

soccer, protests and videogames

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reSource for Transmedial Culture
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soccer, protests
and videogames

thanks to Tatiana Bazichelli and all the reSource team,
really happy to be here :)))

soccer, protests and videogames

a discussion of operational concepts of gamification and ludification, as a consequence of discussing the criticism against how expenses are being made during the organization of the world cup in brazil

_entering risky territory

there are several people in brazil that are more qualified to discuss the activist usage of media in brazil: pablo ortellado, natacha rena and felipe fonseca, to name a few. I will discuss the topic from a safe distance, from the perspective of the scholar that follows closely the relationships of social movements, art and technologies in Brazil, but do not engage but to a certain point. this results in a paradoxical place, similar to the one occupied by the TV commentator that was misled by the fire spots he saw from a helicopter while covering the protests in SP (tks to Lucas Bambozzi for presenting me this example).

the topic I will address today is not in my main field of research
locative arts > 7 years as curator or Arte.Mov

audiovisual arts > director of experimental documentaries, audiovisual performances, tactical cartographies and interactive video

archeology of concepts and practices in real time
(with focus on examples of brazilian video and media art)

@ <http://contradiccoes.net>

risk of *folclorizing* brazil and a country of "soccer and samba"
though the heterogeneous context of transmediale neutralizes it,
given its history of questioning languagens, behaviors, genders etc

and the central criticism of the choice of brazil to host the world cup during the protests of june in brazil offer the proper context

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_the (ludic) role of soccer in brazilian culture (a)
as described in josé miguel wisnik's *poison medicine*

_the role of ritual in culture (b)
as described by elias canetti in *masse und macht*

_the presence of violence in culture (c)
homer's *odyssey*
virgina woolf's *orlando*
violent games

_an operational distinction between gamification and ludification (a+b+c)

_the (perverse) role of soccer in brazilian politics (an possibly elsewhere)
as infered from eagloton's criticism of the relations between soccer and capitalism

--->the double sided presence of sports in society (a dialectical tension of the ludic and the perverse) points towards an ancient relationship between life and game; understanding it represents an archeological approach that is useful to discuss our current process of gamification of culture.



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_reversing the game: the protests of june in sp as a ludic experience and
criticism of the gamification of football on the context of the world cup

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_the (ludic) role of soccer in brazilian culture (a)
as described in josé miguel wisnik's *poison medicine*

the ambivalence of the *pharmakon*, as poison *and* medicine, is described in derrida's deconstruction of plato's *Phedro*. wisnik uses it as an idea to explain the ambivalence of soccer in brazilian culture: a sport that is both part of everyday life and an object of cult; a set of movements that teach maleability towards difficulty and a mass phenomenon (sometimes with nationalistic overtones).

wisnik proposes a close reading of the game of soccer (as literary critics propose close readings of texts); this differs from all books about the sport, which focus on sociological, antropological, psychoanalytical approaches, without discussing the game itself.

this approach is atuned with wisnik's attitude, unfortunately incriseangly exceptional on an university ruled by productivity: he wrote *only 2* (excelent) books in his entire carreer, marked by long periods of silence, the recording of 3 *pop music* albuns and dedication to inspiring courses at the public university of são paulo.

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"... mass hypnosis is a level and a mode of relation with soccer, but it is not the only one, neither the most important: the design of the game, his narrative variations, the moments of plastic beauty and intelligence, the routine itself and the tedium invite the enlightened spectator to go beyond the identificatory hypnosis, to leave the role of club supporter ou nationalist, and surrender to the reversibility and shiftiness, that consist of its most profound meaning. Reason why rivalries can be so stimulating e interesting in soccer (where the game itself is in charge of somehow reverse the paralise of the opposed) and so devastating in intelectual life, where they imobilize and sterilize thought".

"To go beyond the pure, ludic-infantile, promiscuity with the ball, in which what matters most is gratuitously run after and around it, the games see themselves obliged to create a compatible space for consequent dispute and accountability of results, stimulating directionality. We could say, risking a schematic view: it is about translating and converting the link with the mother into an identification with the paternal model. This conversion can only happen, then, through the dialetics of the sphere with the plane, that is, of the ball with the field — in last instance, of the circle with the square."

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this tension between a gratuitous dedication to playfulness and competitive engagement in game is a first aspect to retain, towards our operational distinction of *ludification* and *gamification*. summing up, our relationship with sports can be:

- (1) a ludic approach, based on pleasure and playfulness
- (2) a competitive approach, based on strategy and victory

the cronist rubem alves describes this opposite aspects of sports in a very precise way, when he compares relationships with either a "frescobol" game or a tennis match.

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Um exemplo significativo é a adesão inusitada ao *Cow Clicker*, um jogo para *Facebook* que ironiza o processo de *gamificação* dos relacionamentos (Quem tem mais amigos? Que comentário foi mais curtido?), assim como os próprios jogos nas redes sociais. Para participar do *Cow Clicker*, era preciso clicar em vacas a cada seis horas. Quanto mais o jogador clicava, mais cliques ele ganhava. Apesar da lógica absurda, o jogo se transformou num sucesso, que resistiu às várias tentativas de seu criador de torná-lo cada vez menos atraente. O sucesso foi tamanho, que o obrigou a conceber um *cowpocalypse*, para induzir o final do jogo. Bogost, um criador engajado nas possibilidades dos jogos independentes, que procuram alternativas aos modelos comerciais, pretendia fazer uma crítica ferrenha ao mundo das redes sociais e dos jogos, e descobriu que havia um público ávido por seu estranho produto (seja porque não entenderam a ironia da proposta, ou porque não se importavam em colocar-se na posição embaraçosa de jogar um *game* cujo propósito era justamente ironizar seus possíveis jogadores).

3 Cf. <http://www.situatedtechnologies.net/>

Em entrevista à *NeuralIt*, seu criador, Ian Bogost, responde da seguinte forma ao comentário de Alessandro Ludovico de que “esta bela ironia foi, entretanto, inesperadamente recebida como um jogo social!”, quando este lhe pergunta “o que isto diz sobre o jogador social hoje emergente?”:

Primeiro, isto mostra que não se pode escolher seus sucessos. Mas também pode sugerir que eu subestimei o jogo, que era de fato possível criar esta zona de crise que é o *Cow Clicker*, e através deste estranho aparato fazer perguntas sobre o momento atual de socialização numérica. Mas então, talvez, isto também sugira que todo mundo é otário, ou que a força de vontade humana é pequena, ou que nos cercamos de compulsões em que qualquer uma é a mesma coisa que outra — não importa muito que conteúdo ela apresente.

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_the role of ritual in culture (b)

as described by elias canetti in *masse und macht*

the anthropologist elias canetti describes in very detailed ways the role of ritual in culture, showing how our most violent, crude and visceral instincts are transformed into forms of behavior that organize certain societies, playing a central role on their functioning.

we could go beyond this description, to propose that sports played this role until not so long ago, and that games are slowly occupying this space in contemporary society.

for canetti, humanity suffers from an intrinsic fear of being touched (by the other, by the unknown) and reverses it by installing massive behaviors. the feeling of belonging, the protection of the crowd, the epiphanic comfort of becoming part of a large group of shared motivations is the only form to neutralize this ancient fear.

of course this impulse of constituting crowds is not necessarily negative, as the history of demonstrations on public space shows us.

1789: takeover of the Bastille



eugene delacroix:
freedom guiding people



1848: berlin's revolution



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neither the impulse of constituting crowds is homogeneous.

carnival in salvador



beach takeover



the 1.000 demonstration:
protest against the military dictatorship
in brazil, june 1968



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the example of the soccer fan is particularly sensitive in contemporary society: it has a record of violence, even though the relationship of the fan with the sport is usually cathartic and non-violent, as described in detail by nick hornby in his autobiographical history of stadium attendance following the worst phase of arsenal. studies show that it is NOT possible to generalize the behavior of sports fans.

'Hooligans' abroad? Inter-group dynamics, social identity and participation in collective 'disorder' at the 1998 World Cup Finals

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During the 1998 Football World Cup Finals in France, English supporters were, once again, involved in major incidents of collective 'disorder'. Explanations for these incidents concentrated on the conflictual norms held by 'hooligans'. In contrast, Scottish supporters attending the tournament displayed norms of non-violence, explained by the popular press in terms of the absence of 'hooligans'. This study challenges this tendency to explain the presence or absence of 'disorder' in the context of football solely in terms of the presence or absence of 'hooligan' fans. Using data obtained from an ethnographic study of both Scottish and English supporters attending the tournament ($N = 121$), we examine the processes through which ordinarily 'peaceful' supporters would or would not become involved in collective conflict. In line with the Elaborated Social Identity

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this two-folded relationship between fans and sports relate, even mirror, the tension between the gratuitous dedication to games, as opposed to playfulness and competitive engagement in competition. We also, have, when we consider the spectator:

(1) a ludic approach, based on pleasure and playfulness (but also on the possibility of discharging frustration, on negative situations when a team loses)

(2) a competitive approach, based on violent defeat of the enemy crew

wisnik also describes the psychology of the fans, summing up the motivations behind the two kinds of behaviors:

In the level of mass psychology, soccer is included, for starters, among those formations of *shared hypnosis* in which the subject identifies himself blindly, with an object in which he recognizes an *ideal self* (in this case, the club as idol, and the idols of his club at his service). Pasolini talks of the sports fan as someone who has the main part of the brain "detached of the remaining, and incapable, under the effect of this charismatic illumination, but of a fixed, unified and unchangeable thought. As opposed to the more open fan, according to him capable of tempering this state with certain irony, criticism and distancing, the narrow fan, provincial and authoritative, is completely taken by his fixation".

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_the presence of violence in culture

human culture is permeated by examples of symbolic violence, as well as literary and artistic depictions of violence. this results in a complex relationship, where mankind transfers its impulses to language, in an effort to understand and transform them (what sigmund freud would call *the totemization of the taboos*).

when we think of homer's *odyssey*, it is impossible to dissociate its epic tone of the detailed description of battles and killing. but his narrative voice is an equivalent of the irony and criticism pasolini sees in the open sports fan. he is not making an apology of war, or an eulogy of violence. rather, he is diving deep into human functionings, and helping us understand humanity, in its better and worst aspects.

the same could be said of the initial scene of virginia woolf's *orlando*, probably one of the most violent of all literature.

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violence is intrinsic to humanity, and the game industry is, once again, channelling this dark impulses. but the difference is that games have immersive situations, what makes it harder for people to distance themselves from the narratives they contain.

if violence in literature and art can be ironic, can be perceived as a critical commentary or, at least, as a complex description that does not allow simple attitudes and conclusions, violence in games is completely different: they are enactments, that function as doubles of performing violence.

the effects of this change are yet to be understood, but I would like to propose one provisory result, by comparing our two modes of relationship with sport with *ludification* and *gamification*, and suggesting that the first one allows a more interesting relationship with playfulness than the second.

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_an operational distinction between gamification and ludification (a+b+c)

gamification is a concept that appears on the context of digital games, and has a restrict meaning: people and institutions incorporate modes of functioning of games in their practices, o generates a culture of strategy, competition and destruction of the enemy.

ludification is a wider concept (probably it could be related to Huizinga's description of the *homo ludens*): people do thing for pleasure, they dedicate themselves to their interests (with the "collateral effect" of generating value and products by doing so), what suggests a culture of sharing and collaboration.

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_the (perverse) role of soccer in brazilian politics (an possibly elsewhere)
as infered from eagleton's criticism of the relations between soccer
and capitalism

Modern societies deny men and women the experience of solidarity, which football provides to the point of collective delirium. Most car mechanics and shop assistants feel shut out by high culture; but once a week they bear witness to displays of sublime artistry by men for whom the word genius is sometimes no mere hype. Like a jazz band or drama company, football blends dazzling individual talent with selfless teamwork, thus solving a problem over which sociologists have long agonised. Co-operation and competition are cunningly balanced. Blind loyalty and internecine rivalry gratify some of our most powerful evolutionary instincts.

With fotball, by contrast, there can be outbreaks of angry populism, as supporters revolt against the corporate fat cats who muscle in on their clubs;

soccer and the military dictatorship:
the 1970 championship as an anesthetic



soccer and politics: marcelo tas's interview with nabil abid chedid (in the 1980s, as an example of how rooted is the relationship of soccer and politics in brazil)



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_reversing the game: the protests of june in sp as a ludic experience and criticism of the gamification of football on the context of the world cup
with a short summary of marcos nobre's democracy shock



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A COPA 2014 DEVERÁ AGREGAR

183 BILHÕES

AO PIB DO BRASIL ATÉ

2019 (OU + 0,4% A.A.)

bilhões

47,5

135,7

183,2

- Investimento de infraestrutura
- Gastos incrementais dos turistas
- Incremento no consumo das famílias

- Recirculação do dinheiro na economia
- Aumento do turismo e do uso de estádios após a Copa

+0,4% no PIB acumulado 2010-2019

GRANDES NÚMEROS DA COPA

Impactos diretos:
33 BILHÕES EM
INVESTIMENTOS
EM INFRAESTRUTURA

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Impactos diretos:

9,4 BILHÕES GERADOS POR
3,7 MILHÕES DE TURISTAS*

CENÁRIO SEM COPA: 22,6

CENÁRIO COM COPA: 32,0



INCREMENTO POR TURISTAS



Equivale a ~**2/3** da população da cidade do **Rio de Janeiro**

turista Internacional ■ turista nacional ■

*R\$ bilhões, junho e julho de 2014

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INCREMENTO DE R\$ 5 BILHÕES
NO CONSUMO DAS FAMÍLIAS ENTRE **2010 E 2014**

TRABALHADORES
PERMANENTES



59,7%
CONSUMO

MASSA SALARIAL
R\$ 6,8 BILHÕES

TRABALHADORES
TEMPORÁRIOS



59,7%
CONSUMO

MASSA SALARIAL
R\$ 1,6 BILHÕES

INCREMENTO
NO CONSUMO
R\$ 5,0 BILHÕES

Equivale a 1,3
ano de vendas
de geladeiras
NO BRASIL
(7,2 milhões)

BRAZIL: ONE MILLION PEOPLE DEMAND ACCOUNTABILITY

FILED UNDER: [Accountability](#)

Posted 21 June 2013



The [protests](#) in Brazil started because a hike in bus fares angered people. But that was only the catalyst. Across the country people are taking to the streets in increasingly large numbers to demand that their politicians are held to account.

They want to know why so much money – upwards of \$13 billion – is being spent to build state-of-the-art football stadiums for the 2014 World Cup when so many people lack basic services. They want to know why politicians are giving themselves [pay raises](#) when inflation is hurting the poor.

The message they are sending the political elite is clear: we do not trust you to work in our best interests. We want you to be accountable.

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_the protests in brazil were sometimes criticized for its supposed carnavalization. on a gamified society, this should not necessary be a problem. actually, a research on the history of carnival and carnivalization will reveal the critical aspects of the popular festivities, as shown by Bakhtin on his studies of russian popular literature.

_if the protests resulted in a ludic relation with public space, this could mean that playfullness could be seem as a form o criticism. If we consider gamification to be a problem for its stimulus of competition and strategy, we could argue that the ludification in the street protests in SP has a wider meaning: it indicates a collaborative and shared form of occupying public shpere *WITHOUT A SPECIFIC GOAL*.

Hopefully, this can be seem as an attitude not only against the lack of transparency in local politics, but also a rescue of the country's ludic relation with soccer as a way to "pass through" moments of difficulties. This would mean that a significant group of people are willing to change the rules they live by. The problem of the contemporary is not so much the overload of infomartion and work that people are experiencing, but the rules that control it. There seem to be a generation who is willing to change the rules, instead of playing the game.

