

## LIVING IN PERSISTENT WORLDS 2/3

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Batman, Superman, Spiderman, James Bond...are lead characters of stories that have gone beyond their time not only for the heroes' super powers; or for the remarkable fact that they've achieved to save the world from evil forces. These stories have transcended through generations, because once the movie is over or the book closed, the public goes back into living within the streets and scenarios where these heroes came alive: The City.

Aiden Pearce (A Northern Ireland Native), is Watch Dog's main character and apparently he too follows this pattern (he even has the deep, masculine, velvety voice to go with it). With Chicago as a backdrop, wearing a distinguishable blazer and cap, citizen Pearce is quite your modern hero.

Watch\_Dogs is a videogame created by Ubisoft in Montreal; it was presented in 2012 but is expected to be available around the globe by spring 2014, even though it is already for sale at some stores in the USA. Its main character's world is the world of the information revolution.

In [this series' first instalment](#) the concept of *persistent worlds* was presented through the words of Marc Whitten, corporate vice president of Xbox, during his new console's presentation. He explained how these worlds are possible thanks to the power given by hundreds of thousands of servers that are capable of keeping and operating all kind of user's data, even when these are not in front of their console. These servers create from all that data *shadows* of ourselves, with which other players can interact in our absence. Living in a *persistent world* hence means that we exist in a reality that unfolds from our physical existence, thanks to the managing and retrieving of our data.

Well, that is exactly how Aiden Pearce's world looks like. A Chicago citizen who, thanks to a system called *The Profiler* loaded on his phone -which is of course smart- provided to him through his college and fellow hacker Clara Lille (nice touch Ubisoft) and a prominent arsenal. Navigates the city eluding police forces and looking to serve some kind of justice by his own hand within a system that developers describe as corrupted.

What is the difference between Watch Dogs and the story of any other superhero in the city? That for Pearce the city is not a backdrop as before mentioned, but actually his main weapon. The aforementioned mobile device allows him to hack and then use the

city's information system called ctOS to navigate through his quests. This system was created to automatize the city's services, and hence enhance it inhabitant's life quality.

Being security cameras, traffic network, public transportation information, lightning, sewage, open internet, and communications interconnected and loaded to the servers of a sole company, makes our character's pursues that much easier. Making it possible for him to access the city's reality-folds through the data and controllers this unified system provides.

And what does Pearce achieve with all this? Is he a hero-hacker or a villain? Ubisoft has announced various packages for the game in which different missions will be included. Nevertheless the developers have always used the word *vigilante* to describe Pearce, and have let us know that he has a dark past as member of a criminal cell called *The Fixers*, they've also hinted the fact that his sister appears to be in some kind of trouble with the system. So the only thing known once the game starts is that Aiden Pearce is looking for justice through controlling the system on his favor. Transforming the physical reality of the inhabitants of a city, through tampering with the information they generate and need.

But how can he go onto doing this for as long as his story lasts? By preventing being hacked by other users, by increasing his access to the information network and managing it in a more efficient way, by keeping in touch with his friends and looking out for his reputation in the media and hence with other members of his community, his city.

Except for the use of heavy artillery and the fact that he is seeking for some sort of systemic justice, everything else sounds just like the everyday life of an urbanite, with smartphone included. Especially because these *persistent worlds* are not the backdrop of a story, but the worlds in which us, the audience is starting to live, within and outside the console.