

# Experimental product: Specification Sheet

## Production

### Year

2014 (first release, 1.0)

2018 (improved for the experiment, 2.0)

### Format

Interactive documentary (web)

## Concept

The documentary project was conceived with the intention of making visible and spreading stories about unique ways of life, born in changing environments that tend to disappear. In addition, the authors considered from the beginning that digital tools should favour the durability of stories in contemporary media, both for journalistic dissemination and entertainment and for the archiving of small stories at a specific point in our history. Thus, the documentary is situated in a small region of Western Europe in a context marked by population ageing, the rural exodus, the automation of processes, the industrialization of natural resources, the economic crisis, etc.; together with intangible values of solitude, authenticity, courage or bravery that denote their protagonists: five people living in places far from the city with unique lifestyles (an abandoned village, a lighthouse or sailing around the world, among others). The documentary links the lives of these people with the places and feelings they transmit to build a vision of the region, of its ideosyncrasy and socio-cultural reality.

The project is situated between the observational and reflexive documentary modes, mainly. On the one hand, the viewer is confronted with different stories built without a narrator, where the characters tell their own story. On the other hand, the subject matter, the approach and the interactive proposal aim at raising the spectator's awareness and making him/her build his/her own critical interpretation. Therefore, the interactive – involving, engaging – format feeds back into the purpose of the documentary.

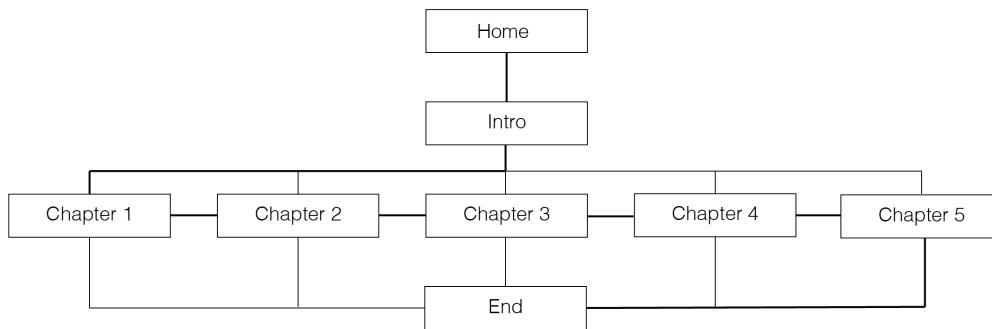
## Design and structure

Taking reference to previous projects such as *Hollow*, navigation by parallax scrolling was implemented to generate the illusion of three-dimensionality and provide dynamism, based on HTML5 and CSS3 to animate the document layers.

The structure starts with an introductory page, and then provides five parallel stories and an ending. It allows an optional linear proposal and, in turn, a non-sequential consumption of the stories from a common input and output.

A top menu and a bottom menu (which appears when the vertical navigation is finished) are implemented. In addition to allowing to move forward and backward in the documentary, it provides navigation by different criteria (biographical, geographical) and access to spaces of additional information, participation and social media.

Figure 1. Navigation scheme (the thick line shows the linear path)



## Multimediality and interactivity

The project uses different media and languages. Pictures, videos, compositions with animated text, maps, icons and other audiovisual elements are used. The parallax effect is implemented with the Skrollr script and the sound is synchronized with the input and output animations of elements in the browser window with the AudioFade script. An autoplay script allows for automatic and smooth play of the illustrative videos.

In each of the chapters there is an introductory video, a central content of about 5 minutes long and several additional contents of audiovisual nature. The videos are played in a lightbox popup with the Magnific Popup script and are hosted on YouTube to optimize the page load time and the demand for resources to the own server.

The breaking of the linearity is articulated through the described menus and the buttons that voluntarily show and hide the contents – actions controlled with Javascript, click and mouseleave events applying changes on the layer styles –.

Participation is channelled through social media, with connected profiles, content sharing buttons and instructions to help expand the documentary with user-generated content. Users can also vote and make decisions that help define the personality of the characters and accumulate distance travelled through viewing the stories – the results are shown at the end of the documentary. These functionalities are articulated through forms, a database, cookies and PHP language. The website requests the geolocation of the user through the browser to personalize the content and locate the user in relation to each of the places where the stories are developed.

## Tracking

A custom system has been implemented that allows the monitoring of relevant actions during navigation. The behavior monitoring system is based on Google Analytics, which already collects unique users, page views, session duration and bounce, geographic origin of traffic, access device and navigation paths.

In addition, key elements are labelled as events for a detailed analysis of user behaviour in the experiment:

- category: object type (video, button function and destination);
- action: type of interaction (click, play, pause);
- tag: additional information (page where the event is located, url of the played video);
- value: integer to quantify some dimension.

The whole structure is tagged with events to collect all the interactions related to any element clickable by the user. In each HTML element that we wanted to track, we added the onclick event, with the following structure: `onClick="ga('send', 'event', { eventCategory: 'category', eventAction: 'action', eventLabel: 'tag' });"`; except for the videos, which are controlled

with Google Tag Manager. On this platform you configure a trigger, the variables associated to the content that will be stored and the tag that will be shown in the analytics panel; it connects to the Google Analytics property and is seen together with the rest of the data.

### Versions to evaluate the experience

Four versions are developed that allow the independent variables to be operated: (IV1) non-linearity/linearity; and (IV2) multimedia-interactive/only-video. They are implemented as subdirectories of the main website. Each user accesses a randomly assigned version through the Google Chrome browser, under laboratory conditions.

The original version is non-linear and multimedia-interactive. From this, navigation was limited by removing menus and buttons to have a linear multimedia-interactive version. An audiovisual version (only video) with content from each section or chapter of the documentary and another only video version with a menu and buttons was developed. In this way, we articulated the four versions for the experiment, maintaining also a common aesthetic. The web development was carried out by the main researcher of the study.

Table 1. Operationalization of variables

		<b>Multimedia-interactive</b>	<b>Only-video</b>
		Original characterization of the interactive documentary. Use of multimedia (photography, constant sound, maps, parallax navigation, etc.). Interactive functions and personalization (geolocation, voting, participation, etc.).	Conventional audiovisual storytelling: only videos are used (in version 4 a single 30-minute video).
<b>Non-linearity</b>	Free navigation. Menus (top and bottom) and buttons allow the user to select the order and control the progress.	<i>Version 1</i>	<i>Version 3</i>
<b>Linearity</b>	The narrative follows a linear order that cannot be altered (no menus); it is necessary to follow the order and see all the chapters to reach the end.	<i>Version 2</i>	<i>Version 4</i>

Version 1 (IV1=0; IV2=1); version 2 (IV1=1; IV2=1); version 3 (IV1=0; IV2=0); version 4 (IV1=1; IV2=0).