LUDIC STRATEGIES IN PUBLIC ENVIRONMENTS

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Starting with a concept of environment not only as 'what is around us' but as the cultural and visual agents we interact with, it appears that situations and interactions between individuals and media content are building a new kind of citizen, a *gamified* citizen that needs strategies to cope with the curious order of public relations we call *ludocracy.*

Figure 1.Protest June 19th - 15M Valencia movement Spanish revolution.
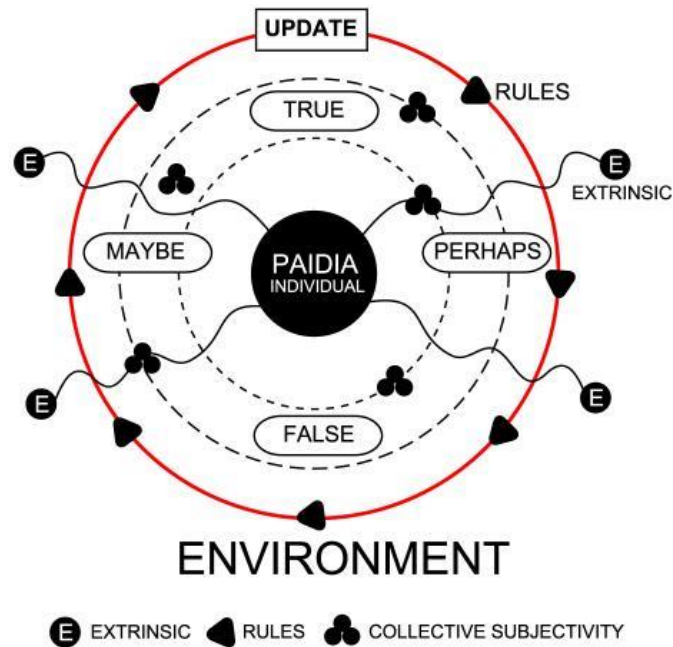

Figure 2. Ludic strategies graphic

Figure.3 Hibrid Playground, 2008, Diego Díaz, Clara Boj. Public space media interaction

1. INTRODUCTION. DESCRIPTION OF THE ELEMENTS OF THE GAME

This paper is presented as a panorama where we show the changes and issues that we have seen in the last few years in the relationship between the environment, art and game. To place ourselves in the text we need to clarify the meaning in which we will use these terms.

We understand "environment" not only as the atmosphere that surrounds us, but also on one hand as characteristics that come from the social and we consider this social environment mainly as "scenery of communication" and on the other hand, characteristics from the information technology field, defining the environment as a set of intrinsic conditions that are needed to make the system work, like the type of program, process or the characteristics of the devices that it consists of.

Let us focus on these word games that could come from these definitions, especially with: conditions, extrinsic, functionality, scenery and communication. From these terms we draw a graph, which is constantly moving due to the interactions that occur between them. The graphs shows movement from the outside to the inside passing by a variable of conditions, all with the fundamental need to work and complete a task in this communicative setting.

This visual model of the environment (Figure 2), which we suggest as functional, presents a variety of layers between the exterior and the space of the individual, in the exterior there are a set of rules that are updated from time to time. These set of rules are related to a political-social aspect and the coexistence that the scenery of communication suggests.

These rules and their variable mechanics define the game as the whole system that we call the environment. Inside this system we find outbreak of *Paidia* characterised by spontaneity, entertainment, destruction, human willingness that acts without ethical deliberation, [1] but this is only found intrinsically in the individual.

On the other hand, between the individual and the environment under rule, we find ludus "a play institutionalizes as a game." [2]

This "ludus" space maintains a relationship with the public. We understand the public from the definition of Habermas [3] as a process by which the citizens occupy the public sphere controlled by the institutional authority and they transform it into a *space* to criticise against the power.

As in the game, the process is more important than the object; the public is a continuity, a procedure which requires constant renewal.

2. THE ROLE OF THE MASS MEDIA WITHIN THE ENVIRONMENT

We saw in the definition the characteristics of the devices that make up the environment, influence in the conditions that the systems needs in order to work, we centre the role of the media in these devices.

The mechanisms of technical and conceptual devices that go beyond measuring the established communication, in the map of its developments and possibilities, the structure and ways of life in a community, its movements from physical to mental, adjusting the sense of sight and of hearing in proximity and distance, in real or delayed time, producing in only one direction as multi-linear and participative feedback.

"These lines of the mechanisms don't include or surround the system; each of them will be homogeneous on their own, (object, subject and language) but it will go in different directions forming unbalanced systems," [4] these unbalanced processes, these changeable directions can administrate and control knowledge, social practises, individual behaviours from these mechanisms (apparatus) of the state, the academy and the industry or consumption.

The impact of the media on the social fabric has been critically analysed by the Frankfurt school. With the passing of time we can see the hopeful position of Benjamin: to create an emancipation and to raise the awareness of the individual; like the perspectives of dehumanization, for the advancement of technological resources and the development of cultural industry that Horkheimer or Adorno presaged, they have drawn our present, hopeful but deceptive at the same time.

The mechanisms of control and the social machination continues to grow but the unveiling of its mechanisms, the access to its component and program codes, spread openly through the network generating a shared knowledge, a "wiki" of resources hoping that the individual will feel the desire to take action and think about the strategies that they should take to perforate these rules of the game, these mechanisms. We can act in the environment, in public spaces and know its conditions, function, setting and the means of communication.

3. STRATEGIES TO RE DEFINE THE RULES OF THE GAME

The latest social transformations which has taken place mainly in Europe have revealed some of the rules of the game, showing gaps in the social cohesion, levels of inequality or dark tunnels; the disappearing of homogenous spaces of well being have given way to new territories that the citizen has to discover.

Where to do we place ourselves on this board game?

The individual as a citizen see that "…the urban becomes what is always was: a place of desire, of permanent disequilibrium, and the seat of the dissolution of normalities and constraints, the moment of play and the unpredictable." [5]

And confronting this situation we establish new ludic strategies on different levels:

The first level of strategies include among others:

- The need to share the game: multi players. With the idea of not only sharing but creating collectively. [6]
- Take back some of the rules that are established by the system: Social networks. Using them as a witness to the actions that happen in the game.
- "That's true, Benteley agreed. After a time he said, No, there's no point in playing a rigged game. But what's your answer? What do you do when you discover the rules are fixed so you can't win?" [7]
- Generate new rules for the game. Build new media, with the intention of developing tactical strategies.
- "You do what I did: you draw up new rules and play by them. Rules by which all the players have the same odds. And the M-game doesn't give those odds. The M-game, the whole classification system, is stacked against us. So I said to myself, what sort of rules would be better?" [7]
- Play with the rules. Take the position of the joker to develop an in/out strategy in the actual system.
- Create low cost devices towards the democratization of the actual system.

The second level of ludic strategies placed:

- A new use of festivities and celebrations as a strategic switch. Profanity of sacred public spaces, [8] and public shows. [9]
- A rebalancing of the auditory and the visual. Suggesting the resonance as a relevant leader in the performative activity.
- Reusing the protocols and systems of symbols as a strategy to learn the game quickly.
- The re conquest of public transit spaces (squares and gardens) as play areas. Political game, economic and social.

And these strategies can give way to:

- Renovation of the significant potential of symbolic forms.
- Use of the route (path) as a graphic adventure.
- Reconversion of transit spaces in areas of consensus and public debate.
- Democratization of media.

- Search for Ludocracy. Reconstruction of the game from the consensus and little by little from all the players.

4. ART AS A FUNDAMENTAL STRATEGY

Art has the ability to bring together the rational and irrational containing a field as wide as the game. *Paidia* and ludus find space in art. The strategy, calculation, intuition or experience build practise that make us aware that we are playing and not just see and also interact in the "first person." [10]

For example," N55 rocket system" from the collective N55 is a low cost homemade devise made with functional and symbolic elements: the rocket is propelled with a mixture of polyethylene and laughing gas. This devise greatly increases the basic elements of protest, from seeds to texts; acting for example in one of its interventions, against Monsanto herbicide in a way very similar to how the industry operates in the air. The rocket spreads the seeds from a height of 5,200 meters. With this proposal the importance of generating new ways to intervene and use tactical strategies becomes evident.

The artistic practises that give new visualising systems can transfer stimuli to spectacular situations or small personal screens. For example, *Cell phone disco* (2006) by Ursula Lavrenčič and Auke Touwslage turns a personal device like a mobile phone into a collective ludic activity by visualising on a LED surface the electromagnetic waves that the telephones use when they are active.

On the other hand, Haruki Nishijima, in the piece *Remain in Light*, look for and capture analogical waves in urban spaces so that they can later be visualised in an exhibition space, the forms that they generate as perceived as extinct elements like what happens with the fireflies in Japan.

Against these low cost practises there are others that have a spectacular visualization system like *Body Movies* (2008), by Rafael Lozano-Hemmer, that project in public spaces, the shadows of the pedestrians in great
so that they reveal images that were previously taken in the city.

Also, *Lummo Blocks* (2010), by Lummo (Carles Guitiérrez, Mar Canet and Jordi Puig) and Javier Lloret, project a version of the Tetris game on the façade of the Medialab-Prado in Madrid in which the pedestrians can play interacting in a coordinated way to control the movement and position of the pieces.

Another piece that intervenes in the media, redesigning the normal visualization system in the news, is *News Map* (2003) by Marcos Weskamp and Dan Albritton. This case maintains a ludic relationship by means of a direct manipulation by the user themselves and under the parameter of the instantaneous news. It is relevant in this visualization what place the news occupies in these Medias and its level of relevance in the mediated society. The user has the ability to manipulate this system of visualization.

In this line of visualization, the example of *Grey in Men* (2010) by Julian Oliver and Danja Vasiliev, are highlighted in which they bridge the access point of wifi and camouflaged in the offer in public spaces (hotels, internet cafes...)

The locative games take part in a very direct way in the renovating of these ludic strategies, for example *Urban Codemakers*, (2011) by Troy Innocent, it is a game spread out on the streets of Melbourne

that through the creation of new iconic signs (ideotag) renew the language and culture through the game.

It is noteworthy to point out that, within these practises, *Hybrid Playground* (2008) by Diego Díaz and Clara Boj (Colectivo Lalalab) [Fig. 3] as an example of the re conquering of the playful urban spaces already existing in the urban space. Through mobile devices (PDA) the children not only play with the street furniture but also this furniture interacts with the video game installed in each of the children's' devises, creating a ludic experience between the physical and virtual, amplifying the classical playful spaces (playground) and reconverting it into an enlarged playful space.

These practises in the intervention of public spaces dissolve the limits of artistic space and dialogue, for example, with the behaviour of the *Skaters* as playful manipulators that find their board game in the urban spaces; or like *Parkour* (the art of moving)tracers of roads, trails, maps, territories, overcoming all the obstacles. There are no rules for the parkour and because of this it adopts a role close to *Paidia*, characterised by the spontaneity and fun while the skater assumes more the role of the joker, gambler or jester with the rules of the game.

These and other types of subversive practises that are not aggressive to urban spaces, like *street chalk message* or the *guerrilla sticker*, reflect creative ludic strategies that waver between the field of art and the urban, where the role of the players are based on the reconquering of the public space as a critical game.

5. CONCLUSIONS:

Returning to the idea of public space by Habermas, [3] we can sense this scenery of communication like a porous sphere that takes on the themes and contributions of all the players, a space in which we can make a new turn to recuperate the public debate culture, lost through its transformation in the culture of public consumption.

And resuming the idea of ludic strategy of profanity through the game Agamben, the citizen is freed from the rules of the institutional sphere, of what is sacred as he states, and he grants a new dimension of use: "to restore the game to its purely profane vocation is a political task." [8]

This environment that we propose is the correct place where we can generate communities of media producers through creative and ludic aspects. Throughout the text we have been collecting elements that shape this possible post- medial, redefining the role and extensiveness of the devises toward independent low cost systems and adopt as a tactical strategy the decision to act from the microphone without losing effective communication and producing a change of collective attitude by experiencing the game.

Its construction is feasible for the public distribution of free and open knowledge, growing outside of academic contexts under a more flexible and dynamic structure, and also by the diffusion of artistic practices that are outside the context of the art industry and establish an effective bridge to popular culture and street culture.

Have we already seen this present in the public sphere?

Perhaps more that its presence, we have seen its desire, embodied for example in the open and non-hierarchical structure of 15M with the re-adapting of symbolic forms and rules coming from other game systems (football red card=politician out of the game). Its system of communication is based on the effectiveness of the social networks, our desire would be that they were produced through independent devices as an answer to what Jose Luis Brea stated in 2000 "imagine the development of the independent devices that given their agility and presumed strategic effectiveness, will soon be able to rearrange the landscape of artistic mediations of experience." [11]

In these ludic devices, of action and communication is where we see the prints of ludocracy. Citizens' re adapting of the rules of the game step by step and under its consensus.

Faced with a reality that we elude, but where action is possible, these strategies allow us to have a greater awareness of the effects of that representation, so that by analyzingthe layers of pretense, rather than bend or fold it, we search in them points of symbolic escape from which individuals see everything an an graphic adventure because they are aware of the game.

References and Notes:

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