familiar conventions such as the book and library metaphor.[606]

In this section, I attempt to show how *Dim Sum* as a website connects itself with other texts and contexts by means of thematic connections, intertextuality, links and navigation conventions. The internal and external links allow *Dim Sum* to connect locally as well as globally. Meanwhile, the navigation conventions reflect its connection with other websites. In addition to making connections, *Dim Sum* also marks its boundaries mainly by means of the interactive functions. If to be a "place" implies connections and boundaries, the capabilities of connecting as well as boundary setting are significant. Since this website consists of these two essential aspects, it fulfils the third requirement necessary to be seen as a "place".

5.2   "Placelessness" and Non-Place"

We have already seen in the previous case that the *World Tales* website does not demonstrate the three features of non-places. I shall now apply these three features to *Dim Sum* to test if the website is a "non-place". If the analysis shows that *Dim Sum* does not have the features of non-places, it will reinforce the argument that *Dim Sum* may be seen as a "place".

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[604] For complex bodies of information, hierarchies are used to organize them. Hierarchical information architecture can be compared to an organization chart in corporations and institutions. See Patrick Lynch and Sarah Horton (2001) *Web Style Guide: Basic design principles for creating web sites* (2nd Ed.)(New Haven & London: Yale University Press) pp.42-43.

[605] See Chap.4 Section 4.1.3.2 and also Lynch and Horton 2001, pp.23-24.

[606] See Section 5.5.1. See also *Dim Sum/Homepage*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/DimSum%20T.ofCon.HomePg.html

To briefly recapitulate, the three inter-related features are:[607]

5.2.1   Lack of identity

This feature focuses on a lack of sense of belonging or a loss of "place".[608]

5.2.2   Disconnectedness

A "non-place" is described as isolated, incoherent and non-relational.[609]

5.2.3   Lack of attachment

According to Tuan non-places are transient, mobile and lack attachment. He argues that a "sense of place" can only be acquired by "experiences, mostly fleeting and undramatic, repeated day after day and over the span of years".[610]

Similar to *World Tales*, I shall argue that *Dim Sum* does not demonstrate the above-mentioned features of a "non-place". Instead, it exemplifies the opposite traits – identity, connectedness and attachment.

- Identity vs. Lack of identity

  Dim Sum distinguishes itself from other cultural or educational websites. As mentioned before, its distinctiveness is its combination of the pedagogic orientation and the Chinese cultural elements.[611] By utilizing the diverse cultural aspects as teaching materials for elementary classes, *Dim Sum* creates its niche. This unique identity is illustrated on most of the web pages.

  To use the "Celebrations, Holidays and Customs" page as an example,[612] the topics such as "Accordion Dragons", "Shoe Box Dragons", and "Lucky Red Envelopes" illustrate the uniqueness of the Chinese identity with the intention of classroom teaching.

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[607] See Chap.3 Section 3.6.
[608] See Chap.3 Section 3.6.1. See also Edward Relph 1997, Marc Augé 1995.
[609] See Chap.3 Section 3.6.2. See also Marc Augé 1995.
[610] See Chap.3 Section 3.6.3. See also, Tuan 1977a, p.183.
[611] See Section 5.1.1.1.
[612] See *Dim Sum/Celebrations, Holidays and Customs*:
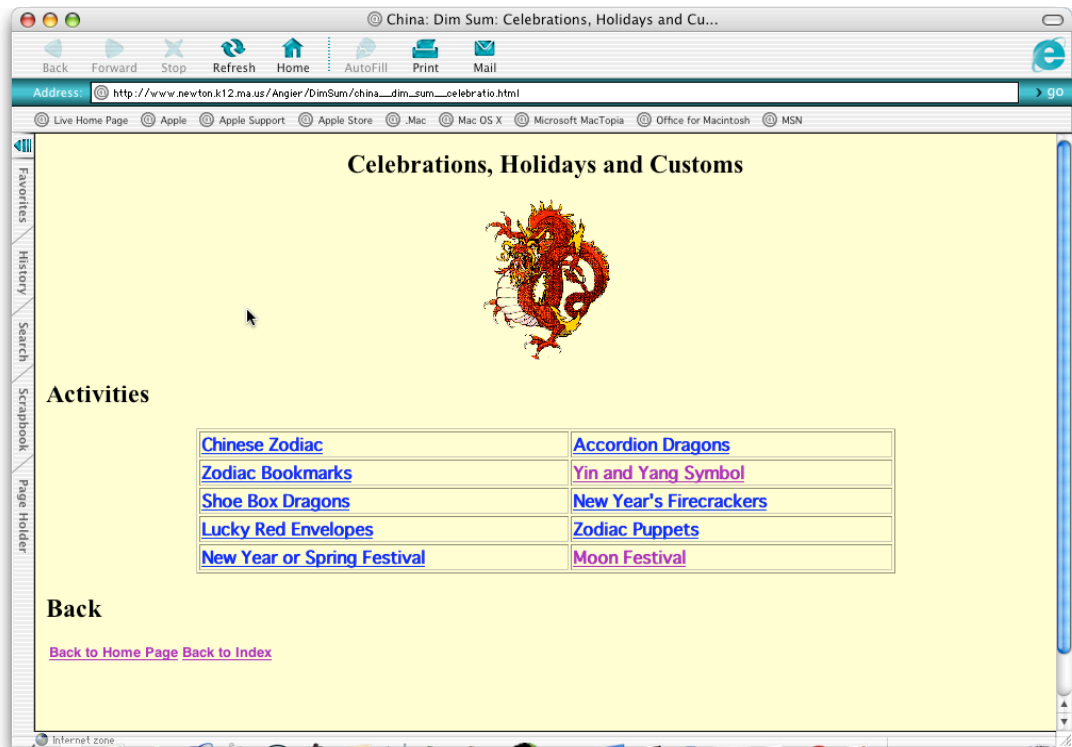http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/china__dim_sum__celebratio.html

Figure 46: The "Celebrations, Holidays and Customs" page

Even though one may also find topics such as the "Great Wall of China", the "Giant Panda of China", "Chopsticks" and "Chinese Inventions" on a tourist website that appeals to trips and visits, the crucial difference between *Dim Sum* and other Chinese cultural and tourist websites is the pedagogic objective. "Origami", "Counting in Chinese" and "Paper Making" are classroom activities and not landmarks for visiting.

This distinctiveness therefore enables it to be seen as a "place" rather than a "non-place".

- Connectedness vs. Disconnectedness

  The prime objective of *Dim Sum* is to act as a cultural connection.[613] In this spirit, most classroom activities and teaching plans are designed to enhance cross-cultural understanding. For example, the activity of comparing Cinderella and Yeh-Shen is an example of comparing folk tales in diverse cultures.[614]   By

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[613] See Section 5.1.3.2.
[614] See *Dim Sum/Language Arts/Cinderella and Yeh-Shen: Comparing Tales across cultures*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Cind.%20%26Yeh%20Shen%20Lesson.html

comparing the western version with the Chinese version, students are encouraged to see the similarities and differences of the two versions.
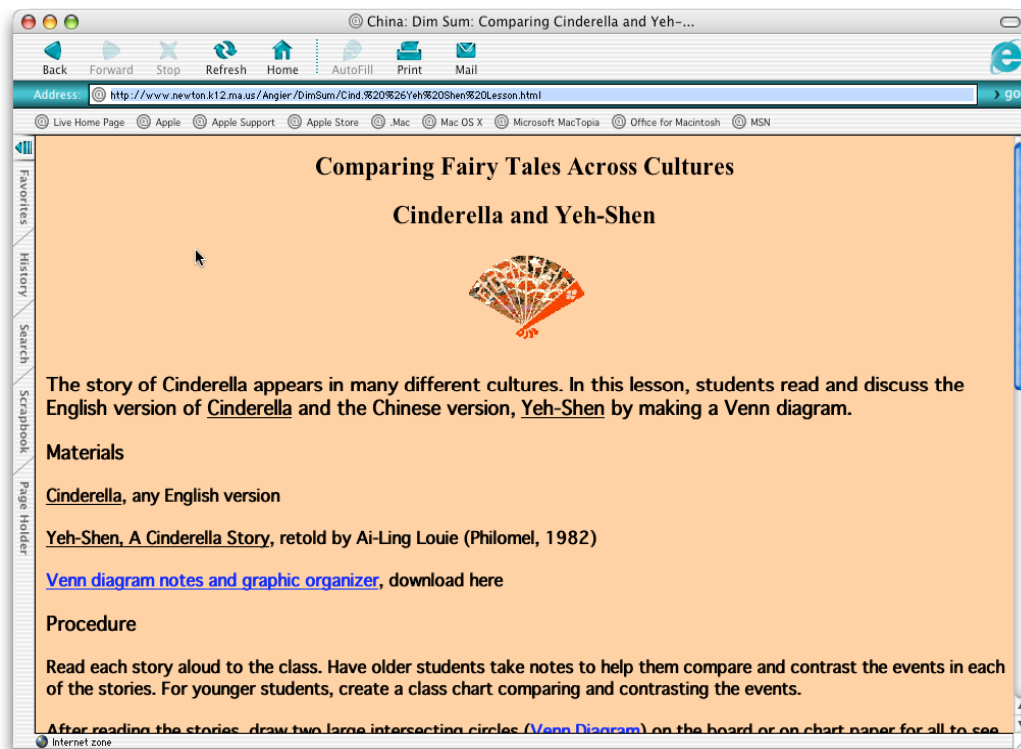

Figure 47: The "Cinderella and Yeh-Shen" page

In addition, the "Write your own Folk Tale" activity encourages students to compare folk and fairy tales from different cultures to discover the common traits in a folk tale. In this way, cross-cultural awareness is stimulated.

- Attachment vs. Lack of attachment

  Instead of being transient, mobile and showing a lack of attachment, *Dim Sum* displays the opposite. As I have already mentioned, *Dim Sum* demonstrates its strong attachment to the Chinese-American culture in its cultural contents and thematic connections.[615]

  Because of its well-defined objective, *Dim Sum* motivates people who are interested in the subject area to visit and revisit the website. For instance, an elementary teacher or a parent who attempts to introduce the Chinese culture to

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[615] See Sections 5.1.1.1 and 5.1.3.2.

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their children may start by telling them a Chinese folk tale about dragons. On another occasion, the children may be asked to connect the "Dot to Dot dragon" or to fold the paper swan as instructed in "Origami".
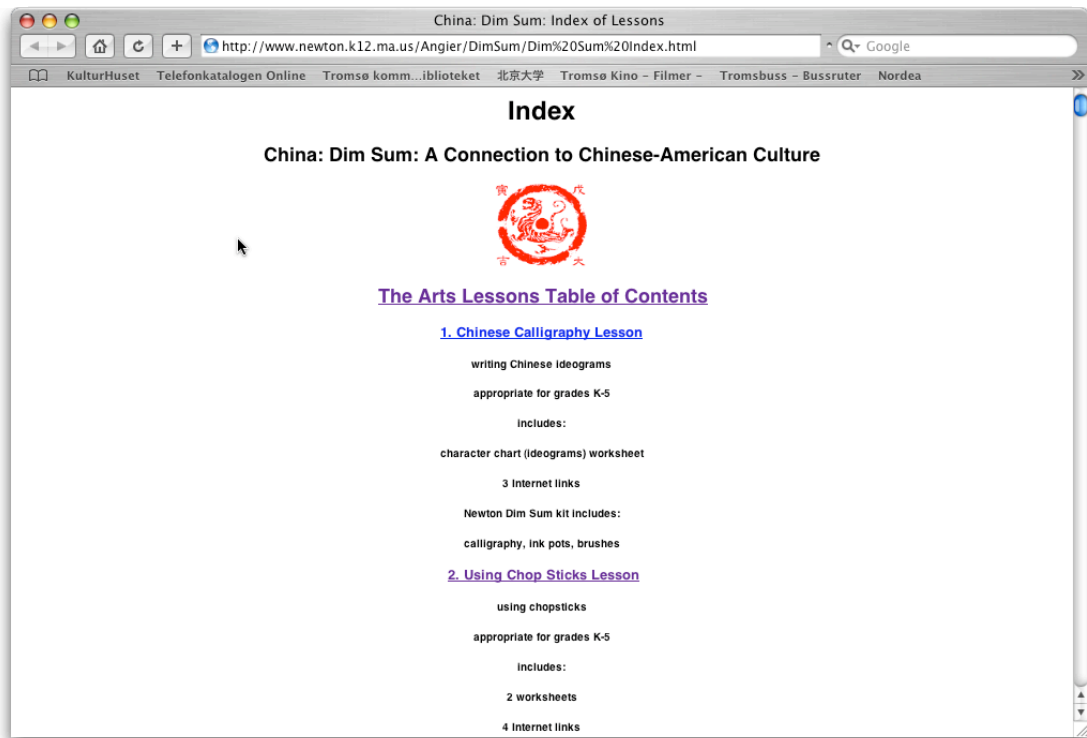

Figure 48: The "Subject Index" page

By providing a classified Subject Index,[616] *Dim Sum* introduces the teachers or parents to the various subject areas in a systematic manner and thereby facilitates revisiting.

5.3   "Place" or "Site"

The above analysis has illustrated that *Dim Sum* displays the features of a "place" and not those of a "non-place". As in the previous chapter,[617] I shall now examine the *Dim Sum* website with reference to Edward Casey's three dichotomies between a "place" and a "site": selective vs. anonymous, familiar vs. indifferent, and enclosed

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[616] See *Dim Sum/Index*: http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Dim%20Sum%20Index.html
[617] See Chap.4, Section 4.3.

vs. open.[618] In short, *Dim Sum* needs to manifest that it is "selective", "familiar", and has the ability to "enclose" in order to be read as a "place".

5.3.1. Selective vs. Anonymous

As previously noted, a "place" makes itself distinguishable.[619] The above analysis has illustrated that *Dim Sum* maintains its distinctiveness by mixing its pedagogic objective with Chinese cultural materials.[620] Unlike tourist websites that focus on the exoticism of China in order to attract customers, *Dim Sum* is unique in its well-defined objective, approach, target audience and scope of content.[621]

5.3.2 Familiar vs. Indifferent

To make a certain place familiar requires attuning, adaptation and adjustment.[622] As argued before, the symbols of a website assist in the process of attuning.[623] The "dragon with a pearl" symbol, for example, serves as an identity symbol for *Dim Sum* that ensures users that they are still within the website.[624] In addition, the consistent interface layouts, the standard navigation icons and the repetitive navigation structure encourage credibility and predictability. All these factors induce confidence in users and also encourage revisiting.[625]

5.3.3 Enclosed vs. Open

 As discussed, Casey argues that "to be in a place is to be sheltered and sustained by its containing boundary" and therefore "the most characteristic effect of place is that of maintaining or retaining rather than dividing or dispersing".[626] I have argued earlier that *Dim Sum*, like *World Tales*, maintains its stability by control mechanisms. Also, *Dim Sum* has stated its definite goals and objectives and how the materials should be used on the web pages: "Presentation", "Conditions for Use", "Where to Begin" and the "Full Grant Proposal".[627] All these mark boundaries for how the

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[618] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.2.
[619] See Chap. 3 Section 3.2.2 and Chap.4 Section 4.3.1.
[620] See Section 5.1.1.
[621] See Section 5.2. Identity vs. Lack of Identity.
[622] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.2.
[623] See Chap.4 Section 4.3.2. See also Section 5.1.2.2.
[624] See Section 5.1.2.1.
[625] See Section 5.1.2.3. See also Lynch & Horton 2001, p.25.
[626] Casey 1987, p.186. See also Chap.3 Section 3.2.2.
[627] See Section 5.1.3.1.

website should be used. Moreover, the logical and well-structured web pages help to contain the relevant information and activities according to subject categories.[628]

5.3.4   Place and memory

As we have seen, Edward Casey argues that memory relies on place and images. We remember a place usually by means of events or persons.[629] In addition, he suggests three similarities between place and memory: horizon, pathways and things.[630] As in Case One,[631] I shall argue that if these three features are recognizable on the *Dim Sum* website, we can further confirm that *Dim Sum* may be seen as a place.

- Horizon

  Like *World Tales*, the external horizon includes those websites that are connected to *Dim Sum* by external links. These websites are generally related to the diverse aspects of Chinese culture such as the customs, folk tales, history, architectures and wildlife. The internal horizon, on the other hand, refers to the website proper or the web pages of the website.

- Pathways

  Similar to horizon, pathways also include external ones – those that provide access as well as internal ones – those that allow free exploration. Like *World Tales*, *Dim Sum* provides pathways internally and externally by supplying internal and external links.[632] These links encourage free exploration within the website proper as well as externally since the links facilitate users to access diverse types of information with ease.

- Things

  Compared to *World Tales*, images of *Dim Sum* also assist users in recalling the website.[633] For instance, the "dragon with a pearl image" serves as an identity marker of the website.[634] In addition, the image of each subject page helps us to

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[628] See also Section 5.2 Attachment vs. Lack of Attachment.
[629] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.3 and also Section 5.1.2.2.
[630] See Chap.3 Section 3.2.3. Casey 1987, pp.203-209.
[631] See Chap.4 Section 4.3.4.
[632] See Section 5.1.3.2 Connections: Links.
[633] See Chap.4 Section 4.3.4.
[634] See Section 5.1.2.1 Symbols: "The Dragon with a Pearl".

remember that specific page because it is related to the topic and has an anchorage effect.[635] A photograph of a pair of red envelopes is shown on the "Lucky Red Envelopes" page as a means of focussing as well as visualization.[636]

Figure 49: The "Lucky Red Envelopes" image

5.4 "Place", "non-place" and place making

From the above analysis, *Dim Sum* can be said to share the three major features of a place. They are as noted before:[637]

- A "place" is a human construction. It is an expression or a concretization of how we see, understand and experience the world.
- A "place" is made distinctive by symbols and narratives that humans attribute to it. These symbols and narratives reinforce the bonding between humans and the environment.
- A "place" is a kind of localization with boundaries and connections. It displays the dialectics between local and global.

On the other hand, neither the traits of a "non-place" nor those of a "site" are recognizable on *Dim Sum*.[638] This further confirms that *Dim Sum* may be read as a

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[635] See Section 5.1.2.2.
[636] See *Dim Sum/Celebrations, Holidays and Customs/Lucky Red Envelopes*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/china__dim_sum_red_envelop.html
[637] See Section 5.1.

place. Like in Case One, I shall now summarize the findings acquired from this analysis.[639]

As mentioned before, the focus of place making according to the humanistic geographers is on theoretical construction and not the physical process.[640] Seen in this light, *Dim Sum* has demonstrated that it may be seen as a "place" because it is an expression of how humans see and understand the world. This expression is represented by its unique perspective: the combination of its pedagogic orientation with cultural materials of China. One may object to the apparent bias in its selection of topics since the website avoids controversial issues such as pollution, democracy and human rights. This partiality, however, supports the argument that *Dim Sum* is a restrictive view and a deliberate human construction.

Moreover, symbols and narratives are essential in the formation of a "place" because they help to evoke our memories.[641] Like *World Tales*, I have singled out the major symbols and narratives that make *Dim Sum* special. They also perform the phatic function by giving reassurances to users that we are in contact with the website. "The dragon with a pearl" symbol, for example, serves as a key symbol that connects the diverse web pages together.[642] In addition to symbols, the narrative sequences including literary narratives and also website narratives contribute to maintaining the distinctiveness of *Dim Sum*. I shall once again emphasize that the core of this website is the teaching plans and classroom activities. Without them, *Dim Sum* may lose its speciality.[643]

Finally, as a website on the World Wide Web, *Dim Sum* manifests itself as a locality that has connections with the rest of the global network via links. Despite its numerous relations, it sustains its stability by clearly marked boundaries. Like *World*

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[638] See sections 5.2 and 5.3.
[639] See Chap.4 Section 4.5.
[640] See Chap.4 Section 4.5 and Chap.3 Section 3.4.1.
[641] See Section 5.1.2.2 and 5.1.2.3.
[642] See Section 5.1.2.1. Symbols: "The dragon with a pearl" – the identity symbol and the phatic function.
[643] See Section 5.2 Identity vs. Lack of Identity.

Tales, the transmissible non-interactive functions facilitate in setting limits to the website.[644]

This analysis once again reinforces the arguments made in the previous case and reveals the possibility of reading a website as "place".[645] By means of this reading, digital environments are seen as cultivated environments.[646] We are therefore able to draw comparisons between digital environments and other human environments.

5.5   Digital documents and digital environments

As in Case One, we shall now proceed to see what kinds of insights are gained by the case study about digital environments.[647] The findings will be grouped into the four main categories as discussed before.[648]

5.5.1   Nature of digital documents

As previously mentioned,[649] one approach to exploring the uniqueness of digital documents is by means of comparing them to non-digital ones. This results in a kind of paper-digital dichotomy that is widely debated among digital theorists.[650]

The case analysis of *Dim Sum* exemplifies the website as a combination of digital and non-digital documents. For example, the "Chinese Emigration" page provides links to both books on Emigration, the Chinese Exclusion Act as written text, as well as websites concerning immigration and cultural diversity.[651] The capability of a website in connection to a wide range of documents regardless of their formats is fully exposed.

In fact, the website itself makes the following claim,

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[644] See Section 5.1.3.1.
[645] See Chap.4 Section 4.5.
[646] See Chap.1 Section 1.1.
[647] See Chap.4 Section 4.6.
[648] See Chap. 2 and Chap.4 Section 4.6.
[649] See Chap.2 Section 2.3
[650] See Bolter 1991; Levy 1994, 2001; Aarseth 1997.
[651] See *Dim Sum/Language Arts/Chinese Emigration*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Emigration-%20Reading%20Lesson.html

> The kit will feature a practical teacher handbook of concise lesson plans and activities, from which units can be selected a la carte. Companion teaching tools will include books, maps, reproducible art, props, and multi-media resources.[652]

By representing itself as an Internet-based resource, *Dim Sum* illustrates strong ties to both new technology as well as traditional materials such as books and maps.

Despite being a website, the interface designs and layouts of *Dim Sum* rely heavily on traditional formats. For instance, most images of this website are borrowed from other sources.[653] Another example is the use of a "table of contents" that resembles a book as its first page. Moreover, the subject categories on the homepage remind us of the subject categories in a library.[654] These examples also support the notion of "borrowing" in which new media borrow from pre-existing media.[655]

The analysis of *Dim Sum* therefore supports the evolutionary perspective rather than the paper-dichotomy perspective since a wide range of documents including traditional as well as digital forms coexist on this website.

5.5.2 Digital Narrative: Modes of Reading

As in Case One, I shall apply Marie-Laure Ryan's proposition that reading in digital environments is "external" and "exploratory".[656] In our analysis of *Dim Sum*, we have already seen that users are not allowed to make direct changes on the website.[657] For example, a teacher may adapt the teaching plans offered by *Dim Sum* in the classroom, but any revision of these plans because of classroom situation or students' capabilities will not be directly recorded on the website. Even though the "Feedback" page encourages teachers to send in comments after they have tried out the teaching plans, these comments apparently will not be directly accessible from the website.[658]

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[652] See *Dim Sum/Full Grant Proposal*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Full%20Grant%20Proposal.html
[653] See also Section 5.1.2 and Section 5.5.3.
[654] See *Dim Sum/Homepage*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/DimSum%20T.ofCon.HomePg.html; See also Lynch and Horton 2001, p.23.
[655] See Chap.2 Section 2.3 and Chap.4 Section 4.6.2.
[656] See Chap.2 Section 2.4. Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) "Will new media produce new narrative?" In Ryan (2004)(Ed.) *Narrative Across Media* (Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press) pp.337-359.
[657] See Section 5.1.3.1.
[658] See *Dim Sum/Feed Back Please*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/DimSum%26Feed%20Back%20Requ.html

Also, the wide range of information available implies that users' need to navigate so as to discover what they require. Therefore this website confirms that reading is "external" and "exploratory".

Furthermore, Ryan proposes that the type of topic and structure that are most suitable for "external" and "exploratory" reading are "collections of little stories, such as family sagas, narratives of cultural memory, local history".[659] *Dim Sum* appears to be an example of the suggested type of structure. Each subject area of the website may be seen as a self-sufficient unit that allows reading in random order. To those who are interested in "Science", they may choose activities related to these subcategories: "Giant Panda", "Chinese Inventions" and "Animals in Asia and China".[660] Since there is no proper sequence of these units, readers are free to browse through them in any order they prefer.
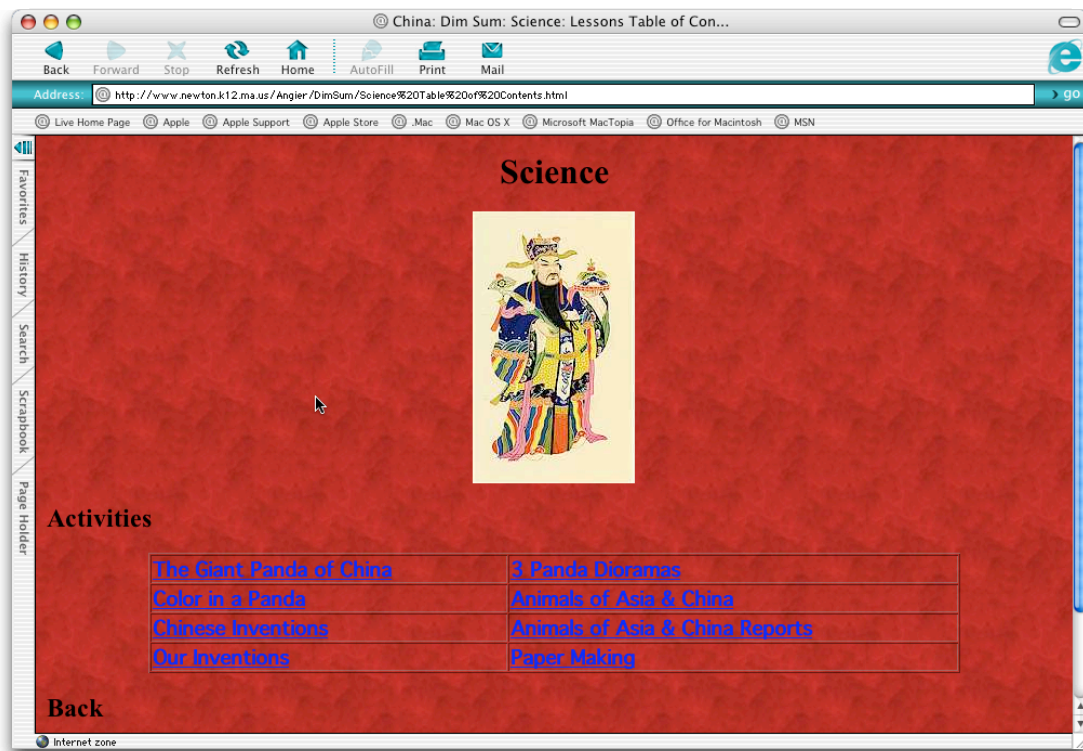

Figure 50: The "Science" page

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[659] See Chap.2, Section 2.4 and also Ryan 2004, p.343.
[660] See *Dim Sum/Science*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Science%20Table%20of%20Contents.html

5.5.3   Hypertext: links, nodes, connections and boundaries

The links and nodes on the World Wide Web are more than technical capabilities. As discussed, Gunnar Liestøl's arguments about integration and reference as the basis for connections are particularly insightful.[661]

Dim Sum illustrates the distinctiveness of a web document by connecting to other websites via links. As mentioned before,[662] the internal links tie the web pages together whereas the external links provide additional references to relevant websites according to topics. The "Internet Resources" web page is perhaps one of most noticeable examples among the web pages that exemplify this characteristic.[663] Apart from links, elements of inter-references are observable on *Dim Sum*. Similar to *World Tales*, these elements show thematic and topical connections even though the representational linkages are not as apparent as those of *World Tales*.[664]

Although images are few on *Dim Sum*,[665] they exhibit the meta-communicative function and the inter-semiotic function.[666] For example, the photo of Mount Everest illustrates this function. Initially, it is a photo in a book but it is now borrowed to illustrate Mount Everest as a topic in "Social Studies" on the *Dim Sum* website.[667]

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[661] See Chap.2 Section 2.5. See also Chap.4 Section 4.6.3 and Liestøl 1999, pp.191-221.
[662] See Section 5.1.3.2 Links.
[663] See *Dim Sum/Internet Resources*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Internet%20Resources.html
[664] See Section 5.1.3.2 Connections and Intertextuality
[665] See Section 5.1.2.
[666] See Chap.4 Section 4.6.3.
[667] See *Dim Sum/Social Studies/4 Mount Everest Activities*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Mt.%20Everest%20Lesson.html

Mount Everest

Mountains : Highest

Copyright 1993 by Guinness Publishing Ltd

Mount Everest Photo credit: Bruce Herrod

At the same time, the inter-semiotic function also operates on *Dim Sum*. Thorlacius argues that metaphor is a central concept to the inter-semiotic function.[668] I suggest that the title of the website – *Dim Sum* – is an example of the inter-semiotic function. Although "dim sum", as we have seen, usually refers to small dishes of delicacies, it is borrowed by the website as a metaphor to connect the unrelated topics together.[669]

Last but not least, the boundaries of this website, as argued before, are marked by limiting interactivity.[670] Thus, relative stability is maintained since the final control is in the hands of the professionals and web designers.

5.5.4   Nature of digital communities

As discussed earlier, comradeship is to a great extent "imagined" because it depends on symbolic associations.[671] This insight brings forward fruitful reflections on "virtual communities" that are formed via the Net in spite of temporal and geographical diffusion.[672]

Once again, I shall argue that even though *Dim Sum* does not provide direct interaction among its users, it promotes revisiting by means of the unique symbols

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[668] See Thorlacius 2005, p.188-189.
[669] See Section 5.1.2.1. See *Dim Sum/Presentation*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/chinadimsumaconnection.html
[670] See Section 5.1.3.1.
[671] See Chap.4 Section 4.6.4. See also Anderson 1983/1991.
[672] See Chap.2 Section 2.6.

and narratives of this website.[673] In addition to symbols and narratives that help to consolidate the social bonding, I shall argue that the educational materials, including the teaching plans and classroom activities, establish a primary bonding among users who utilize this information. As the website states,

> Using technology, we will develop a Newton based web site for the purpose of distributing Dim Sum project information and for sharing of ideas, activities and lessons with teachers across the city.[674]

Dim Sum therefore aims at reaching an audience outside its geographical proximity. The website narrative emphasizes the pedagogic content and this content is crucial in forming a sense of community for *Dim Sum*. By sharing the teaching plans as well as the possibility of commenting on their applications,[675] the bonding among educators who access this website is strengthened.

Dim Sum is also represented as a high profile website generally approved among educators, teachers and parents. The "Awards" page advocates its credibility.[676] This is another additional feature that consolidates the bonding among educators and parents who are users of this website.

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[673] See Section 5.1.2.

[674] See *Dim Sum/Full Grant Proposal*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Full%20Grant%20Proposal.html

[675] According to the "Feedback Please" page, comments are apparently encouraged. These comments may be sent via e-mail to the professional staff responsible for the website. See *Dim Sum/Feedback Please*: http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/DimSum%26Feed%20Back%20Requ.html. See also Section 5.1.3.1.

[676] See *Dim Sum/Awards*: http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/awards.html
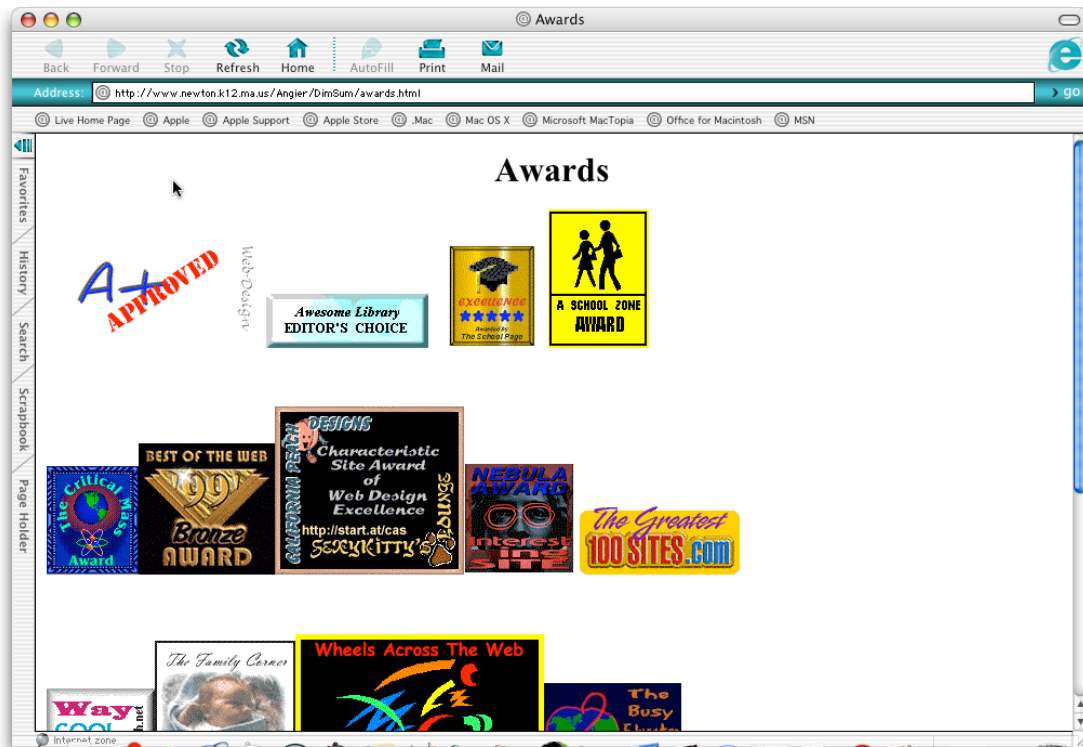
Figure 51: The Awards page

As in the Case of *World Tales*, issues around "homogeneity" and "lifestyle enclaves" are not applicable to *Dim Sum*. As mentioned before, David Healy argues that the Internet promotes uniformity and homogeneity because discussion lists, newsgroups and even MUDs and MOOs appeal to those who are like-minded.[677] Since *Dim Sum* does not offer direct participation and contact among users, there is little danger that it promotes homogeneity. Perhaps the only possible homogeneity is its pedagogic orientation. However, to say that teachers and parents are a homogenous group will be an exaggeration since they embrace a wide spectrum of diverse individuals.

The notion of "lifestyle enclaves" concentrates on shared interests among members of the online groups who often focus on leisure and consumption rather than work.[678] However, the core of *Dim Sum* is the teaching plans and classroom activities that imply work rather than relaxation. Even though many attempts have been made to

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[677] See Chap.2 Section 2.6. See also Healy 1997, pp.55-68.
[678] See Chap.2 Section 2.6. See also Robert N. Bellah 1985.

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liven up the teaching plans,[679] there will be little confusion about the nature of this website.

5.6   Concluding Remarks

As in the previous case study, the *Dim Sum* website fulfils the three requirements that are essential for it to be read as a "place". To recapitulate, *Dim Sum* is a human manifestation that expresses a certain way of understanding and experiencing the world. As a pedagogic website that makes use of folk tale narratives and other cultural elements for classroom activities, *Dim Sum* establishes its uniqueness. The symbols and narratives provide it with a "sense of place" and support this uniqueness. Although unlike *World Tales* literary narratives do not form the core of *Dim Sum*, they reinforce the overall website narrative and contribute to tightening the bonding between users and website. As a web document, it demonstrates its connectedness with the global via external links while maintaining its particularity by marking its boundaries. It is possible to draw similarities between place making in traditional environments and digital ones when "place" is seen as a theoretical concept. In addition, by reading *Dim Sum* as a "place", the four aspects concerning the nature of digital documents and their environments are reconfirmed.

The last chapter will take account of the major similarities and differences between these two case studies. At the same time, I shall argue that further research is essential to provide additional empirical data so as to increase our comprehension of the digital domain.

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[679] For example, the M&M candies teaching plan: See *Dim Sum/Math/M&M Fractions*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/M%26M%20Fraction%20Lesson.html

6.   Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, I shall respond to the major questions of the thesis and reconfirm my hypothesis that websites, despite their digital nature, may be seen as "places". By viewing them as "places", we are able to achieve insights into two key issues: firstly, place making and secondly, the nature of digital documents and digital environments. I shall argue that even though these two selected websites display individual differences, both of them may be seen as "places".

6.1   Features of "Place"

The major theories about "place" and place making in this thesis are borrowed from the discussed humanistic geographers. In short, they argue that "place" should not be seen as simply physical cartographical coordinates but should be seen as a complex theoretical concept. Yi-Fu Tuan, for instance, argues:

> Place is not only a fact to be explained in the broader frame of space, but it is also a reality to be clarified and understood from the perspectives of the people who have given it meaning.[680]

According to him, "place" should be seen in terms of human experience, perception, reflection and interpretation. By seeing "place" from this humanistic perspective, Tuan suggests that we can acquire insights into human existence as well as the ultimate values in life.[681]

Informed by these humanistic geographers, I have identified three major features as the essential markers of a "place":

- A "place" is a human construction. It is an expression or a concretization of how we see, understand and experience the world.
- A "place" is made distinctive by symbols and narratives that humans attribute to it. These symbols and narratives reinforce the bonding between humans and the environment.

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[680] Yi-Fu Tuan (1974a) "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective". In *Progress in Human Geography* Vol.6, pp.211-252; p.213
[681] Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press)

- A "place" is a kind of localization with boundaries and connections. It displays the dialectics between local and global.

According to the two case analyses, both *Dim Sum* and *World Tales* show that they possess the above-mentioned three features and may be read as "places".

6.1.1   A human construction: perspective and experience

Both *World Tales* and *Dim Sum* offer us a framework of seeing and understanding the world. In other words, these websites propose a certain perspective that we may use in looking at the world. Although these perspectives may appear to be partial and we may not necessarily agree with them, it does not change the fact that the websites express discernable points of view.

As the name suggests, *World Tales* presents us with a collection of tales from different regions of the world. The perspective that this website offers us is a contemporary interpretation of traditional tales. However, this perspective is not a single, united one. Rather, it consists of a wide spectrum of interpretations by a culturally diverse group of animators. One may describe *World Tales* as an umbrella that embraces cultural plurality as stated by the website in its objective. This plurality is reflected firstly, by the scope of tales included in this website, and secondly, by the multicultural background of the animators involved.[682]

In addition, by using a stage with the smiling monkey and the sharp beaked bird as its constant icons, *World Tales* gives us the perspective of a performance or a show.

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[682] Some of the animators are immigrants and have roots in another culture. For example, Kyunghee Gwon ("Weaver and Herder"), Sijun Zhou ("Ming") and Gary Saunders ("Djinungs Koorngees").

Figure 52: Example of *World Tales* homepage: "Stone Soup"

Entertainment and fun are significant elements of the website. This is clearly stated in the "About" Section of the website.[683] The "Play" Section also reinforces this element of entertainment.[684] Despite the fact that it has an "Education" page that provides teachers with additional information related to the tales,[685] the pedagogic element appears to be secondary.

Dim Sum, on the other hand, offers us a pedagogic perspective that makes this website unique among the Chinese culture-oriented websites. By mixing teaching plans and classroom activities with Chinese cultural elements,[686] *Dim Sum* distinguishes itself. However, the website only presents us with a restricted view of China since it does not include controversial topics.

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[683] See *World Tales/About*: "Above all, this project is about making media that entertains you and celebrates our cultural diversity, so watch, read, play and most importantly enjoy." http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/about.php. The exception is the information loaded "Education" Section that serves as additional resources for teachers and parents.
[684] See *World Tales/Play*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/games.php
[685] See *World Tales/Education*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales_education/
[686] For instance, the dragon activities are topics that apparently appeal to children. "Maths/Dot to Dot Dragon", dragon tales in "Language and Arts/6 Chinese folk tales" and making "Shoe Box Dragons" in "Celebrations, Holidays and Customs/Shoe Box Dragons" are some examples.
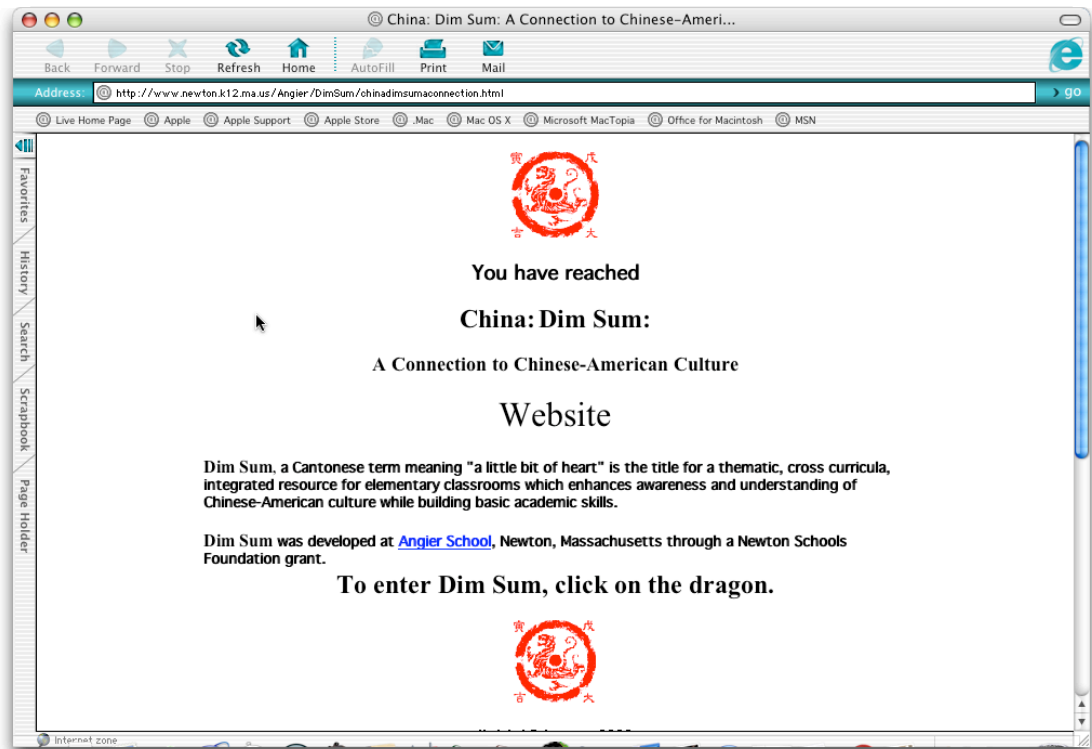
Figure 53: The pedagogic statement of *Dim Sum* on the "Presentation" page

To reinstate my argument, the fact that the website presents only a restricted view underlines that it may be seen as a "place," since a "place" implies a specific way of understanding, expressing and interpreting the world. Like a window that enables us to see the landscape from a vantage point, both websites introduce us to seeing the world from a particular angle.

Apart from offering us a distinct perspective, the two websites invite users to experience them. Since we can neither taste nor smell the websites, this experience relies primarily on the visual elements.

In the case of *World Tales*, the use of multimedia elements is crucial because they stimulate our visual and aural senses. When we watch "Twelve Months", the Russian version of Cinderella, our sympathy is aroused when we see the little girl struggling in the deep, white snow and the howling, icy winds.
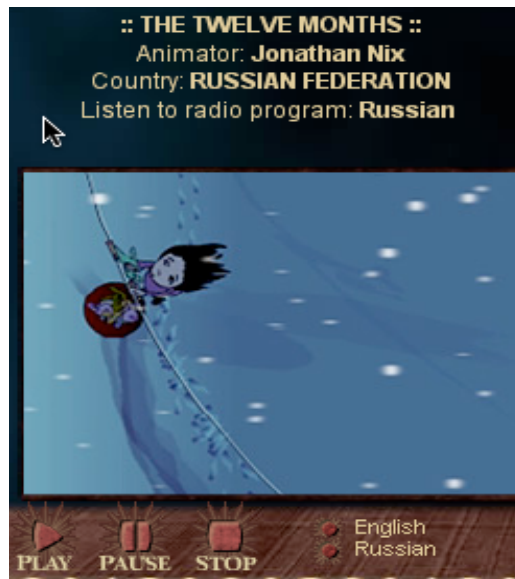
Figure 54: The struggling girl shown as the central image of "Twelve Months"

Nevertheless, even though multimedia effects are not predominant in the case of *Dim Sum*, visual images still perform an essential role in connecting the website with our previous experience. As discussed before, the photo of the Giant Panda or the Great Wall of China remind us of related images that we have come across from other sources – previous travels, magazines, TV programs and other websites. I argue that the function of these images corresponds with Bachelard's suggestion that images provide a kind of concentration and focus.[687] It also resonates with Casey's argument that images assist us in remembering.[688]

More significantly, I have also argued that the stories incorporated in the two websites are of crucial importance in evoking our experiences. As I have mentioned in the case study of *Dim Sum*, we may not know the taste of moon cakes but most of us will have experienced curiosity, suspense, fear and disillusionment as the character Chang-O has experienced in the legend of the Moon Festival.[689] Instead of multimedia effects, stories are used by *Dim Sum* to connect the users with the website. In the case of *World Tales*, stories are reinforced by effects so that users can experience the website not only by

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[687] Bachelard (1994) *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press)
[688] Casey (1987) *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press)
[689] See *Dim Sum/Celebrations, Holidays and Customs/Moon Festival*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/china__dim_sum__moon_festi.html

means of imagination and former experiences but also via the senses. One obvious example is the story, "The Skeleton Woman".[690] The isolation, alienation and coldness described in this story connect with users' experiences of isolation and alienation. We do not need to visit an Inuit igloo to relate to these feelings.
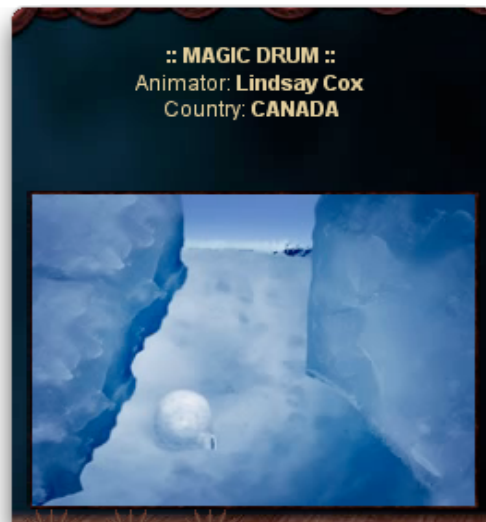

Figure 55: The isolated and remote igloo in "Magic Drum"

The image of the igloo in the animation, "The Magic Drum", may then be seen as a concretization of this isolation and forlornness and thus corresponds to the above-mentioned notion of concentration and focus.[691]

6.1.2   "Topophilia": symbols and narratives

Symbols and narratives are important in place making because they underpin the uniqueness and distinctiveness of that place. Without the symbols and narratives, a place may appear as any random space. Tuan proposes the notion of "topophilia" to describe the bonding between people and environments.[692] He argues that the quality of a place can only be understood by

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[690] The animation "The Magic Drum" is based on this story. See *World Tales/Read a Story: The Skeleton Woman:* http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/read_story.php?storyID=36
[691] See *World Tales/View an Animation: The Magic Drum*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=4
[692] Tuan (1974b) *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes & Values* (New York: Columbia University Press)

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comprehending the symbols and narratives of that place.[693] These insights may not be obtained by pure observation of the physical structures.

Narratives, as Bronislaw Malinowski argues, perform a social and ritualistic role among groups of people.[694] Myths and legends help to establish and strengthen not only bonding among people but also bonding between people and place.

As mentioned before, the term "hypernarratives" in the digital context is used as an overall inclusive term to embrace linear literary narratives and also website narratives.[695] I argue that in these two cases, literary narratives and website narratives both assist in developing and maintaining the bonding between users and websites. Of crucial importance, I also argue that we gain better comprehension into how these two kinds of narratives relate to each other from the two cases.

Even though both websites contain a number of fairy tales, legends and folk tales, the significance of tales differs between these two websites. Stories including animations and written text stories form the core of *World Tales*. Without them, I argue that this website would lose its essence of existence.

However, if we turn our attention to *Dim Sum*, we can see that stories do not carry as much weight as in *World Tales*. Being a pedagogic website, the website narrative is predominated by teaching plans, subject areas and classroom activities. Fairy tales, legends and folk tales are only subsidiary and they are included as literary narratives in the subject areas. I argue that the significance of these literary narratives is that they strengthen the website narrative of *Dim Sum*. For example, the origin and customs of the Chinese New Year are reinforced by the legend of "Nian" – the destructive monster

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[693] Tuan (1978) "Sign and Metaphor". In *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* Vol. 68, No. 3 (Sept.) pp.363-372.

[694] Bronislaw Malinowski (1923/1969) Supplement I: "The Problem of Meaning in Primitive Languages". In Ogden, C.K. & Richards, I.A. (Eds.) *The Meaning of Meaning – A study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (London: Routledge)

[695] See Lev Manovich (2001) *The Language of New Media* (Mass. & London: The MIT Press) pp.225-228.

that was finally conquered by collective human efforts.[696] This legend serves as a background that connects the activities related to other customs such as dragon dance, firecrackers, family visits and red packets so that the Chinese New Year becomes unique among festivals. The legend, "Nian", is therefore an example that shows how a literary narrative supports the pedagogic narratives. Unlike *World Tales*, without the stories, *Dim Sum* can still exist as a website of teaching materials. However, this existence may be compared to a bare skeleton with no flesh.

On the other hand, Lisbeth Thorlacius, as we have seen, suggests that symbols and narratives perform "the phatic function" that is essential to maintain contact between users and website. Repetition of major images thereby serves as a central thread tying the diverse web pages together and thus reconfirms this contact.[697]

Both *World Tales* and *Dim Sum* consist of a number of symbols and narratives. The stage symbol of *World Tales*, for instance, relates us to the website as a multimedia showcase of contemporary story telling. The smiling monkey and the bird are significant symbols of *World Tales* because they perform the phatic function and act as the opening and ending credit sequences of the twenty animations.[698] Although each animation is a new story, the two animal figures introduce and end the animations.

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[696] See *Dim Sum/Celebrations, Holidays, Customs/New Year or Spring Festival*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/china__dim_sum__spring_fes.html
[697] See Lisbeth Thorlacius (2005) *Visuel Kommunikation på websites* (Denmark: Roskilde Universitetsforlag) pp.160-168.
[698] See 2005, pp.160-168.

Figure 56: One version of the monkey and the bird in the opening sequences

Meanwhile, "the dragon with a pearl" symbol carries weight in *Dim Sum* since it acts like a signature that appears on numerous web pages. The meaning that these symbols articulate highlights the uniqueness of that website.

Figure 57: The signature symbol of *Dim Sum* website

Like symbols, narratives also perform the phatic function because they maintain contact between senders and receivers of the website.[699] I have argued that the website narrative sequences are mainly responsible for maintaining this contact.[700] For example, the homepage of World Tales gives us four options: "View", "Meet", "Read" and "Play".[701]

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[699] See Thorlacius 2005, pp.160-168.
[700] These sequences include the consistent layouts and interface designs, the navigation icons and the repetitions of key statements and clicking options.
[701] See *World Tales/Homepage*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/frontpage.php
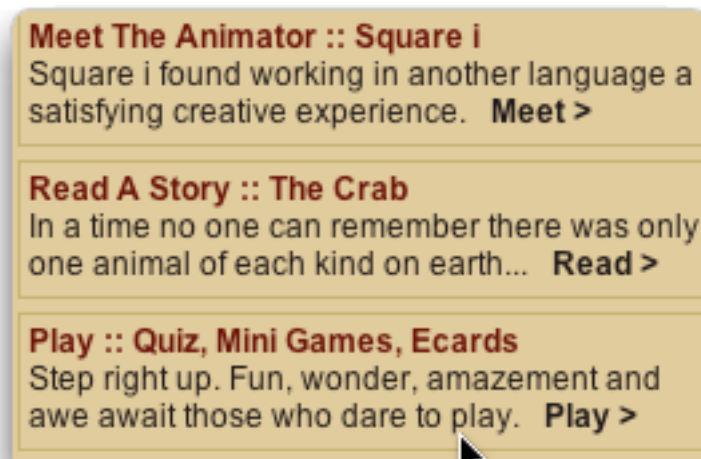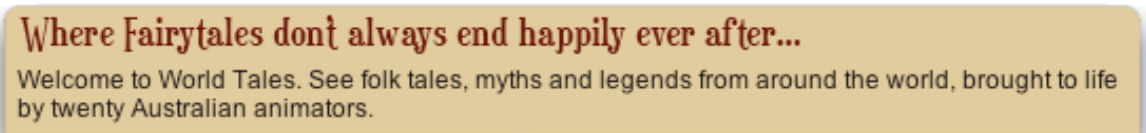
Figure 58: Clicking options of *World Tales*

Even though the animation together with the image introducing this animation changes every time when we choose the website, the standard layout with these four options remains unchanged.[702] Also, the following statement introduces each animation:[703]

Likewise, the following key statement of *Dim Sum* meets us every time when we click on "Homepage" to ensure that we are in contact with this website:[704]

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[702] See the arguments about the significance of maintaining a consistent layout and navigation in Patrick J. Lynch & Sarah Horton (2001) *Web Style Guide: Basic Design Principles for Creating Web Sites* (2nd Ed.)(New Haven & London: Yale University Press) p.84.
[703] See *World Tales/Homepage*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/frontpage.php.
[704] See *Dim Sum/Homepage*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/DimSum%20T.ofCon.HomePg.html

The website narrative once again marks the distinctiveness of the websites.

Major symbols and narratives enable users to remember these two websites and support my argument that these two websites may be read as places.

6.1.3   Localization: boundaries and connections

Both *World Tales* and *Dim Sum* maintain a specific positioning by their well-defined objective, recognizable structure and representation. As localities, they are able to mark their boundaries by means of restricting interactivity. As previously mentioned, these two websites display for the most part the "transmissible non-interactive function", proposed by Thorlacius.[705]   This implies that users cannot make changes directly on the website. The film clips, the text-based stories, and information pages of *World Tales* do not accept direct intervention by users. Similarly, users may adapt the teaching plans and activities to the classroom setting during the application. However, these adaptations cannot be altered directly on the Web. Suggestions to changes are facilitated by e-mails to the professional staff of *Dim Sum*.[706]

On the other hand, these websites exemplify their vast capacity in making connections. As digital documents on the World Wide Web, they are connected internally and externally by links. These links allow the websites to connect locally as well as globally. *Dim Sum*, for example, is intended to be a set of Internet Resources that are not limited by geographical or national constraints:

> Using technology, we will develop a Newton based web site for the purpose of distributing Dim Sum project information and for sharing of ideas, activities and lessons with teachers across the city.[707]

The advantage of being net-based documents is the effectiveness in terms of information sharing and dispersion.

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[705] Thorlacius 2005, pp. 82-86.
[706] See *Dim Sum/Feed back Please*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/DimSum%26Feed%20Back%20Requ.html
[707] See *Dim Sum/Full Grant Proposal*:
www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Full%20Grant%20Proposal.html

Moreover, *Dim Sum* also illustrates the capability to incorporate a wide range of documents regardless of formats. As stated in the "Full Grant Proposal",[708]

> The kit will feature a practical teacher handbook of concise lesson plans and activities, from which units can be selected a la carte. Companion teaching tools will include books, maps, reproducible art, props, and multi-media resources.

This capability to include diverse formats is also manifested in *World Tales*. If we look at the "Education" page, there are two boxes that offer additional resources: "Key Learning Areas" and "Stories and Animations". Each subcategory in the "Key Learning Areas" connects us to the relevant web pages that also provide external links to related websites.
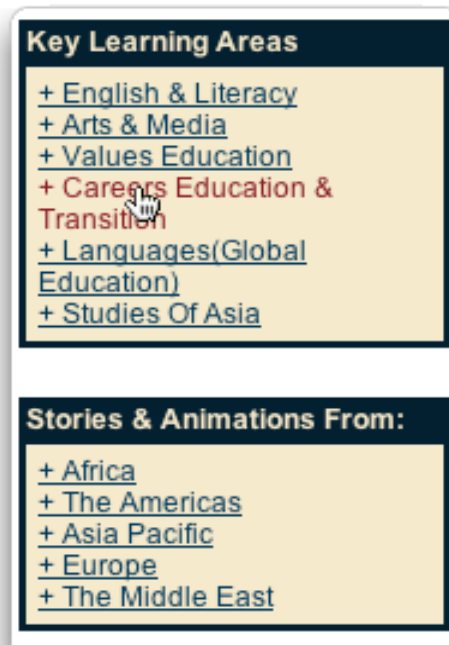

Figure 59: The "Education" page is connected to other links thematically

Also, the "Stories and Animations" Section contains stories that we can print out in PDF format or read on screen.[709]

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[708] See *Dim Sum/Full Grant Proposal*:
www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Full%20Grant%20Proposal.html
[709] See *World Tales/Education:* http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales_education/

In addition, these websites show connections to other documents in terms of both themes and representations. Some major themes of *World Tales* that illustrate this connection are: the Cinderella theme,[710] the Initiation theme,[711] and also the Creation theme.[712] As to representation, the animation "Ming" serves as a good example.[713] This animation employs silhouettes that resemble traditional Chinese puppet shows. At the same time, the Australian actor, Russell Crowe, inspired the animator when Zhou decided to transform the Thunder God from a god-figure to a warrior instead.[714]

Likewise, the diverse subject areas offered by *Dim Sum* are connected to other Chinese cultural websites and paper documents thematically. For example, the "Chinese Emigration" page, as shown before, is linked with the document – "The Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882" and also other websites about immigration and the Gold Rush.[715]

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[710] The Cinderella theme is used to illustrate cross-cultural comparison of tales in one of the teaching plans provided in the "Education" Section, as part of the E&L Resource Pack.
See *World Tales/Education/Key Learning Areas:*
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales_education/learning_areas.php?learnID=1&section=resource_pack#
[711] For example, "The Magic Drum".
[712] For example, "Djinungs Koorngees".
[713] Other examples are: "Tam and Cam" and "Weaver and Herder".
[714] See *World Tales/Meet the Animator: Sijun Zhou:*
http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animator.php?animatorID=14
[715] *See Dim Sum/Language Arts/Reading for information: Chinese Emigration*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Emigration-%20Reading%20Lesson.html
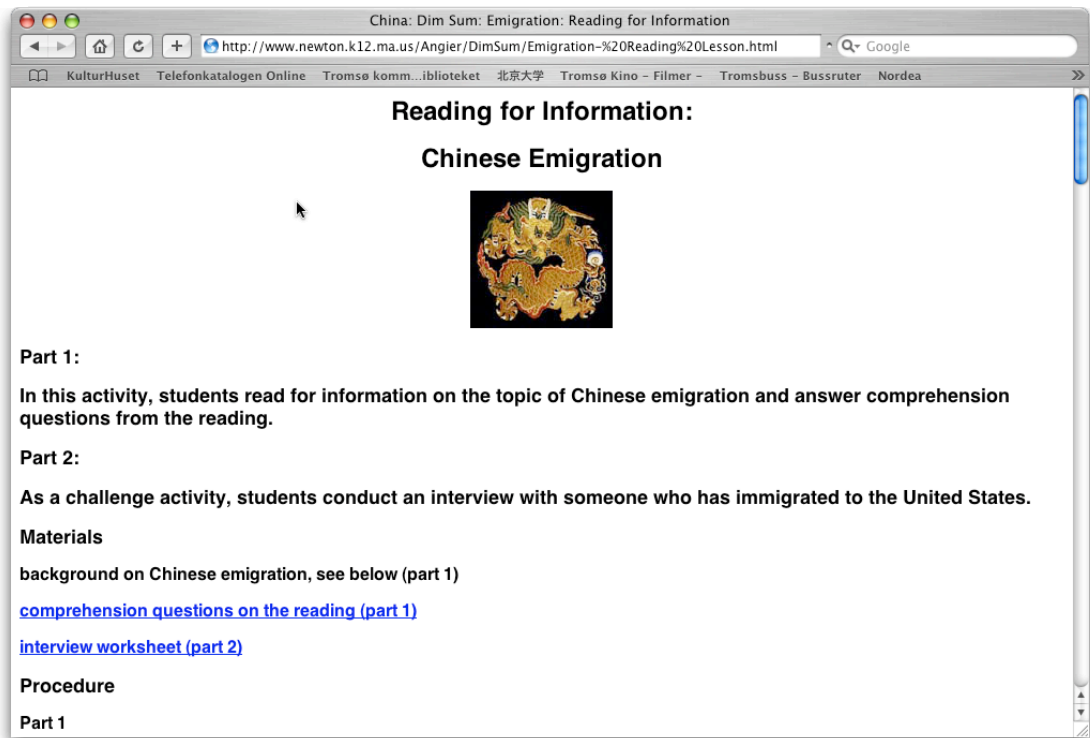
Figure 60: The "Chinese Emigration" page showing connections to other documents

Other topics such as "The Great Wall of China", "Origami" and "The Giant Panda" show similar thematic connections.

Last of all, connection is also seen by the navigation patterns and interface designs. Both websites show elements of intertextuality in terms of their typography, layout and navigation structures. As previously mentioned, Thorlacius suggests that visual media in one way or another refer to the connection they have in common in the use of colours, font types, design, and typography. All these elements indicate the time period they are in.[716] An obvious example is the use of a "Table of Contents" that serves as an overview by the *Dim Sum* website to direct users in their navigation.[717] The "Table of Contents" refers to the familiar metaphor of a book that most users have encountered. Also, the subject categories remind us of a library. *World Tales*, on the other hand, uses the recognizable metaphor of a little house as the navigation icon for the home menu box. Clicking on this box will then

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[716] Thorlacius 2005, p.157.
[717] See *Dim Sum/Homepage*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/DimSum%20T.ofCon.HomePg.html

generate a subsidiary box. This reminds us of the building blocks that children play with.

If localization implies boundaries and connections, these two websites reveal that they have marked boundaries and multiple connections to other documents and thus satisfy the third necessary requirement.

6.2   "Non-Place" and "Placelessness"

Even though I have already shown that these two websites fulfil the three requirements that characterize a "place" and may therefore be regarded as a "place", it will also be beneficial to confirm that they do not possess the traits of a "non-place". As formerly discussed, a "non-place" may be described as:

- Lack of identity
- Disconnected
- Lack of attachment

The case analyses have shown that both *World Tales* and *Dim Sum* are websites with distinctive identities. *World Tales* represents itself as a website that embraces cultural diversity whereas *Dim Sum* is unique as a pedagogic website that combines teaching plans and classroom activities with Chinese cultural materials. Also, both *World Tales* and *Dim Sum* relate to other websites by means of themes or subject areas, representations, links and navigation.[718] Instead of lack of attachment, I argue that both websites show strong attachment to the cultures they represent. The typography and content of *Dim Sum* support its stated objective – to make cross-cultural connections. At the same time, *World Tales* presents itself as a website that celebrates cultural plurality. In addition to this attachment to multiculturalism, *World Tales* also shows its attachment to the folk and fairy tales that are the essence of the website. These two websites reveal the opposite traits of "non-places" and once more confirm their status as "places".

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[718] See Section 6.1.3 for more.

6.2.1   Transforming "non-places" to "places": Features of re-visiting

Of utmost importance, I have argued that both *World Tales* and *Dim Sum* possess elements that encourage revisiting and these elements contribute to them being "places". I shall now briefly summarize these revisiting elements.

World Tales encourages revisiting by offering twenty multimedia animations. Each animation is a contemporary interpretation of a traditional tale. None of these animations look alike and they are the productions of different animators. To users who enjoy animations, each animation becomes a reason for revisiting. In addition, the interviews with animators also attract users to re-visit. After watching the animation, users may become interested in how the animation is made or what inspired the animator during the production process. In addition, relevant information such as the introduction of the original storytellers and the background of the story also encourage revisiting. Some animations contain important symbols that are part of the ancient customs or beliefs of the native culture. The background information that explains these customs and beliefs will then be beneficial to users.[719]   In addition, the "Play" Section is structurally connected to the animations. The "Quiz" Section, for example, brings users back to the animations and stories. As a conclusion to the "Quiz", a moral is offered together with a suggestion of viewing an animation that illustrates that moral statement. This illustrates a circular structure that links the four essential sections of *World Tales* together by internal referral.

In contrast, *Dim Sum* relies on the diverse subject areas and the vast collection of information and teaching materials to promote revisiting. As a well-organized collection of educational resources, *Dim Sum* appeals to teachers and parents. The carefully prepared lesson plans make them easily adaptable in classrooms. The "Full Grant Proposal" and the "Awards" page raise the

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[719] "The Magic Drum" and "Djinungs Koorngees" are examples. The background information about the Inuit culture and the Wurundjeri people – a group of Australian aboriginals – is a great help to users so that they can appreciate the complexity of the animations. See *World Tales/View an Animation: Magic Drum*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=4; Also *World Tales/View an Animation: Djinungs Koorngees*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales/animation.php?animationID=21

reliability of the website. Concurrently, the "Feedback please" page puts forward a positive and constructive attitude.

Even though the emphasis is different, both websites offer revisiting elements to tighten the bondage between website and users. As discussed before, Tuan has argued that attachment and feelings of a certain place are strengthened by habits and routines.[720] He says,

> The functional pattern of our lives is capable of establishing a sense of place. In carrying out the daily routines we go regularly from one point to another, following established paths, so that in time a web of nodes and their links is imprinted in our perceptual systems and affects our bodily expectations.[721]

Once a "habit field" is developed, the sense of attachment and bondage to the place increases every time we visit and revisit the field. These two websites manage to develop a kind of "habit field" that draws frequent visits.

6.3 "Place" or "Site"

In Chapter One, I have put forward Edward Casey's arguments about how a "place" distinguishes itself from a "site" to see how websites may be read as places. He remarks,

> A site is not a container but an open area that is specified primarily by means of cartographic representations such as maps or architects´ plans. It embodies a spatiality that is at once homogeneous (i.e. having no internal differentiations with respect to material constitution) and isotropic (possessing no inherent directionality such as up/down, East/West, etc.). A site is thus leveled down to the point of being definable solely in terms of distances between "positions" which are established on its surface and which exist strictly in relation to one another.[722]

To put it briefly, there exist three dichotomies between a "place" and a "site": selective vs. anonymous, familiar vs. indifferent, and enclosed vs. open.[723]

Following his line of argument, the analyses of the two websites, *World Tales* and *Dim Sum*, show that these two websites are places because they demonstrate that they

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[720] Yi-Fu Tuan (1974a) "Space and Place: Humanistic Perspective". In *Progress in Human Geography* Vol.6, pp.211-252.
[721] Tuan 1974, p.242.
[722] Casey 1987, p.185.
[723] Edward Casey (1987) *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press) pp.185-195.

are selective, familiar and have the capacity to contain. In a nutshell, they are selective because of their distinctiveness; they are familiar because their layout and navigation constructions are consistent, logical and predictable; and they have the capacity to contain by means of restraining interactivity. These findings substantiate their standing as places rather than sites.

In addition, Casey argues that memory is place-related and shares three similarities with place: horizon, pathways and things.[724] As we have seen, these characteristics are decipherable from the two websites. Firstly, they have internal and external horizons – the web pages of the websites serve as the internal horizon whereas other relevant websites and book references that the website connects to may be regarded as the external horizon. Secondly, both websites allow free exploration and thirdly, they offer multiple navigation possibilities that serve as pathways.

6.4   The nature of place making

As I have stated before, this thesis is first and foremost informed by the humanistic geographers' theories of "place" and "place making". "Place" is more than a set of geographical coordinates on a map. Rather, it is seen as a human expression and concretization that is experienced by our senses. The emphasis of place construction is theoretical rather than physical. This implies that human capabilities, including abstract thoughts, argumentation, comparison, experience, emotions, affections and creativity, are motivated in the construction process. Place making in this sense is no longer geographically restricted, physically rooted or cartographically represented.

If place making is seen as a theoretical human construction, there is no reason why websites may not be seen as "places". No one can deny that websites are also human constructions and expressions of how humans understand their environments. As mentioned before, some researchers have argued that cultivated environments have replaced natural ones.[725] As kinds of cultivated envrionments, digital environments are growing in significance because of our modern lifestyle. Some researchers have

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[724] Casey 1987, pp.203-209.
[725] See for example, Christian Norberg-Schulz (1980) *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (New York: Rizzoli) pp. 17-18.

argued that modern humans are "placeless",[726] because they have lost contact with natural environments. Instead of being "placeless", I have argued that cultivated environments may also be "places". The two websites have validated my argument since they qualify to be seen as "places" and are able to connect users by symbolic associations. Symbols and narratives play a crucial role because they address our imagination and assist in our experience of the website. They can be seen as features of revisiting that encourage users to frequent the website and thereby strengthen the already established ties. The digital nature of websites does not prevent them from being "places".

6.5   Digital documents and digital environments

We have seen that the two websites may be read as "places" and also the implications of place making in digital environments. I shall now turn our attention to examining the findings we acquire into the nature of digital documents and their environments through the lens of "place".

6.5.1   Nature of digital documents

As discussed, researchers have attempted to distinguish the differences between paper and digital documents using dichotomies such as "fixed" and "fluid", "stable" and "unstable".[727] Many researchers nevertheless object to this kind of polarizations and view them as unproductive.[728] As we have seen, David Levy, for instance, uses the example of editing to illustrate fixity in a document. He argues technology is only relevant in terms of the speed of change.[729]

My analyses of the two websites are made possible by means of the kind of fixity and stability that Levy proposes. If websites as digital documents are too "fluid", it would not be possible to conduct thorough analysis because the process depends on the comparative stability of documents – at least for a certain period of time. This thesis has undergone a process of about two years.

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[726] See for examples, Relph 1976; Augé 1995.
[727] See Jay D. Bolter (1991) *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates) p.31.
[728] See for examples: Levy 1994, 2001; Aarseth 1997.
[729] David Levy (1994) "Fixed and Fluid? Document Stability and New Media". In *Proceedings of the European conference of HyperText* (Sept.) p.26.

During this period of time, I have visited and revisited these two websites a considerable number of times to scrutinize various sections and these two websites have remained unchanged. The relatively stable situation of these two websites may be a consequence of a number of factors. Firstly, these two websites may be seen as finished products. *World Tales* is the result of a multimedia project that aims at advocating cultural diversity in Australia. *Dim Sum* is the product of funding that endeavours to enhance cultural understanding by developing Net-based educational resources. Another factor that contributes to this stability is that these two websites may be seen as relatively "closed" sites with restraints on interactivity.[730]

We have also noted the alternative approach proposed by Espen Aarseth who argues for an evolutionary perspective of documents: digital documents should be seen as new forms that evolve from traditional paper-based documents. After his analysis of diverse types of texts, he concludes that some digital texts illustrate a kind of control that makes them less flexible than traditional ones.[731]

My analyses of the two websites supports Aarseth's argument that digital documents may be seen as a continuation of the previously mentioned evolutionary tradition. For example, the folk and fairy tales of *World Tales* are represented as multimedia animations as well as text-based stories. The text-based stories are in the form of digitized written texts. Even though they form a part of a Net-based document in a digital environment, they resemble the paper-based traditional documents in their appearances. Also, they can be printed out on paper and read as paper documents.[732]

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[730] To use the four interactive functions proposed by Thorlacius, both *World Tales* and *Dim Sum* demonstrate the transmissible non-interactive function as the predominant interactive pattern. See Thorlacius 2005, pp. 82-94.

[731] Aarseth 1997, pp.74-75.

[732] I am aware of the scepticism among some researchers about equating digitized texts with traditional print-based texts. The process of digitization as well as the possibilities of manipulation needs to be taken into consideration so as not to overlook the complexity of digitization. See for example, Hartmut Weber & Marianne Doerr (1997) "Digitization as a Means of Preservation?" In *Final Report* (European Commission on Preservation and Access, Amsterdam)(Oct.); Donald Waters (2001) "The uses of Digital Libraries: Some technological, political, and economic considerations". In Deanna Marcum (Ed.) *Development of Digital Libraries* (Westport: Greenwood Press); John Feather (2004)(Ed.) *Managing Preservation for libraries and archives* (Hants: Ashgate Publishing Ltd.); Brian

The second case study, *Dim Sum*, consists of many web pages that are digitized written texts such as the background information, legends and stories. Most of these information pages are borrowed from other sources including digital and non-digital ones. Similar to the evidence from *World Tales*, the digitized paper-based documents co-exist with the digital web-based documents. This combination of the traditional and the digital is in fact recognized and acknowledged as an advantage by the website itself.[733]

Moreover, the reinterpretation and retelling of traditional folk tales in the form of animations may be seen as a development from the oral form to the multimedia digital form. The co-existence of both the text-based stories as well as the multimedia animations brings forward the argument that folk and fairy tales may be seen as "ergodic" literature that are open to concurrent types of representations. Thus, the evolutionary nature of "ergodic" literature is once more confirmed.

As already discussed, familiar metaphors such as the "Table of Contents" and subject categories are used on the *Dim Sum* website. I argue that these metaphors also connect the digital environment to the traditional, paper-based environment.

6.5.2   Digital Narrative: Modes of Reading

Even though researchers single out interactivity as a unique feature of digital documents, it is vital to realize that interactivity does not occur solely in the digital environment.[734] Any reader of any text interacts with the text, regardless of the physical carrier of the text. One approach to distinguishing

Lavoie & Lorcan Dempsey (2004) "Thirteen ways of looking at Digital Preservation". In *D-Lib Magazine* (July/August) Vol. 10, No. 7/8.

[733] "The kit will feature a practical teacher handbook of concise lesson plans and activities, from which units can be selected a la carte. Companion teaching tools will include books, maps, reproducible art, props, and multi-media resources." See *Dim Sum/Full Grant Proposal*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Full%20Grant%20Proposal.html

[734] See for example Mats Dahlström (2002) "When is a Webtext?" In *Text technology* Vol. 11, No.1, pp.39-161; p.156.

interactivity between digital and non-digital environments is, as Marie-Laure Ryan argues, the reader's roles.[735]

She argues that the unique nature of digital narratives creates new modes of reader participation.[736] One of these modes, as discussed, is the "external" and "exploratory".[737] Rather than a kind of isolated immersion, as when reading paper-based novels, this new mode of reading is investigative and explorative like participating in a treasure hunt in which one clue leads to another and eventually the treasure is found.

My analyses of these two websites show that the above-mentioned investigative exploratory mode of reading may be identified. Users can determine their own navigation patterns based on their purposes, needs and habits. Those who surf *World Tales* may begin by viewing an animation, reading a story or even playing a game. Likewise, one may select any subject area, lesson plan or background information available in *Dim Sum*.

However, this investigative mode of reading does not exclude the isolated immersion mode of reading that we are acquainted with. Both *World Tales* and *Dim Sum* consist of many chunks of literary narratives such as the stories and legends, as well as the background information and explanatory texts. These narratives require immersion reading. I shall therefore argue that the new modes of reading also depend on the pre-existing mode of reading and thereby suggest that reading modes may also be seen in an evolutionary perspective. They co-exist rather than replace one another.

The two case studies therefore indicate that modes of reading should be seen from an evolutionary and transformative perspective. This is in line with Espen Aarseth's argument that the "text" should be considered "as an unfinished historical process of system transformation, the sum of all

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[735] See Marie-Laure Ryan (2004) "Will New Media Produce New Narrative?" In Marie-Laure Ryan (Ed.) *Narrative Across Media* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press) pp.337-359
[736] Ryan devised a typology of reader's involvement by means of four categories: internal, external, exploratory and ontological involvement. She argues that this new mode of reading allows readers or users to explore a collection of documents in the pursuit of a story. See Ryan 2004, p.339.
[737] See Ryan 2004, pp.342-343.

evolutionary stages and paraphrases".[738] It also supports Gunnar Liestøl's argument that reading and writing are sequential and chronological and are fundamentally linear in time.[739]

6.5.3   Hypertext: links, nodes, connections and boundaries

As previously discussed, the nodes and links are obvious markers of web documents. The World Wide Web itself clearly gives us an image of the global networking. Gunnar Liestøl, as we have seen, argues that inter-reference capability is fundamental in the hypertext or hypermedia environment.[740] He also connects inter-reference to the notion of "intertextuality" proposed by Julia Kristeva.[741] Intertextuality also implies thematic and representational connections.[742]

My analyses of the two websites illustrate that they exemplify the explicit nodes and links of web documents. By means of internal links, the websites connect the diverse web pages together, whereas external links enable the websites to network with other documents on the Net. The "Education" page of *World Tales* is a concrete example that demonstrates how the website refers to external resources that are relevant to folk and fairy tales.[743] External links are even more observable on *Dim Sum* since they exist in most of its web pages.[744]

Both websites illustrate thematic and representational linkages to other documents. As mentioned before, the animations of *World Tales* are closely connected to other folk tales by sharing similar themes – Cinderella, Creation and Initiation are examples. Likewise, *Dim Sum* uses subjects as themes to

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[738] Aarseth 1997, pp.176-177.

[739] Gunnar Liestøl (1994) "Wittgenstein, Genette and the Reader´s Narrative in Hypertext". Reprinted in Liestøl (1999) *Essays in Rhetorics of Hypermedia Design* (Oslo: University of Oslo) pp. 99-132.

[740] Gunnar Liestøl (1995) "Notes on Integration, Linking, Reference, and Inclusion". Reprinted in Liestøl (1999) *Essays in Rhetorics of Hypermedia Design* (Oslo: University of Oslo) pp.191-221.

[741] Liestøl 1995/1999, p.198. See also Julia Kristeva (1980) *Desire in language: a semiotic approach to literature and art*. Leon S Roudiez, (Ed.), Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (Trans.)(New York: Columbia University Press)

[742] See Section 6.1.3. Connections.

[743] See *World Tales/Education*: http://www8.sbs.com.au/worldtales_education/

[744] See for example, *Dim Sum/Internet Resources*:
http://www.newton.k12.ma.us/Angier/DimSum/Internet%20Resources.htm

connect with other resources that share the same subject area. In addition, the two websites share well-acquainted navigation conventions with other major websites.[745] This supports Thorlacius's observation that visual media show they are related because of noticeable similarities in interface designs and typography.[746]

Last but not least, as I have argued before,[747] even though links and connections are crucial to web documents, this does not imply that websites cannot put restraints on their interactivity. These two websites are such examples.

6.5.4   Nature of digital communities

Following the line of thought of Benedict Anderson,[748] I have argued that the forming of community of *World Tales* and *Dim Sum* depends mainly on symbolic associations since both are non-interactive websites. It is "imagination" rather than geographic proximity that fosters and maintains the sense of belonging. By extending the argument of Malinowski,[749] I argue also that narratives – literary and the website narrative – perform the social function of upholding the collective bonding. This also correlates to Tuan's notion of "topophilia" that we have seen earlier.[750]

World Tales, for example, forms its community by means of a shared interest in fairy and folk tales and multimedia animations across cultural borders. Meanwhile, *Dim Sum* consolidates its bonding by means of the diverse cultural symbols and associations that are incorporated in the stories, background information and teaching materials. The distinctiveness of these two websites attracts users and encourages them to revisit.[751]   The "community" thus formed is certainly "imagined" in the sense that the

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[745] See Section 6.1.3. See also Lynch and Horton 2001, pp.42-43.
[746] See Thorlacius 2005, pp.157-158.
[747] See Section 6.1.3.
[748] Benedict Anderson (1983/1991) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London/New York: Verso)
[749] Malinowski 1923/1969, pp. 312-315.
[750] Tuan (1974b) *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental perception, attitudes and values* (New York: Columbia University Press)
[751] See Section 6.2.4.

fellowship depends purely on symbolic association with almost no possibility of any face-to-face contact.

Unlike interactive websites that allow direct participation and interaction among users, issues that have previously been mentioned such as "identity performance", role-playing, "homogeneity", and "lifestyle enclave" are not applicable to these two websites because of their non-interactive nature.

6.6 Convergence of "place" and digital theories

I have pointed out in the Introduction that theoretical convergence helps us to see how theories complement each other and give insights into complex phenomena. This thesis is an attempt to use the lens of "place" to examine websites and thus to better our understanding of digital environments.

As discussed before, two specific areas indicate theoretical convergence. They are:

- Localization: connections and boundaries

The two case studies confirm that both websites may be seen as localities with well-defined boundaries that exist in global networks. *World Tales* displays its specific position as a contemporary interpretation of traditional tales in the form of multimedia animations. Conversely, *Dim Sum* also distinguishes itself from other China-oriented and culture-oriented websites because of its pedagogic focus and content.

Both websites are globally connected. *World Tales* belongs to the global network of tales and legends, whereas *Dim Sum* connects to more than one kind of network. It is related to China resources and educational initiatives, as well as folk tale connections. These networks are not restricted to digital documents but also include non-digital documents. The significance of multiple electronic links is that they enable almost immediate access to and retrieval of other digital documents. However, the links are based fundamentally on thematic connections, as illustrated by the external links of

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Dim Sum. Similarly, the external links of *World Tales,* as illustrated in the "Education" page, are also thematically related to other networks.

I shall therefore argue that connections are made by inter-reference of themes and topics. The digital nature supports these connections in terms of accessibility.

- Community and sense of belonging

As mentioned before, Anderson's perceptive proposal of "imagined communities" opens up the portability of "community" in the sense that it is not restricted to communal activities.[752] We have also discussed Yi-Fu Tuan's argument about the importance of symbols and narratives in connecting people and environments,[753] which reflects the "genius loci".[754]

Although researchers have applied the notion of "imagined communities" in relation to the formation of virtual communities, the importance of this study is to investigate this formation among non-interactive websites. Unlike online communities, these two non-interactive websites do not facilitate direct contact among users. The two case studies therefore point to symbolic associations as the fundamental element in developing a sense of belonging in this kind of websites. By means of symbols and narratives, the two websites establish their localities and encourage users to revisit. And by generating revisiting, the websites establish a type of bonding between users and websites even though web users may not come into contact with each other. This line of argument corresponds to the humanistic geographers' argument that it is symbolic associations that form and strengthen the bonding between humans and environments.

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[752] Anderson 1983/1991.
[753] Tuan 1974b, 1991.
[754] See Norberg-Schulz 1980.

6.7   Further Research

6.7.1   Other types of websites

By using two case studies, this thesis has shown that it is possible to read websites as places when "place" is seen as a theoretical human construction. However, further research on other types of websites is essential to substantiate this claim. The two chosen websites are "exploratory", non-interactive digital documents and also belong to the "database form",[755] or the "searchable archive" model.[756] Other dissimilar websites need to be investigated to see if they may also be read as "places", and if so, what additional profits will be gained by such readings.

The following are some possibilities:

- Interactive websites that allow users to interact with each other and even to collaborate so as to determine the course of events such as interactive computer games, MUDs, MOOs, Chats, interactive hypertext fiction and collaborative writing sites.

- Corporate websites that mainly cater to existing and potential clients such as websites of banks, credit card companies, airlines, travel agents and hotels.

- E-shopping and e-auction websites that require interactive registering functions as well as transactions via Internet.

- Other kinds of non-transient websites. The *Polaria* website that I have briefly discussed before serves as an example.[757] As a promotional website for the Polaria Research Centre, it owns its existence to the physical location.

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[755] See Lev Manovich (2001) *The Language of New Media* (Mass. & London: MIT Press) pp. 218-219.
[756] See Raine Koskimaa (2000) *Digital literature. "From Text to Hypertext and Beyond"*. PhD diss., University of Jyväskylä (Finland), quoted by Ryan 2004, p.343
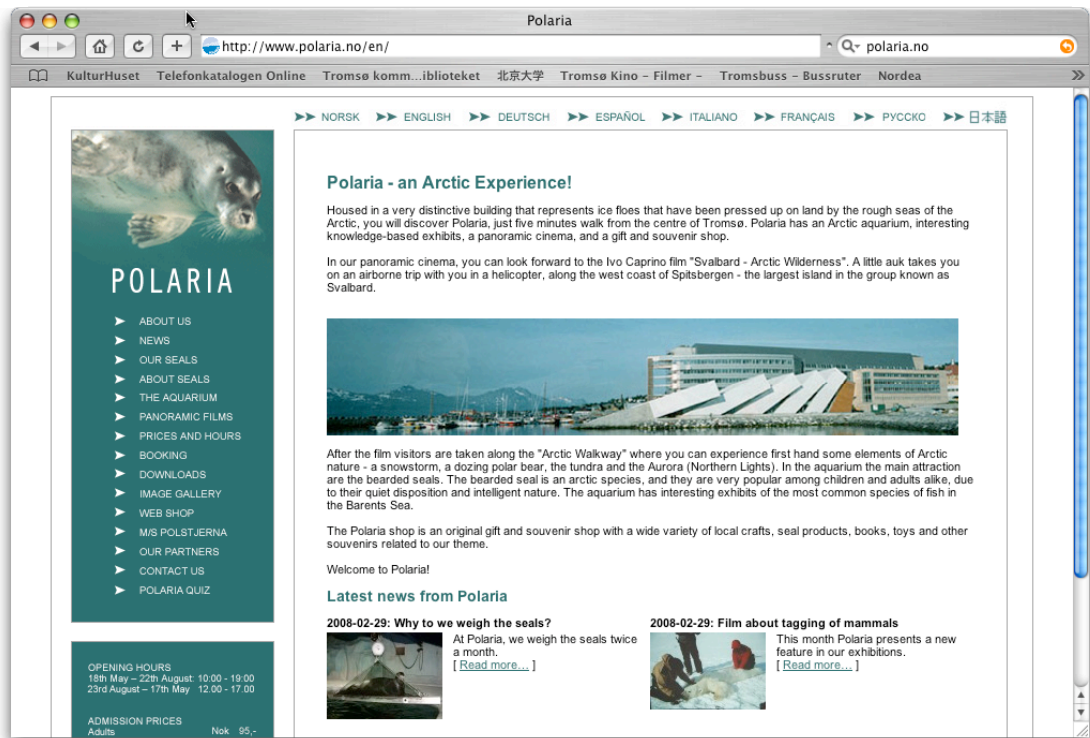[757] See *Polaria* website: http://www.polaria.no/en/

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Figure 61: The *Polaria* website

Could we argue that these websites may also be seen as "places" since many of these sites target members or clients who repeat their visits? Do they possess the above-mentioned three features of a "place"? How are they different from the two websites that are analysed in this thesis?

6.7.2　"Place", "imagined communities", and interactive websites

Further research will also be necessary to corroborate the relationship between "places", "sense of belonging" and "imagined" communities in connection to interactive websites.

If we take interactive websites such as dungeons or online chat groups as examples, could we argue that these websites are "places" and their members are the "imagined" communities of those places?

For example, the *Second Life* website may be an interesting case study because it performs real estate acquisition and property management in the digital environment. This website allows members to buy and build their

dream-houses according to the members' tastes and desires in the areas they select.[758] Members need to subscribe and pay for their houses to be designed, built, furnished and maintained. In addition, members can choose their own surrogates and live in their houses.

Figure 62: The *Second Life* website

If these interactive websites may be seen as places and do have an imagined community, do bonds exist among the members of the community? What kinds of bonds are these: commercial, hierarchical, affectionate, or imaginative? Does the existence of these bonds reinforce revisiting? Could we say that revisiting the websites is a major way to strengthen the bonds and those websites that encourage these bonds are doubtless "places"? Do these websites depend on symbolic associations or solely on interactive possibilities? Are there significant differences between non-interactive and interactive websites in terms of place making and the sense of community?

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[758] According to the *Second Life* website, this site is a "3-D virtual world entirely built and owned by its residents. Since its opening to the public in 2003, it has grown explosively and today is inhabited by a total of 6,037,767 people from around the globe". See: *http://secondlife.com/whatis/*

6.8   Closing Remarks

This thesis attempts to use the theoretical concept of "place" borrowed from the humanistic geographers to explore, firstly, the differences between traditional and digital place making and secondly, the nature of digital documents in connection to digital environments.

When employing "place" as a theoretical concept, I argue that place making in digital dimensions is comparable to that in traditional ones. As a kind of cultivated environment, digital environments also function as "places" for modern humans. This is crucial to our daily existence since modern humans apparently rely extensively on digital technology.

By seeing websites as "places", the evolutionary nature of digital documents is reconfirmed. Instead of the paper-digital dichotomy, websites in this thesis are seen as an evolvement or a continuation of traditional documents. Also, digital environments open new possibilities for reading without replacing traditional modes of reading. The exploratory investigative mode of reading does not exclude preceding reading modes such as the isolated immersion mode. In addition, the two websites are examples of web documents and demonstrate the capability to connect with other documents via links and nodes. Navigational structures and also thematic and representational linkages make connections. By showing themselves as localities as well as part of interrelated networks, the two websites enable the flow between local and global. Last but not least, the relation between websites as "places" and the "imagined" communities is explored. I argue that the communities formed by these two non-interactive websites depend primarily on symbolic associations and the sharing of cultural meaning. This final observation brings us back to the findings on "place" and place making since the bonding between "place" and people is, as Yi-Fu Tuan has argued, fundamentally affective, associative and symbolic.

These two case studies have illustrated the possibility that websites may be read as "places" and reading them as such provides us with insights into place

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making in digital environments. Further investigation into other kinds of websites such as interactive websites will be necessary to establish the essential criteria for the distinction between websites as "places" and websites as "sites". Reading websites as "places" will thereby enhance our comprehension of digital environments that is of growing significance for modern human existence.

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