

GAMIFICATION VERSUS LUDICTATORSHIP. FROM SEX GAMES TO RUSSIAN OMELETTE.

INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the first time we heard about gamification was in a speech on 'how to save the world using multiplayer games' delivered by Jane McGonigal, one of the precursors of gamification through her book *Reality is Broken*. This Institute for the Future's researcher stated that people need to keep playing multiplayer games for more than 21000 millions hours in order to solve the most important problems on Earth: poverty, starvation, climate change, war, etc.

The game is -as described by Huizinga and later by Caillois- a non productive activity according to a capitalistic way of thinking focused on the production of objects or goods, on the monetization of effort, namely the effort turned into a service for others or a saleable good.. Gamification is, in the opposite way, proposing a conversion of every non-productive effort arising from game into a new and huge driving force capable of changing the world.

DEFINITIONS

Zichermann has commented that 'in tactical terms, gamification can be thought of as using some elements of game systems in the cause of a business objective [...] gamification is being used to create experiences that use the power of games [...] in spheres as diverse as HR, healthcare, finance, government and education' (2011).

On the other side, Schell (2010) states that the 'gamification is taking things that aren't games and trying to make them feel more like games'.

In this regard, there are abundant examples in widely varied sectors also: from education, to human behavior, bio medicine, etc. Among these examples some stand out, such as the interesting proposals by Fun Theory, which usually intend to produce an impact on aspects of everyday life to change people's behavior and make it healthier, more civic and respectful. Another project called "m.Paani" tries to combine loyalty programs with current spending on mobile calls in impoverished areas from developing countries so as to involve telecommunications companies in the solution of the problem of access to potable water in such areas. The third example is "Foldit", an online game about manipulating biomolecular structures, thanks to which advances in HIV research have been made. The last example is a game called "Play SPENT", an Urban Ministries of Durham and McKinney Marketing Agency collaboration, in which, as a citizen who earns almost 1000 \$ a month, the player has to resist social exclusion through very difficult decision making.

However, these are not the only cases involving gamification. Gamification is a powerful tool and can be used in manifold ways. Today both military and videogame industries share a lot of information about technological innovations as well as contents, real missions, etc. For example, it can be argued that a good videogamer-pilot may need few training lessons in order to pilot a real combat drone. In fact, the graphic interfaces of drone cockpits are almost indistinguishable from those of combat-flight simulator games.

Workplace gamification has had many facets. The attempts to introduce game elements or playgrounds into the workplace to turn it more pleasant and desirable are well known. Nevertheless, a very rigid work schedule does not allow to use these "in-workplace" playgrounds. Other applications of gamification in the workplace try to stimulate workers to improve their efforts and results, even if this kind of gamification could be counterproductive or if it is senselessly implemented instead of trying to solve real workplace problems with more resources or improving communication with workers.

SOME QUESTIONS

When I wrote my article about gamification for Zackariasson & Wilson's *The Video Game Industry. Formation, Present State and Future* (2012), I considered useful to create a taxonomy of gamification,

dividing it into three types: Natural, Technological and Forced Gamification. These three kinds of gamification mirror the three essential elements of every ludic manifestation: the Cultural, Technological and Economical aspects of today's games.

Many elements of gamification, such as game mechanics, achievements and goals, have evolved thanks to new and digital technologies. Despite this I would like to turn my attention back to traditional ludic mechanisms used to achieve improvements in health, intellectual development and work. In this sense, I propose new approaches to everyday problems in order to break the system's rules that are commonly imposed upon us.

The first of these problems is that of my father's lack of reading. When I lend my father a book, I notice that the bookmark remains at the same place for a long period of time. How can I help him to read more?

Second problem: Some friends of mine are smokers and even when they take a look at the very disgusting images on the packet of cigarettes they do not feel the urge to quit smoking. How can I help them to quit this unhealthy habit?

The third is about our personal tasks. Even if I have got a lot of task management software it is hard to choose which task I should start with. How can I help myself this way?

The fourth is about food waste on flights, restaurants or trips in general. How can we save food and distribute it efficiently?

The fifth and final one is about a situation that affected the tax administrator of my own company in the past. In order to know the satisfaction level of our clients, he had to do a considerable amount of paperwork, even if we used a powerful ERP tool. How can I use technology, or gamification in order to help him to do this job as fast as possible?

THE GAME IN GENERAL

6 out of the 21 most famous IMDB quotes from the TV series *The Wire* mention the word 'game'¹. There are numerous TV series characters and politicians appearing on TV that mention the word 'game'. Even well known films like 1983's *WarGame* mention game as something considerably serious.

Less known games such as 'Jogo do Bicho' (Game of animals in Portuguese) -despite the legal issues around it- proved to be a powerful tool with great influence on the political and social structure of a huge country as Brazil (Chazkel, 2012).

Human beings introduced 'playfulness' in every aspect of their lives, and even in death, from the beginning of Human History. Very close to life conception we use sexual toys. Dildos date back to 23.000 BC, that means they are older than agriculture².

There is a very funny and illustrative example in the Spanish comedy film *Airbag* (Spain, 1997). It depicts some kind of Russian roulette variation called 'The Russian Omelette', which consists in using poisoned omelettes instead of guns. Examples like the Russian roulette/Omelette show us how even in deadly situations we introduce playful elements.

GAMIFICATION AS THE GREAT PROMISE

Take your time and think about the different kinds of physical and mental energy that are needed to perform each of these activities. With the aid of this map I intend to show some kind of cartography that visualizes

1 See <<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0306414/quotes>> Accessed July 24, 2013.

2 See <<http://listverse.com/2013/01/11/10-sex-toys-with-ridiculously-ancient-origins/>> Accessed July 24, 2013.



For these reasons I consider gamification as a natural and native process since the beginning of Human History and, perhaps, prior to Culture. We have gamified our sexuality as well as the construction and destruction of our societies, therefore playing games has always had a pivotal role in education and labour. In this manner, during our childhood we play ludic simulations with their own badges in order to feel closer to adults' tasks. Owing to those simulations we become aware of the necessity to deepen our practical and theoretical knowledge about those tasks through oral or written education. Then we transform our ludic activities into work or craft activities. My theory is: this occurs innately since the beginning of time until the Industrial Era.

A History of Children's Play and Play Environments (Frost, 62) analyzes very important changes occurred from the end of the 19th to the beginnings of the 20th century in the USA (massive displacements from country to urban areas, the growth of large production factories, institutionalization and centralization of education, etc.) and how these factors influenced the culture of children's play. In the section "Victims of a Stolen Childhood" we find the efforts of reformers to reroute this forcibly urbanized childhood, young victims of a strong cultural shock. Needless to say, the culture of play also suffered greatly as a consequence.

On the one hand, factories and assembly line work, contrary to what happened with traditional jobs, prevented the unproductive presence of children within their facilities. That is, the child was in a factory because he or she was working and never playing. On the other hand, the work in the factory used to be highly automatized in every way; it was usually required to learn a single and very limited task belonging to a production chain consisting of other similarly mechanical and limited tasks. Thus we moved from the traditional and almost artistic work / craft (where a large amount of knowledge was needed to perform or complete a product) to learn a simple mechanical gesture that did not require great expertise. The ludic faded into insignificance with the rise of industrial labor.

Concurrently, educational environments, and specifically schools, also began to look more like factories than recreational and community environments where children and teenagers practiced (very close to the adults in the community to which the children belonged) the "games to learn". In modern schools playing games was removed altogether in order to mechanize and automatize learning and reshape future generations of workers and factory workers.

To make matters worse, in the 30's of the 20th century the most passive and individual form of entertainment became highly popular : the TV. TV eliminated social and abstract playing, the way of playing just for fun or being accompanied by other people.

In every human activity, from pleasure for pleasure's sake to the exercise of military acts or the educational and civil works, game was losing ground in favor of the new industrialization and, more specifically, of Fordism. We witnessed an unprecedented de-gamification process that has lasted about a century (Image 3)



un-gamification :-)

The birth and forging of such a young country like the United States is clearly linked to its industrial concept, the work at the factories and more specifically to Fordism. It went unnoticed though that this native gamification was almost completely eliminated in the process. That is, those countries and areas with high industrial development were de-gamified.

THEN, THE 70's CAME

After the Summer of Love and the psychedelic explosion of new ideas, both in the U.S. and in other developed and westernized countries a number of coincidences begun to happen which would transform the role of play and game in society.

In 1970, Clark C. Abt publishes *Serious Games*, a declaration of intent on the usefulness of games in educational contexts and how we should transform the classroom so that it does not look like a students factory (remember that video games did not exist at that time).

Later in 1972 the first console called PONG is released. This game hardware parasites television, so that it ceases to be a passive entertainment device and becomes an active (and interactive) one.

In 1973 USA proclaimed the abolition of conscription and demilitarized much of the American population, changing welfare and warfare status.

In 1974, board games and "civilized" war games played at clubs for retired soldiers suffered a major change with the invention by Gary Gigax and Dave Arneson of the first RPG, Dungeons & Dragons. This is the ancestor of a genre which would be later digitized with much success.

In 1977 the first Apple II computer breaks into the market, the most complex appliance to date started its unstoppable expansion in all areas of life.

Since the 70's (especially the end of it) all areas of life (leisure, education, labor and army) are digitalized, all of them are sharing the mediation of the computer, a computer that, from its earliest beginnings, is inextricably linked to the (video) game.

This new digital space creates new opportunities for the game according to the different facets of human evolution. Thus, this digital space becomes an indissoluble new "gamespace" in words of McKenzie Wark. The expansion of this new re-gamification is now unstoppable, not as a new phenomenon, but as the unstoppable resurrection under a digital form of a human characteristic that had been suppressed for about a century.

As mentioned above, a "new" country, with its research and development capacities, but also with its 'fordist' ability to destroy an inherent phenomenon to the human being -as the gamification is- sees in this rebirth something new altogether, when, in fact, it was always there: A native or natural gamification now extended by the use of both new technologies and marketing.

GAMIFICATION VERSUS LUDICTATORSHIP

There are some differences between Natural or Native Gamification, which exists since the beginning of humanity, and the new current Forced Gamification / Ludictorship the markets (and marketing) are trying to impose through its centralization, institutionalization and instrumentalization of recreational tools in workplaces or contexts where products are purchased.

A clear example of this is the banner "Everything will go well" that Bitoon Games placed in Cuatro Caminos (Madrid)³ with the aim of -according to members of the company- "introducing dynamic entertainment into arid environments". Perhaps due to the situation in Spain and in a neighborhood with high rates of immigrant population as Cuatro Caminos this phrase can be interpreted as a quite unfortunate irony and not as a beneficial entertainment initiative.

This is what usually happens when gamification is applied from top to bottom instead of the way perhaps rules for every social game should be established: from bottom to top, democratically, involving everyone. Therefore if self-satisfaction or self-fulfillment in Maslow's words arises from the accumulation and development of certain vital aspects, among which are an attractive, well paid and creative job, now this self-fulfillment is replaced by a mechanical Forced Gamification from above which tries to generate in the employee (or customer, depending on the case) something we could call Artificial Happiness. That is, when you use a tool like gamification to induce desired behaviors without discussing the reasons for such modification of behavior or when you are not allowing every person involved to discuss the rules of the game, then you are inducing these behaviors or changes through something similar to a Ludictorship.

That is why gamification acquires a political and ethical character; although nowadays it has great relevance almost exclusively in the academia and in business and marketing, it should start to gain attention and credence in public, social and participatory spaces. The purpose of gamification, like any other means, should be to serve enhance citizen participation, decision-making of human resources departments working in companies or institutions and, ultimately, to promote the rational distribution of power.

ANSWERING THE QUESTIONS

Returning to everyday situations, I want to emphasize the task of working constantly on resolving the kind of problems (either little or serious) that everyday life presents us in an attempt to democratize the rules of the game, the rules of the system in which we live.

3 See <<http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2013/04/26/economia/1366997401.html>> Accessed July 24, 2013.

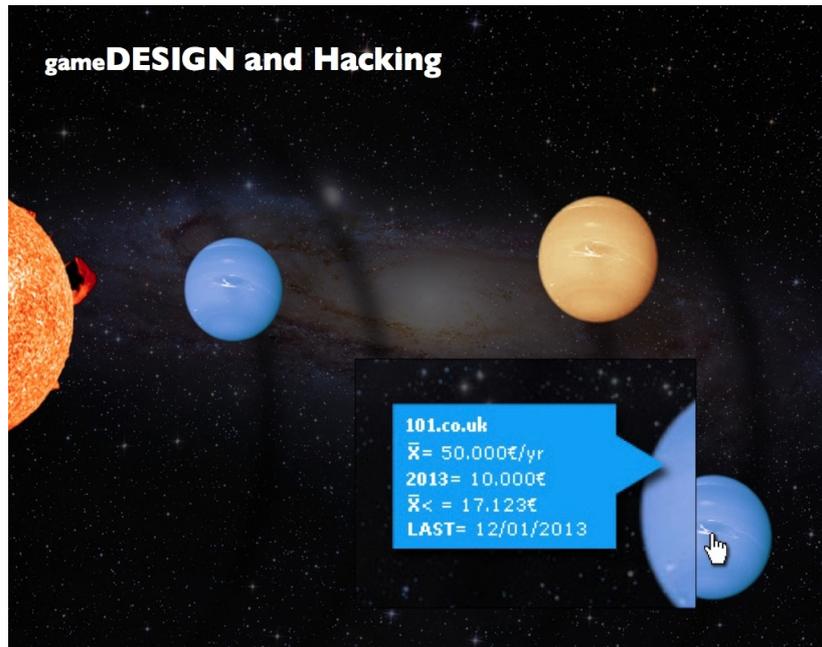
In the first example, the situation revolves around my father's problems with reading. In this case I tried to take advantage of his fondness for television using series in original version with subtitles, something not very common in Spain. In recent months he has been reading more than in any other period of his life. He has also learned a few words in English and values more the original version performances.

In the second case, and despite the terrible images printed on the packets of cigarettes, we see that the fear of death is not enough reason for smokers to quit the habit. On the contrary, their opinion is that "everybody must die of something". Reading about the problems caused by smoking, I found out that the average life expectancy in Spain is reduced 9 years because of tobacco consumption. So I thought the best line of action was to work on positive reinforcement rather than on a negative one. I took pictures of other friends, added the message "9 years without you" and printed them on stickers with which to cover the disgusting, yet anonymous images, trying to prompt real feelings of guilt.

The third case deals with something as basic as personal tasks management, which is related to our inability to admit our own limitations. In my case, I thought I should parameterize the tasks depending on the efforts required to accomplish each one, so that I could choose the easiest at those times when I feel less vigorous. Despite having many different kinds of task managing software, none of them allows me to visualize how hard the performance of a task can be in comparison with another. This helps me to be more effective.

In the fourth case refers to something as simple as food waste around us, be it in a restaurant or on a plane. The fact is that it is an almost stupid gesture, but it is not a gesture of compassion or anything similar. It is simply a spontaneous and voluntary gesture that can help other people, a gesture that breaks the convention that makes us think that wasting food is a normal procedure. In all my travels I have not seen anyone around me that kept leftover food. That is why I recommend collecting and storing food in their unused and unopened containers to give it to people in need. This is a first step towards breaking the chain of wasted food, even if this simple action looks like rather stupid.

In the fifth case, the problem was the suffering of my colleague from the finance department of my previous company due to, the huge number of hours wasted just to generate a report which allows him to obtain conclusions about our customers' satisfaction. So I decided to make a real-time representation of our clients using a solar system model, so that customers appear as planets of different sizes (depending on the average turnover) and orbiting farther or closer (depending on the rate of project requests). By clicking on each planet you could extend this information with real data so that in less than two minutes you could behold a "star map" of the relationship that our customers had with our company ([image n4](#)).



CONCLUSIONS

In the lectures and documentation devoted to Gamification I have identified two different tendencies with regard to Gamification, which are repeated too often.: The first consists in using the term Gamification to refer to things that are actually something else (data visualization, urban intervention, etc..), The other is trying to use gamification when another solution could work just as well or better.

I want to highlight elements that can maximize the use of gamification and should not be underestimated when it comes to carrying out a project to gamify an application, a marketing campaign, etc.

1. reDESIGN and hack. Many authors agree that hybridizations through hacking acts are an endless source of imagination and therefore innovation. Our brain is designed to design, being alert and trying to re-design and improve our environment is a good exercise for "gamificators"
2. Data Visualization. Eyesight is our primary sense and not for nothing: most of the processing load of the brain is due to the interpretation of images, which is why all our attempts at technological improvement in this direction try to represent our environment and, even our future projects not yet realized. Visualizing in one's mind is almost equivalent to comprehend. Through images we share what we think. A picture is worth a thousand words, data visualization is worth terabytes of abstract data.
3. Power of Wellness. This may be more difficult to understand because of the relativity of notions of 'good and evil' in our contemporary society. However, some of these manifestations of good and evil have been translated in terms of "karma" in some internet and social computer applications. We have seen it on internet news groups, even in games like *Fable*. I think that if we act in a different way and in a way that we think can be positive, then such attitude can turn into some sort of power with a significant contagion effect. For example, when a person is the first to collect the faeces of her dog in a neighborhood where people usually do not do it, then she causes a short circuit in their environment that motivates most people to start doing the same.
4. Positive emotional commitment. We see campaigns that resort to and capitalize on terror and fear to help us avoid certain harmful habits or situations; however, it is much better to appeal to positive emotions such

as love and affection, far more needed and valued by any person. According to Fogg, we need reminders to change our behaviors, it is better to use positive reminders than negative ones.

5. Intimate Parameterization. It is advisable to engage in self-criticism in that it allows us to know better ourselves before accepting the recommendations of others, since, by accepting our weak points and how they can influence us, we can deal with them appropriately and design solutions for ourselves and others. This will also help us motivate ourselves.

LAST WORDS

Perhaps now more than ever Huizinga's ideas are more meaningful: we are no so much homo sapiens as homo ludens. Note that the game has a role in all facets of our life and the very concept of gameplay is integrated in our existence.

I also want to emphasize that gamification is a natural process. The emergence of a country like the U.S., -in which the term for this phenomenon was coined around 2010- during the 20th century was closely related to its industrial development, and more specifically to Fordism. But at the same time, such development caused a de-gamification in that society. It is normal that now, owing to the natural (re)blossoming of gamification (stimulated by digitization), the term may seem new, but it is not.

As every tool or device that is placed at our disposal, gamification is not good or bad per se, but it can be used in many different ways. We can try to gamify peace keeping processes, but we are also gamifying war; we gamify the benefits of healthy eating but we also try to evade our social and labor responsibilities using gamifications that are perhaps closer to the concept of ludictatorship.

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