Playable Places: Google's Answer to Pokemon Go

One of the most intriguing things I've learned about at Google I/O is the Google Maps Platform gaming offerings and, among those, playable places.

The base concept is this:

Take Ingress and Pokemon Go and make them playable world-wide without having to collect data about the structures where you want to place markers for interaction to happen. With that base take out the possibility of playing in inappropriate places (like cemeteries) and other private properties where you have not been allowed to play, Google has done the work for us in identifying places where we can run our apps without fear of upsetting property owners or playing in sensitive locations.

You also have the ability to use geofences to make certain activities only happen where we want them to be. For example, we want an event for a scavenger hunt only to happen in a single place in the playing area; we can create a geofence around that place so that the event will only trigger when inside the region defined by the fence. It gives developers a lot more flexibility in craeting and configuring our users' experience.

These are some games using the maps platform that have already been

anounced and appear in the Map Platform and will release in the near future (click on the video title for a larger version).

Ideas and Examples

Beyond the games presented above, here are some ideaas of what we can use playable places for. Some of these ideas come from having worked at Geoteaming creating team building scavenger hunts. Some come from playing board, computer and role playing games.

Scavenger Hunts and Team Building Exercises

Other than games, scavenger hunts are the essential activity to do in a virtual world. We can do generic scavenger hunts where the objective can be to collect points or trophies by visiting and/or completing challenges in as many locations within the playing area as possible.

These missions could be as simple as capturing an enemy monster (think Pokemon Go), or working to decipher a puzzle at the location, or any other type of individual or team oriented activity you can think about.

Marketing for a geographical location

A variation on the scavenger hunt theme is to create marketing experiences.

For example: A business association can create a marketing campaign for their members. Get specific rewards (physical and virtual) when players visit participating locations.

The organizer can then choose to award phisical prizes to the person or group who gets the highest score or who has shared the adventure in Social Media.

Laser Tag

Like Ingress live events or Pokemon Go Raid Battles large scale events can be the main activity or the captsone event for a smaller or shorter duration game.

Conclusion and Next Steps

This are just first ideas, I'll be playing with more ideas and following the process to see how expensive it would be to get some of them implemented.

Other questions are more in line of development environment required to use the APIs.

- Am I allowed to create web applications to use the API?
- Am I limited to Unity and mobile devices?
- If I follow the scavenger hunt model, do I need to create one application per geographical region?

The next steps are to write down a concrete proposal and then contact Google to see what would next steps be and where it'll go from there.