

ALEXANDRE LEJEUNE

EXPLORATION PLAY & PRODUCTIVISM

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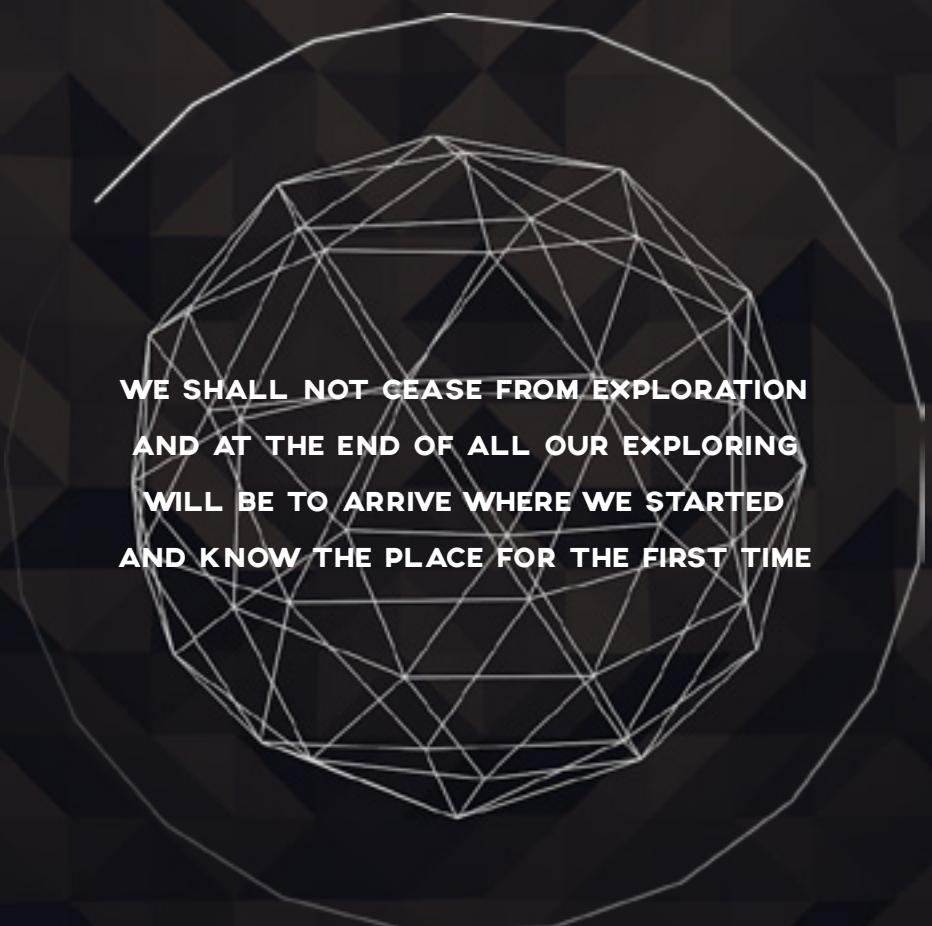


a masters thesis by
Alexandre Lejeune

thanks to everyone who
believed in me and was
there for support.

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WE SHALL NOT CEASE FROM EXPLORATION
AND AT THE END OF ALL OUR EXPLORING
WILL BE TO ARRIVE WHERE WE STARTED
AND KNOW THE PLACE FOR THE FIRST TIME

EXCERPT FROM T.S. ELIOT'S LITTLE GIDDINGS



SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION	p. 5
I. EXPLORATION, PLAY, SOCIETY AND WHAT IS WRONG WITH IT	p. 8
1) EXPLORATION & PLAY	p. 10
2) BEHAVIOR	p. 20
3) RESTRAINING EXPLORATION	p. 26
II. UNDERLYING TENSIONS IN STUDYING EXPLORATION AND PLAY IN TODAY'S SOCIETY	p. 30
1) IGNORANCE & FAILURE	p. 32
2) GOAL & JOURNEY	p. 38
3) POLITICS & EXPLORATION	p. 50
III. WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?	p. 68
1) BUILDING, REBUILDING AND CULTIVATING OUR SENSE OF EXPLORATION AND PLAY	p. 70
2) LOSING ONESELF	p. 84
3) PLAYFULNESS	p. 92
CONCLUSION	p. 99
BIBLIOGRAPHY	p. 104
GLOSSARY	p. 110
APPENDIX	p. 112

INTRODUCTION

We use maps to find where we are, or to figure out where we are going. They are about orientation, finding our location so we can see our surroundings from another point of view and figure out where we want to go. We map territories, but we also map knowledge, not quite in the same way, but we do, we document our findings. To create these maps we had to explore. In territorial maps, the places that are unexplored are labeled “terra incognita”, literally “unknown land” in Latin. We acknowledge the fact that we ignore what is beyond a certain point, “they signify that the cartographers knew they did not know, and awareness of ignorance is not just ignorance; it’s awareness of knowledge’s limits”¹. Today we don’t see those anymore, as we have mapped out most of the world. One might find it a bit troubling that we live in an age where we think we know, or hide that we don’t know, because nothing or no one tells us that there still are terra incognitas out there, in geography or in knowledge. We spend so much time talking and learning about what we know, about what we’ve explored as a species and so little about what we don’t know or haven’t explored or figured out yet. It seems to us that the most exciting times are when we don’t know, when something is not set in stone, like the beginnings of programming or computer games. Back when people were just exploring, testing out new methods or theories, and none would say “this is what programming is” or “should be”, they would most likely question themselves and say “what is programming?” or “what could programming be like?”. But since then, we mostly say “this is programming”. In 1985, Marguerite Duras, a famous French writer was asked about what the year 2000 would look like and where we would find answers to our questions; she replied: “that’s all that there’s

1 SOLNIT, Rebecca, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, US, Penguin Books, 2006, p. 163.

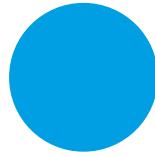
going to be. The demand will be so great that there will only be answers”¹.

How can we explore in a world abundant in answers and certitudes? As we grow up we do not explore as much, we do not ask as many questions as we did when we were children and we are not as playful, we become more serious. As such the main issue of this thesis is the conditioning of individuals by structures, society and culture. We live in a productivist culture and in such a culture we are taught to desire productivity and efficiency, which is opposed to what defines exploration and play; exploration and play being mainly about embracing the unknown and uncertainty. How can we play or be playful in such a culture? With the number of people playing video games increasing each year, especially since video games became so much more accessible due to smartphones and mobile games, what can the games we play today say about ourselves, our desires and the society we live in? Do we play games because we are playful or to fulfill our need for productivity, efficiency and control by playing games tailored for those productivist desires? Therefore, I ask myself, as a designer, how can I encourage exploration through play?

As such, we will begin by attempting to properly define our subjects, exploration and play, as they have multiple meanings, definitions or interpretations, as well as examining their similarities and differences. We will talk about our preliminary observations on the subjects, centered around behavior from child to adult, and we will finish by hypothesizing on what may be the cause of such behavioral changes in growing up, which restrains exploration and play. We will then identify and examine the underlying problems in studying exploration and play in today’s society. We will begin by talking about the notions of ignorance and failure and how they are perceived, how education deals with making mistakes and

1 From the French “y’aura plus que ça. La demande sera telle que il n’y aura plus que des réponses”. DURAS, Marguerite, September 25 1985, accessible at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ITJ8UN3YaM>, accessed in November 2014.

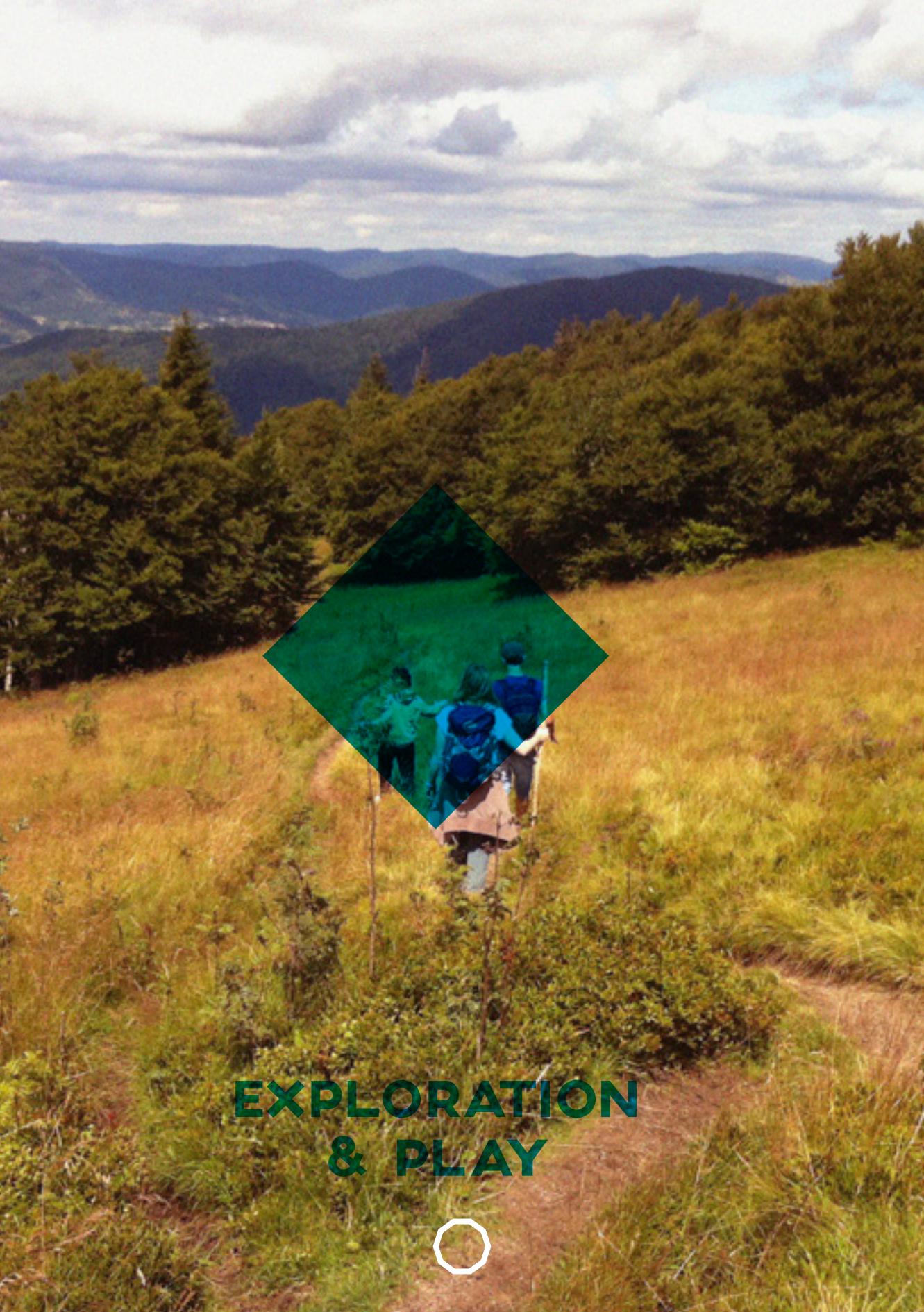
evaluation, as well as how the learning process works. We will see how a society based on productivity perceives goals as compared to journeys, how productivism translates into the world of video games and the counter culture that questions this trend or simply goes against it. We will finish this second chapter with exploration and politics. We will see how our economic system, capitalism and productivism influences and shapes our desires and environment using work, consumption and urbanism. Lastly we will attempt to make hypotheses in more practical territories in which we will ask ourselves how can we (re)encourage exploration and play in culture? As such we will see how we can build, rebuild and cultivate our sense of exploration and play through education and urbanism, how we can intentionally lose ourselves in order to explore and play, and how to live and design for a playful world.



I.

EXPLORATION, PLAY, SOCIETY AND WHAT IS WRONG WITH IT

We will begin by laying down the foundation of our reasoning. Our first observation is that exploration and play have many similarities, even though they are two different concepts. This gets us to ask ourselves, is exploration a form of play? We will therefore begin by defining exploration and play and look at their similarities and difference. Then, we will meditate on observations that reveal problematizing elements that are tied to our subjects. Finally from those problems we will attempt to hypothesize in order to find the causes and understand how they come into being.



**EXPLORATION
& PLAY**



1) EXPLORATION & PLAY

Exploration

As we have said, exploration and play have multiple definitions, and they are used in several different contexts. To begin, let us explain what those two terms mean, where they come from and the aspects of them that we find interesting in the context of this thesis. Let us start by defining exploration. Exploration is very often simply defined as the act of exploring an unfamiliar area, or searching for the purpose of discovery of either information or resources. This is a very straightforward definition of the concept, used to describe things such as scientific research, space exploration or the well known continental exploration by famous explorers. An explorer is someone that goes into the unknown in order to discover. But there is also a figurative meaning or metaphorical use of the word exploration that we must take into consideration. This term is used to define exploration of things such as sexuality or the internet. There is little information clearly explaining the difference between the literal and figurative meaning of exploration, we just know that the two concepts exist and that they are different. But the two concepts do feel different, they are not used in the same context or to describe the same things, we will therefore attempt to explain the differences we see in those two concepts.

The first distinction we can observe is in the quest for discovery, in the literal definition of exploration what you are exploring is something that has never been explored by anyone before, as in space exploration for example. In the figurative definition though, you are exploring something that has already been explored, something that is part of mankind's common knowledge, but that you have not explored yourself. As in exploring the internet or sexuality. It is discovering something previously unknown by yourself or with someone, through an uncertain process that resembles trial and error, that we call exploration.

The second difference are goals. In most cases literal exploration is very goal-oriented, it's about finding something in particular or confirming a hypothesis or theory. Figurative or metaphorical exploration is not as goal-oriented, and rather more about aimlessness. It may remind one of wandering, where the goals (if there are any) that one gives themselves are smaller or more short-term; "what happens if I do this?", "what if I walk over there", etc. The nature of the goal is also different in most cases. In literal exploration, the goal is often knowledge and resources, in figurative exploration the goal is often experience or feeling as well as knowledge, but not resources or material wealth. This distinction is quite interesting as it allows us to see that figurative exploration is primarily about exploration for the self, for experience, and not for a larger group or collective, for knowledge or resources.

The third distinction is risk. The risks are not of the same nature, and quite different in both cases, but what sets the two concepts of exploration apart is how they deal with risks. In literal exploration risks are studied and avoided as much as possible, as in most cases that would result in losing a lot of resources, such as human lives, time, or money. As such partaking in such exploration may involve precise methods of calculations and predictions. We could say that literal exploration is a kind of efficient exploration, or seeks to be. On the other hand though, figurative exploration does not deal with risks in quite the same way, to the point where it may ignore them altogether, as the stakes are not as high. We could say that figurative exploration is an aimless less efficient exploration. Now, this is only an attempt at trying to differentiate the two uses of the term, this attempt may not be exact (or completely wrong), but this is how we perceive them for now. The figurative definition or concept of exploration is the one we will be mainly be talking about, as we find that it is a more accessible form of exploration, but also because it resembles play the most.

Play

Play also has multiple meanings, definitions and variations, as “play is older than culture”¹ and all languages did not create a word to describe the concept of play at the same moment in time. As play, even though common to every civilization, can be quite difficult to explain or describe without the use of itself, therefore we will do our best in order to describe the basic notion of play, and then making its definition become clearer as we move forward in the thesis. Johan Huizinga, author of *Homo Ludens* offers a great definition of play: play is a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it’s “different” from “ordinary life”². He explains that “play is superfluous. The need for it is only urgent to the extent that the enjoyment of it makes it a need. [...] It is never a task”³. Play is not tied to any material gain, it is not productive and is described as pure waste by French sociologist Roger Caillois, by saying that it “is an occasion of pure waste: waste of time, energy, ingenuity, skill, and often money”⁴. Play is freedom, and while playing we know that we play, we know that it is not “ordinary life”, “every child knows perfectly well that he is “only pretending”, or that is was “only for fun””⁵.

It is not a coincidence that I have decided to write this thesis in english, being French, and studying in a French speaking French school. As

1 HUIZINGA, Johan, *Homo Ludens*, Boston, The Beacon Press, 1955, p. 1.

2 Ibid., p. 28.

3 Ibid., p. 8.

4 From the French “est occasion de dépense pure : de temps, d'énergie, d'ingéniosité, d'adresse et souvent d'argent”. CAILLOIS, Roger, *Les jeux et les hommes*, France, Editions Gallimard, 1958.

5 HUIZINGA, Johan, op. cit., p. 8.

mentioned before, describing the concept of play can be quite difficult, and I have also found that talking about play in French can be quite challenging, as we use the same word to mean *play* and *game* — “*jeu*”. *Je* is most often used to mean game though, we say “*un jeu*” — a game, “*jeu vidéo*” — video game, “*jeu de hazard*” — game of chance. It’s also a verb as in “*jouer*” meaning “to play”, “*jouer aux jeux vidéo*” — to play video games. And the word play is just “*jeu*”, or “*le jeu*” (which can also mean *the game* or *games*). So when speaking French and saying that I study “*le jeu*” (either *play* or *games*) I had to find a way to make myself be understood, and the easiest way that I could find was to say “*le jeu, dans le sens de ‘play’ en anglais*” literally “*le jeu*, as in ‘play’ in English”.

We have earlier hinted at the fact that play and games are different things, and we will talk about that later, but play and playing a game are also different things, just like the French noun “*jeu*” and verb “*jouer*”. Playing a game is, or is used to describe, merely just the action of taking part in the game, but play are those moments in the playing of a game were you have “free movement within a more rigid structure”¹, as put by Eric Zimmerman and Katie Salem. Just like you would feel “play” in a steering wheel, this loose feeling, play as in truly *playing* is this loose feeling, not the use or action of turning the steering wheel.

Playfulness

Having talked about the concept of play in the attempt to describe it, we will now look at playfulness to continue in explaining what play is, what it may look like and how it may manifest itself. Playfulness is this optimistic behavior towards play, it is what drives it, it is an attitude towards life that incites play. As such we will try to describe playfulness through the story of a personal experience by Maria Lugones as a child: “We are by the river bank.

1 SALEM, Katie, ZIMMERMAN, Eric, *Rules of play*, Cambridge MA, The MIT Press, 2004, p. 304.

The river is very, very low. Almost dry. But mostly is wet stones. Grey on the outside. We walk on the stones for awhile. You pick up a stone and crash it onto the others. As it breaks, it is quite wet inside and is very colorful, very pretty. I pick up a stone and break it and run toward the pieces to see the colors. They are beautiful. I laugh and bring the pieces back to you and you are doing the same with your pieces. We keep on crashing stones for hours, anxious to see the beautiful new colors. We are playing. The playfulness of our activity does not presuppose that it is a particular form of play with its own rules. Rather the attitude that carries us through the activity, a playful attitude, turns the activity into play. Our activity has no rules, though it is certainly intentional activity and we both understand what we are doing. The playfulness that gives meaning to our activity includes uncertainty, but in this case the uncertainty is an openness to surprise. This is a particular metaphysical attitude that does not expect the world to be neatly packaged, ruly. Rules may fail to explain what we are doing. We are not self-important, we are not fixed in particular constructions of ourselves, which is part of saying that we are open to self-construction. We are not worried about competence. We are not wedded to a particular way of doing things. While playful we have not abandoned ourselves to, nor are we stuck in, any particular 'world.' We are there creatively. We are not passive.

Playfulness is, in part, an openness to being a fool, which is a combination of not worrying about competence, not being self-important, not taking norms as sacred and finding ambiguity and double edges a source of wisdom and delight.

So, positively, the playful attitude involves openness to surprise, openness to being a fool, openness to self-construction or reconstruction and to construction or reconstruction of the 'worlds' we inhabit playfully. Negatively, playfulness is characterized by uncertainty, lack of self-importance, absence of rules or a not taking rules as sacred, a no worrying about competence and a lack of abandonment to a particular construction of oneself, others and one's relation to them. In attempting to take a hold of oneself and one's relation to others in a particular 'world,' one may

study, examine and come to understand oneself. One may then see what the possibilities for play are for being one is in that ‘world.’ One may even decide to inhabit that self fully in order to understand it better and find its creative possibilities. All of this is just self-reflection, and is quite different from residing or abandoning oneself to the particular construction of oneself that one is attempting to take a hold of”¹.

Exploration as play

As we can begin to see, what we call figurative or metaphorical exploration has several things in common with play and there are further similarities between the two concepts that we may not have discussed yet. For example we have talked about the fact that both are not tied to material gain, but rather to feeling and experiencing, as opposed to literal exploration. Both concepts are attached to a sense of awareness, an awareness that you are exploring or playing and that it is an activity that you chose to partake in. Figurative exploration and play find fulfillment within themselves, in the sense that you do not explore or play in order to do anything else than explore and play. They are both about embracing uncertainty and about abandonment, as in play “tension means uncertainty, chanciness”² and in exploration it is an abandonment to the unknown, to the uncertainty in discovery. We said that figurative exploration was an aimless, less efficient form of exploration and we have seen how play through playful behavior could be just as aimless. Which brings us to also see how both concepts are to some extend opposed to work of labor, as they are not tasks, and are self-

1 LUGONES, Maria, *Playfulness, ‘World’-Traveling, and Loving Perception*, cited in: DE KOVEN, Bernard, “On Playfulness (Cont’d)”, July 23 2014, <http://www.aplayfulpath.com/playfulness-contd/>, accessed in September 2014.

2 HUIZINGA, Johan, *Homo Ludens*, Boston, The Beacon Press, 1955, p. 10.

motivated activities.

Explorers “were always lost, because they’d never been to these places before. They never expected to know exactly where they were. Yet, at the same time, many of them knew their instruments pretty well and understood their trajectories within a reasonable degree of accuracy. In my opinion, their most important skill was simply a sense of optimism about surviving and finding their way”¹. This sense optimism described here by historian Aaron Sachs in a response to a question asked by Rebecca Solnit, can be interpreted as playfulness. And as we said earlier that playfulness was an optimistic behavior towards play, that it was an attitude towards life that incites play. As such, from here on we will consider exploration to be a form of play.

Having briefly mentioned exploring sexuality, we will now see using an example how exploration is a form of play, through sexuality. We will begin by talking about masturbation, which we also refer to as “playing with ourselves”. Masturbation can occur as early as infancy, but is most commonly known to frequently be performed around the time of puberty, nevertheless masturbation is a way of exploring our sexuality. We explore our body and sexuality through new sensations and new ways on interacting with it, we discover our body. We all have different bodies that function in different ways, and masturbation is a way of discovering how our body works, it is a way of appropriating our own bodies. Where we tend to play, is where we tend to create a moment of abandonment, creating a situation for masturbation. We also play when we take our time or stop to hold the moment of climax back, for the pleasure to last longer. We play with our body, sometimes as if we were playing against our body, our body being the rigid structure or the steering wheel, as explained before. We can also see sexual relationships with partners as mutual playful exploration, as it is not only the exploration of an unknown body, that is not ours, but

1 Aaron Sachs, cited in: SOLNIT, Rebecca, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, US, Penguin Books, 2006, p. 14.

also an exploration of how our body reacts to this other one. Even though we may have been taught or given “rules” or guidelines in how to have sexual relationships, a considerable part of it is exploring how we and our partners feel and react to our “playing” or exploring. That being said, not everyone explores as much as they could when having sexual relationships, some follow the “rules” and guidelines they were given without questioning them. Having described what exploration and play is, how the concepts are similar and how we consider exploration to be a form of play, we will now talk about our observations of society and its relationship with exploration and play as well as other elements that are implied by these concepts.



behavior



2) BEHAVIOR

Children, the natural explorers

Children are very curious, they explore a lot and they learn by doing so, they engage in trial and error to test theories they have about their surroundings. What children partake in is called theory-theory and it states that children naturally attempt to construct theories to explain their observations¹. “Through their growth and development, children will continue to form intuitive theories, revising and altering them as they come across new results and observations”². Children explore to learn, to understand, to make sense of their surroundings. They do so through roaming, playing, experimenting and asking a lot of questions. “For me, childhood roaming was what developed self-reliance, a sense of direction and adventure, imagination, a will to explore, to be able to get a little lost and then figure out a way back”³. Children have this thirst for knowledge and understanding, they are adventurous and willing to explore. This is from the fact that they do not fear making mistakes, failing or asking a silly question, “they will take a chance. If they don’t know, they will have a go,”⁴. Almost everything is brand new to children, they know that they are ignorant, and therefore are prepared to be wrong, and to question themselves. This allows

1 BERGER, Kathleen Stassen, *Invitation to the Life Span*, Second Edition, New York, Worth Publishers, 2014.

2 GOPNIK, Alison, *Reconstructing constructivism: Causal models, Bayesian learning mechanisms, and the theory theory.*, American Psychological Association, 2012.

3 SOLNIT, Rebecca, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, US, Penguin Books, 2006, p. 7.

4 ROBINSON, Ken, “How school kills creativity”, February 2006, http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity, accessed in September 2014.

children to be very creative, and we might ask ourselves, if this is in any way linked to their ability to explore and vice versa.

We might want to say that children's fearlessness and readiness to making mistakes drives their creativity but also their exploratory abilities and behavior. "They're not frightened of being wrong. Now, I don't mean to say that being wrong is the same thing as being creative. What we do know is, if you're not prepared to be wrong, you'll never come up with anything original"¹. As we've said earlier, to explore you need to not be scared of failing, as it's inevitably part of the process, you need a certain sense of optimism. On the other hand adults do not deal with failure in quite the same way, we do our best to dodge mistakes, we are taught to avoid making them, to fear them, in some sorts. If we expose children's exploratory attitude it is in order to compare it to adults' attitude to exploration. It is not to say that adults are not capable of exploration or play, but it is to show that their attitude towards them are not entirely of the same nature as children. Therefore we will now look at the notion of playful play to attempt at capturing the different shades of behavior in play between children and adults.

Playful play, children and adults

Children play games, just like adults do — even though they might not play the same games— but children have this particular approach to play, that we can call playful play. Patrick Bateson and Paul Martin offer a concise definition: "Playful play (as distinct from the broader biological category of play) is accompanied by a particular positive mood state in which the individual is more

inclined to behave (and, in the case of humans, think) in a spontaneous

1 ROBINSON, Ken, "How school kills creativity", February 2006, http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity, accessed in September 2014.

and flexible way”¹. Bernard De Koven completes this definition by saying that “Playful play requires a measured abandon, a passionate, conscious embrace of a state of mind and body that expresses itself [...] as: “cries of exultant commitment.” We give ourselves over, absent ourselves from all that is not felicity, embracing not just the game, but our fellow players; not just the goals but each moment of play”². What we find very interesting about playful play is that it’s not just play, it’s an attitude, a behavior towards play. And this goes to show how children can go on and play in a particular way, without any explicit structure or while embracing aimlessness, it’s because they have this distinct behavior.

Adults have a harder time letting go, they tend to be more serious, as we’re taught to control ourselves, to stop “acting like a child”. This in turn makes having this playful attitude and achieving playful play more difficult. “For adult human beings, playful play [...] is most often pursued only under the influence of mind altering substances.”³. We can of course all relate to this statement. We know that under the influence of alcohol or drugs we are not as self-conscious and more likely to embrace a playful attitude. Adults don’t really forget this behavior, they just lose touch with it. The fact that adults grow out of this playful behavior isn’t due to some biological factor, it’s not just because we get older, it’s because of the environment in which we grow up in. Adults are grown up children, children that have grown more serious, more “mature”. Seriousness is an interesting term because it’s thought to be the opposite of play, but the fact is that play can be very

1 Patrick Bateson and Paul Martin, *Play, Playfulness, Creativity and Innovation*, cited in : DE KOVEN, Bernard, “Playful Play Part 1”, September 16 2014, <http://www.aplayerfulpath.com/playful-play-part-one/>, accessed in September 2014

2 DE KOVEN, Bernard, “Playful Play Part 1”, September 16 2014, <http://www.aplayerfulpath.com/playful-play-part-one/>, accessed in September 2014

3 Ibid.

serious. Johan Huizinga sums this up wonderfully by saying that “the play-concept as such is of a higher order than is seriousness. For seriousness seeks to exclude play, whereas play can very well include seriousness”¹. In their reaching of maturity, adults lose touch with their playful attitude towards play. Since we’ve expressed how close we think exploration and play are, what can be said about adults’ attitude towards exploration? If they lose touch with their playful attitude towards play, do they lose touch with a playful attitude towards exploration, like a sense of exploratory optimism?

Playful exploration

Considering that exploration (the figurative meaning of the term) is a form of play, let us take into account this observation and analysis by Johan Huizinga on play and civilization. “As a civilization becomes more complex, more variegated and more overladen, and as the technique of production and social life itself become more finely organized, the old cultural soil is gradually smothered under a rank layer of ideas, systems of thought and knowledge, doctrines, rules and regulations, moralities and conventions which have all lost touch with play. Civilization, we then say, has grown more serious; it assigns only secondary place to playing”². Growing more serious and assigning a secondary place to play impedes playfulness and therefore playful play. Children, when born aren’t yet structured by civilization’s rules or norms, but as they mature into adults they reach the point where they have grown more serious and therefore assign a secondary place to play. Now since we consider exploration to be a form of play, that would mean that exploration would therefore also be assigned that secondary place. We could conclude by saying that in growing up, it seems that we lose some of our exploratory capabilities, capacities to play playfully. The structuration

1 HUIZINGA, Johan, *Homo Ludens*, Boston, The Beacon Press, 1955, p. 45.

2 Ibid., p. 75.

of individuals seems to thus put aside all exploratory approaches or at least to making them minor. How can we explain this loss of capacities in the transition towards adulthood? We shall now hypothesize in order to understand this change in behavior.



RESTRANDING
EXPLORATION



3) RESTAINING EXPLORATION

Education & society

We saw that society affects our approach to exploration and play, as we talked about growing more serious for example, but we must ask ourselves how society impedes exploration. The first hypothesis that we'll make is that education is one of the main factors that affects our behavior towards exploration and play. As Sir Ken Robinson said schools kill creativity¹, creativity is in part driven by a readiness to making mistakes, by not being afraid of them, just like for exploration or play. So we'll hypothesize that school gradually deter our exploratory abilities, it changes our relationship to knowledge. We do not have to look for knowledge anymore, it is given to us, to consume, to learn, to memorize. Upon learning and memorizing this new knowledge, we get tested, we get evaluated, we are given a number or letter based on the quality of our work. School shapes us, this is where we are supposed to learn to learn, this is where we begin to structure our minds and the way we think. So we will see how all of this affects our exploratory abilities and also our playful behavior.

School is hardly the only thing that shapes us, that educates us. We should talk about education in a broader sense, the education we get from our parents, our social background, the political views of the people that surround us, what we learn from our surrounding environment. All of this affects the way we think and eventually the way we explore, the way we play. So we can refine our hypothesis, and say that it is not only education as in school that affects our approach to exploration, but society, and the culture it conveys. From this hypothesis, we have to ask ourselves what part of society affects our exploratory and playful behavior and how. Accordingly if

1 ROBINSON, Ken, "How school kills creativity", February 2006, http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity, accessed in September 2014.

we hypothesize that society is a major element that constitutes a repression to exploratory attitude, can we not go further in asking if it is not because of our economic system in our society that relies on productivism, a system that is founded on the search for productivity and that in fact would be opposed to the exploratory approach or attitude?

Exploration, play, society and productivist culture

Productivism, also called growthism, is a belief that productivity or growth is necessarily good. A productivist society or culture is built on that belief, it is founded on the search for productivity, the search for efficiency. Anthony Giddens describes productivism as “an ethos in which “work”, as paid employment, has been separated out in a clear-cut way from other domains of life”¹ and adds that “[work] defines whether or not individuals feel worthwhile or socially valued”². Productivism is a term that isn’t very frequently used, as it’s usually used pejoratively, but the fact is that most countries and economic systems in our society are productivist in nature. Productivism is often criticized because we live in a world with limited resources and therefore cannot reach an infinite amount of production or consumption. But this isn’t the reason why we’ll talk about productivism, we’re more interested in the fact that a productivist society affects the way people think. We will, of course, question the fact that productivity is necessarily a good thing, but not for its physical limitations. Just like we hypothesized that education was one of the reasons why we lost touch with our exploratory abilities we’ll hypothesize that productivism and its culture is also a factor in this change of behavior. Let us first see how by definition productivism opposes figurative exploration and play.

By definition, figurative exploration and play are not productive,

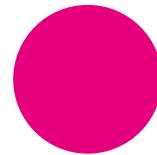
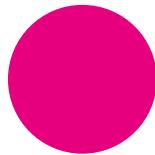
1 GIDDENS, Anthony, *Beyond left and right: the future of radical politics*, Oxford, Polity Press, 1994, p. 175.

2 Ibid.

they are not tied to any material gain. But just like we said earlier the reason why we talk about productivism is not because of its physical aspects towards productivity, but rather because of how it affects the way people think. Productivism is about gain, it is about growth, it looks for productivity, for efficiency. Exploration and play on the other hand, is about loss, being lost, abandoning oneself. We've seen that play is pure waste, a waste of time, a waste of money, a waste of energy, the same can be said about figurative exploration, as we've already shown how we consider it to be a form of play. What we really want to show by opposing exploration and productivism, is not just that they're opposed, but it's that since we live in a productivist culture that affects the way we think, we're less likely to engage in something that is opposed to that ideology. The hypothesis that we're making is that in a productivist culture, exploration is not encouraged. But all of this isn't just only about exploration, it's about what exploration allows you to do. It allows you to think by yourself, it allows you to question things, exploration is about critical thinking, it's about trusting yourself and knowing who to trust.



UNDERLYING TENSIONS IN STUDYING EXPLORATION AND PLAY IN TODAY'S SOCIETY



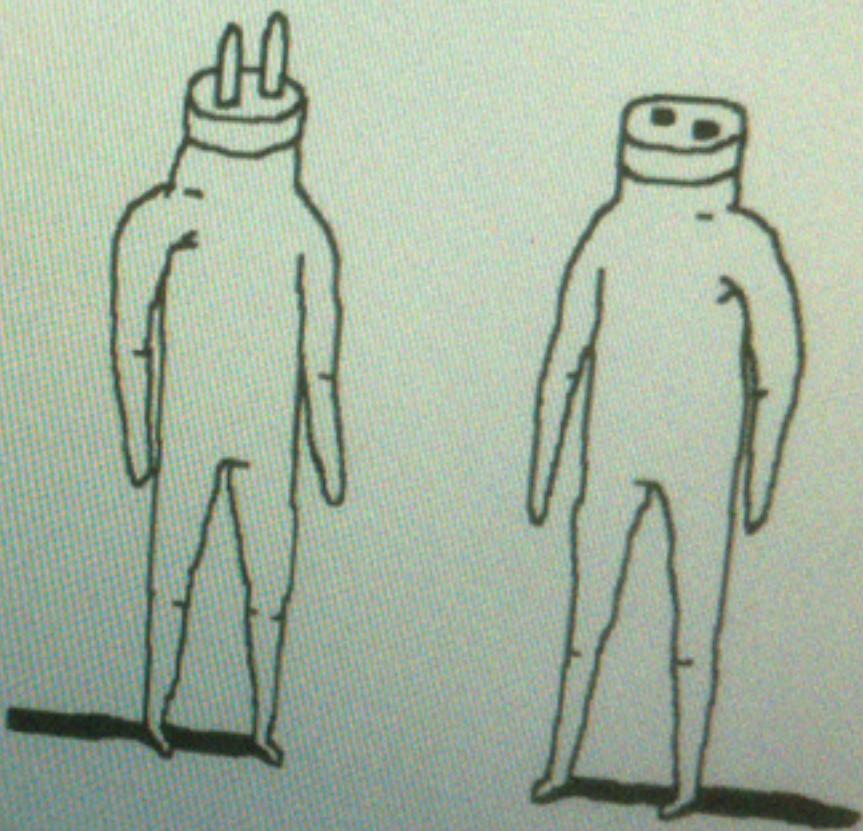
II.

UNDERLYING TENSIONS IN STUDYING EXPLORATION AND PLAY IN TODAY'S SOCIETY

Taking into account all that we've said so far, we will now attempt to identify problematic notions within the hypotheses that we have laid down, to then open up our reflection and try to make out different paths towards new hypotheses. Therefore, we will begin by exploring the notions of ignorance and failure in education and how society stigmatizes them. Then, we will discuss goals, journeys and exploration. And lastly, from those reflections we will attempt to show how productivist culture affects our way of thinking.

ighairnec

We don't know we don't know.



picture from the game Plug and Play



1) IGNORANCE & FAILURE

Education and making mistakes

Education is built on rewarding right answers, it rewards knowing. It uses grading systems to evaluate students' capacities. The problem is that most students feel valued or devalued based on their grades, it's basically assigning a number to them, rationalizing their being. Many countries use many different grading systems, for example in France, we use a grading system out of 20. The problem with these grading systems is the way they are perceived. For example, if you get 14 out of 20, which is pretty good, what you see is that you're 6 points off from knowing all of that you were supposed to know. When doing a test and not being able to answer a question, what you tell yourself as a student is that these are points you are not going to get, that your maximum grade will therefore be 20 minus how many points that question is worth. "The role of a teacher is to facilitate learning. That's it. And part of the problem is, I think, that the dominant culture of education has come to focus on not teaching and learning, but testing. Now, testing is important. Standardized tests have a place. But they should not be the dominant culture of education. They should be diagnostic. They should help"¹. "We stigmatize mistakes. And we're now running national education systems where mistakes are the worst thing you can make. And the result is that we are educating people out of their creative capacities"². And this also tramples students' curiosity.

Curiosity is important, it's that strong desire to know or learn

1 ROBINSON, Ken, "How to escape education's death valley", April 2013, http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_how_to_escape_education_s_death_valley, accessed in October 2014.

2 ROBINSON, Ken, "How school kills creativity", February 2006, http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity, accessed in September 2014.

something, it's what drives students to learn new things. Curiosity is what drives human life to be so diverse and flourishing. "If you can light the spark of curiosity in a child, they will learn without any further assistance, very often. Children are natural learners"¹. But sadly education is not built on curiosity, "what we have is a culture of compliance. Our children and teachers are encouraged to follow routine algorithms rather than to excite that power of imagination and curiosity"². What happens when students are not curious anymore in school, because of school itself, is that they get bored. Learning becomes boring. Curiosity is what generates engagement in learning. Without engagement, learning becomes quite more difficult as it becomes a task. Let us now see how engagement is part of the learning process.

Engagement and the learning process

Céline Alvarez, a French teacher that studies education and learning, describes the learning process according to cognitive science in four steps: attention, engagement, feedback, and consolidation³. To learn, we must pay attention, we must also be actively engaged. Then, having those two prerequisite, we need immediate feedback on whatever action we are performing, this will allow us to adjust our hypotheses that we made based on the action we are doing. It is the difference between the brain's prediction and the observation that will create a surprise, and create learning. And lastly, consolidation, once we have all three previous steps done, we need to

1 ROBINSON, Ken, "How school kills creativity", February 2006, http://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_says_schools_kill_creativity, accessed in September 2014.

2 Ibid.

3 ALVAREZ, Céline, "Pour une refondation de l'école guidée par les enfants: Céline Alvarez at TEDxIsèreRiver", April 6 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwVgsaNQ-Hw>, accessed in September 2014.

repeat the action we were doing. This repetition will allow the knowledge to be automatized, so it doesn't require as much conscious effort¹. This is what is needed to assimilate and learn something new. We can easily see how most of the time when a student can't really learn something at school it's because of one or all four of those steps. For example, you may be concentrated but not be motivated to learn what ever the teacher wants you to learn, or the feedback you get might not necessarily be as quick as you wanted to be, some tests take days or weeks to get corrected, and without motivation you're not willing to repeat and do more exercises.

As we have seen, curiosity drives us, it drives children to want to learn, to want to understand. Céline Alvarez did a 3 year experiment in a French kindergarten school where she let children do what they wanted in class. The children were not imposed a task, or activity compared to "normal" education and what was observed in those children's behaviors was extraordinary. Since they chose to do what ever activity they were doing they were really concentrated, they were really immersed in what they were doing. They were engaged, they were driven by their curiosity. Also, most of the activities that they were doing had instant feedback, like buttoning up a shirt or teaching another student to read. They instantaneously saw if the button didn't fit or if the other child had difficulties reading a certain word. And that instant feedback allowed them to iterate, to repeat, to understand and to assimilate or even to help out others and therefore consolidate. This is learning by doing, learning by experimenting, by exploring. The children are learning by themselves, by experiencing their hypotheses and theories, by failing and trying again. This is what some call learning through research. It is important to mention that Celine Alvarez resigned from l'Éducation nationale after her 3 year experiment as, despite it being an undeniable success, it was not extended by the administration.

1 ALVAREZ, Céline, "Pour une refondation de l'école guidée par les enfants: Céline Alvarez at TEDxIsèreRiver", April 6 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwVgsaNQ-Hw>, accessed in September 2014.

Ignorance

Children are ignorant, and they know they are. But ignorance has a lot of bad connotations, we mean “a kind of ignorance that’s less pejorative, a kind of ignorance that comes from a communal gap in our knowledge, something that’s just not there to be known or isn’t known well enough yet or we can’t make predictions from”¹. Children’s ignorance, curiosity and naivety make them ask the most interesting questions, that we may not even consider, as we do not have their ignorance. The perfect example of children’s ignorance as fuel for their curiosity can be found in the book *Réflexions d’un grenouille* or *A Frog in Reflection* by Kazuo Iwamaru, where a frog and a mouse question their surroundings in quest of knowledge and understanding when they come across a worm: “Eh! Earth worm! Where is your face? Do you have a face? Where is it? [...] No face! Does not see? Never angry? Cannot smell? Never laughs? Does not talk? Never cries? Does not even breath? And is never happy?”². Adults would never question the fact that an earth worm has no visible face like a child would, and even less likely assume that since it has no visible face it cannot feel emotions. This is what is so marvelous in children, it is how they look at the world with their ignorance and try to understand.

Stuart Firestein, who wrote *Ignorance: How It Drives Science*, talks about seeking ignorance and how seeking it creates good questions. “If you think of knowledge being this ever-expanding ripple on a pond,

1 FIRESTEIN, Stuart, “The pursuit of ignorance”, February 2013, http://www.ted.com/talks/stuart_firestein_the_pursuit_of_ignorance, accessed in September 2014.

2 From the French “Eh ! Verre de terre ! Où est ton visage ? Est-ce que tu as un visage ? Où est il ? [...] Pas de visage ! Ne voit rien ? Jamais en colère ? Ne sent rien ? Ne rit jamais ? Ne dit rien ? Ne pleure jamais ? Ne respire même pas ? Et n'est jamais heureux ?”. IWAMURA, Kazuo, *Réflexions d'une grenouille - L'intégrale*, Paris, Autrement, 2011, pp. 14-17.

the important thing to realize is that our ignorance, the circumference of this knowledge, also grows with knowledge. So the knowledge generates ignorance”¹. But “what do we use this knowledge for? What are we using this collection of facts for? We’re using it to make better ignorance, to come up with, if you will, higher-quality ignorance. [...] It’s the ignorance. It’s the what we don’t know. It’s what makes a good question”². As such he quotes James Clerk Maxwell that said “Thoroughly conscious ignorance is the prelude to every real advance in science”³. This positions ignorance as a strength, and not as the commonly known weakness that it is known as. Ignorance can make us do things that we would have been capable of doing if not ignorant. In an interview Orson Welles was asked where he found the confidence to make Citizen Kane, considered to be one of the best films ever made, to which he replied: “Ignorance, ignorance, sheer ignorance—you know there’s no confidence to equal it. It’s only when you know something about a profession, I think, that you’re timid or careful”⁴. We need to seek ignorance, dive into the unknown, be careless and playful like children in order to explore.

1 George Bernard Shaw, cited in: FIRESTEIN, Stuart, “The pursuit of ignorance”, February 2013, http://www.ted.com/talks/stuart_firestein_the_pursuit_of_ignorance, accessed in September 2014.

2 FIRESTEIN, Stuart, “The pursuit of ignorance”, February 2013, http://www.ted.com/talks/stuart_firestein_the_pursuit_of_ignorance, accessed in September 2014.

3 James Clerk Maxwell, cited in: *Ibid.*

4 Orson Welles, cited in: GRAMMENOS, Dimitris, “Stupidity, Ignorance and Nonsense as Tools for Creative Thinking”, September October 2014, <http://interactions.acm.org/archive/view/september-october-2014/stupidity-ignorance-and-nonsense-as-tools-for-creative-thinking>, accessed in November 2014.



GOAL
&
JOURNEY



2) GOAL & JOURNEY

A culture where productivity is the goal

Now let us talk about the notions of goal and journey. First of all, as we said earlier, we live in a culture where productivity is the goal. The goal is to be productive, it is being able to produce a large amount of goods or things in an efficient way. We have briefly mentioned research earlier, and is a good example to give to us see how our culture of productivity affects things like it. There are two major types of research: basic or fundamental research and applied research. Basic or fundamental research, or even sometimes called pure research is directed towards gaining greater knowledge and understanding of the world and of things. It does not have any clear end-goals or applications in mind, its main goal is to learn and gain understanding. Sometimes, it comes upon a serendipitous¹ discovery, but that discovery was never the end-goal, it just so happened to be discovered by surprise. Applied research as opposed to fundamental research is focused on a particular problem. Its goal is to solve those practical problems through research. Both of those research approaches are interesting and necessary, but in a culture where productivity is the goal, applied research finds itself favored by the people with the power to finance such research. As an example, in 2012, the National Research Council (NRC) in Ottawa, Canada, lost their funding that went towards fundamental research, and were left to focus on applied research to solve practical problems that are

¹ Serendipity is the occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way.

relevant for the industry¹. As we can see, compared to what we have already talked about, applied research is goal-oriented and is driven by that goal, on the other hand fundamental research is more of a journey, its goal is not clearly defined apart from exploring the unknown and learning from it.

This opposition between goal and journey is also noticeable between games and play. Games are structured play, and very often goal oriented; “the goal is to get the ball in the hole”, “the goal is to catch the other players until there are none left to catch” and so on. Play on the other hand is more about letting go, it’s a journey, an experience. The experience of playing. Nonetheless, productivism affects the way we play too, and this is observed in adults especially. Adults most often than not play games that have quantifiable results, something they can relate to, that can rationalize ones performance. This is surely due to the fact that we grow up being used to assigning numerical values to performance or competence. Then, ones goal is to do better, to beat that score, to be more efficient in ones playing of the game. On a similar note as what we have said about fundamental research and applied research, the fact that we might play games to show off skill and performance and partake in a process of getting more efficient in our playing is not a problem in itself. The problem comes from the fact that our culture tends to focus on this kind of playing, leaving playful play behind, or labeling it useless. Which we could say is ironic, as it serves no use apart from making itself possible.

When we say “games”, we twenty first century folks usually think of video games as the game market has expanded so much since home computers and consoles have become commonplace, and evermore since smartphones came into the picture. Now, everyone potentially has a video-

1 La Presse Canadienne, “Ottawa abandonne la recherche fondamentale pour mieux servir les entreprises”, March 29 2012, <http://www.ledevoir.com/politique/canada/346194/ottawa-abandonne-la-recherche-fondamentale-pour-mieux-servir-les-entreprises>, accessed in October 2014.

game-playing device in their possession. Video games are the media of our time. And as such, video games in their nature are a window into how our society plays and thinks. Paolo Pedercini in his “Videogames and the Spirit of Capitalism” talk given at Indiecade East 2014, give a thorough explanation of how “video games are the aesthetic form of rationalization”¹ and how it is imbued with capitalistic values and mindsets. He begins by stating that if video games, in their immense variety, have anything in common it may be their “compulsion for efficiency and control”². When playing computer games we complete tasks, we collect items and power-ups, we perfect our racing lines, we do our best to get the highest score; we strive for efficiency. This is especially true to skill-based games that “demand efficiency of movement within clockwork environments”³, rarely leaving room for “creative or expressive play”⁴.

FarmVille is a farming simulation game created by Zynga. It is a game that is played on Facebook where you manage a farm that you are encouraged to develop. There are no real goals expect expanding your farm. You can do things such as plowing land, planting and growing crops, harvesting crops and trees and raising livestock, in order to gain points and in-game currency to further develop your farm. The game incites the players to invite friends to be able to perform extra actions on each others’ farms, “players are encouraged to see their non-playing friends as potential resources to further their individual goals”⁵. If you use Facebook, you probably have received requests from friends to join them in playing FarmVille. The reason why FarmVille is an important example to talk about

1 PEDERCINI, Paolo, “Videogames and the Spirit of Capitalism”, February 14 2014, <http://www.molleindustria.org/blog/videogames-and-the-spirit-of-capitalism/>, accessed in Juin 2014.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.

is because it became the most popular “social” game when it came out in 2009, and since then we have seen a lot of FarmVille clones come into being. “FarmVille and its spin-offs are peculiar in that they are both the products and the heralds of a rationalizing ideology. They are the result of a rigorous design process that maximizes addictiveness. Traditional game design, at least we might like to think despite industrial organization of major game companies, has always been relatively creative, and into some extent, intuitive process. What Zynga perfected is an iterative, scientific approach to game making where every user interaction is registered and analyzed. The most effective elements (i.e. whatever pushes players to spend more money or return more frequently) are then amplified and multiplied throughout the game”¹.

As we have seen FarmVille is a game where the only goal is growth. It is clearly a game built on productivist and capitalist values, it’s about efficient production and management. More importantly FarmVille and games alike are about Taylorism or scientific management. Taylorism is a production method of synthesizing workflow, it breaks down every action into smaller simpler single actions that can be executed and repeated by a single worker on an assembly line. Its objective is to improve economic efficiency and labor productivity. When playing games like FarmVille you follow Taylorist principles to achieve efficiency and better productivity. Sadly, this efficient task-completing gameplay can be observed in many games today, Candy Crush Saga being another example. All of this may seem strange as “playing games per se may appear as the ultimate non-instrumental activity, the perfect antithesis to economic production and reproduction. But the act of playing, especially a computer-assisted, cybernetically-biased variety, can cultivate the capitalist mindset and value system — regardless of what the

1 PEDERCINI, Paolo, “Videogames and the Spirit of Capitalism”, February 14 2014, <http://www.molleindustria.org/blog/videogames-and-the-spirit-of-capitalism/>, accessed in Juin 2014.

specific games are intended to portray or narrate”¹.

Play, exploration and journeys

The strive for productivity, efficiency and rationalization in our culture affects the way we explore, the way we play and games. We tend to focus on rational results, goals, endings, and on points rather than on lines, paths, expeditions and journeys. Exploration and play are about journey. There may be goals in exploration or play, but generally they are not primary elements driving the action, what drives it is our curiosity and our playfulness. We may give ourselves goals when exploring or playing, but we are conscious that the aim is to explore, to play. Giving ourselves a goal is only to fuel our exploration and play, not to terminate it, it is like a milestone, not a finish line. We have seen how a common trait among games are their desire for efficiency and control, we shall now see how games outside the mainstream are “rejecting rigid goal-oriented gameplays in favor of exploration and non-linear storytelling”².

Proteus³ by Ed Key and David Kanaga is an exploration game where you start off in the ocean facing an island that is there for you to explore. What sets Proteus apart from other more famous mainstream games is that it is just about wandering and exploring, there are no points or score, no goals, no quests to complete. It is just you exploring this island that was generated by your computer. You are exploring an island that was never explored before and that will never be explored after you quit the game, as every time the game is launched it generates a new island. You cannot interact with the island by pressing keys as you would do in other games.

1 PEDERCINI, Paolo, “Videogames and the Spirit of Capitalism”, February 14 2014, <http://www.molleindustria.org/blog/videogames-and-the-spirit-of-capitalism/>, accessed in Juin 2014.

2 Ibid.

3 Pictures of Proteus can be found in the appendix.

Rather the environment interacts with you by emitting sound and creating a soundscape based on where you are. Proteus is about letting go, it's about losing yourself and discovering, it's about wandering and playing. But not playing as in responding to what the game asks you to do, because the game doesn't ask you to do anything, it just creates a beautiful impressionist-like landscape for you to explore. Proteus is about playful play. People that cannot be playful cannot enjoy Proteus, as they try to find a point to it, they do not let go and abandon themselves to the experience.

Panoramical¹ is another game centered around exploration, created by Fernando Ramallo and David Kanaga. It is similar to Proteus to a point where it has been called the reverse-Proteus. In Panoramical you generate sounds on an empty horizon using an experimental controller that has 18 identical unlabelled knobs². The sounds you create generate and affect landscape elements on the horizon that was previously empty. What is interesting in Panoramical is the controller and how it is designed: it has no labels, no elements that could indicate what any knob does or doesn't do, unlike gamepads that can be bought in stores. This is primordial to the experience of Panoramical as you are not only exploring the game — the digital media — but the interface that allows you to interact with it. In MirrorMoon EP³ by Santa Ragione the interface of the space in which you explore space was designed with similar intentions. Its appearance and looks were designed first and then the designers applied functions to the elements of the interface. Pietro Righi Riva from Santa Ragione describes this process as very a “anti-accessibility/anti-interaction design approach”⁴.

1 Pictures of Panoramical can be found in the appendix.

2 A picture of the Panoramical controller can be found in the appendix.

3 Pictures of MirrorMoon EP can be found in the appendix.

4 RIGHI RIVA, Pietro, “MirrorMoon EP: A True Sci-Fi Game Postmortem”, August 2014, <http://www.gdcvault.com/play/1020858/MirrorMoon-EP-A-True-Sci>, accessed in September 2014.

The idea is to get lost in the interface, to explore it, to not make it invisible.

Luxuria Superbia¹ is an abstract game about sensuality, giving and eventually sexuality. Originally released on the iPad, the game asks you to caress a flower to bring it to a climax. The game isn't about sexuality but because of how we are encouraged to act and interact with our device, we are reminded of sexuality and of sexual interaction with other human beings. Luxuria Superbia may not be an exploration game per se, but we can consider it an exploration by itself. What it does is change the context of interaction with a digital device. Compared to Proteus and Panoramical you are given a goal, which is to color the flower or bring it to a climax, but the game cleverly gets you to understand that you mustn't be too quick about it. "Be gentle" it asks of you. If you are too quick in coloring the flower, it finishes and expresses the fact the sensation of pleasure felt too brief. This is an allusion to ejaculating too quickly or climaxing too fast in human sexuality. This is very interesting as what the game asks of you, in the end, is to enjoy the journey and not to focus too much on the goal. It is about giving pleasure and making it last and sometimes delaying the reaching of the "goal" to further enjoy the pleasure, the journey.

Our last example is Patatap, a music making digital toy made by Jono Brandel and Lullatone. In Patatap you use your computer keyboard to play music, each key is linked to a certain sound and also to small animation associated with the sound. We could find nothing extraordinary and special about Patatap, but the way it is conceived greatly encourages playfulness, it does not ask us to be playful but when exposed to it we cannot but help ourselves be playful. But Patatap is not a game, we make it into a game, we play with it. "Playing something like Patatap — and I do mean "play," even when explicit interaction is moderate to minimal — is to engage with something unlike the imitations of productive labour I'm used to in most

1 Pictures of Luxuria Superbia can be found in the appendix.

videogames. It's closer to play as idleness, more like leisure”¹. Patatap is a small tool for wandering and our “desire to play or not play isn't necessarily determined by topicality or money-value—there's a timelessness here. Or that wasting time can actually be an important and fruitful part of emotional health”².

These games try to change the way we play with computers, with machine. “We are only learning to speak of immeasurable qualities through videogames. It's a slow and collective process of hacking accounting machines into expressive machines”³. These games challenge the way we are used to playing, they make us think, they question us and how we play, how we think about play. But more importantly games like these make us question games in general and society at play.

Political play

Play is political. Of course, one might say that everything is political and that would be right, but it is important to remind ourselves that playing is a political act. Playing can be an act of rebellion, in which we refuse to do what ever we are asked to do and play instead, as a sign of protest. As we said earlier, play can be very serious, and therefore be critical of said “serious” subjects of everyday life such as war, poverty, racism, gender inequality, and such. Mary Flanagan calls this critical play and describes it as “to create or occupy play environments and activities that represent one

1 POLANSKY, Lana, “DAYDREAMING IS HEALTHY: AN APOLOGY FOR WASTING TIME”, July 22 2014, <http://sufficientlyhuman.com/archives/346>, accessed in September 2014.

2 Ibid.

3 PEDERCINI, Paolo, “Videogames and the Spirit of Capitalism”, February 14 2014, <http://www.molleindustria.org/blog/videogames-and-the-spirit-of-capitalism/>, accessed in Juin 2014.

or more questions about aspects of human life”¹. She adds that “criticality in play can be fostered in order to question an aspect of a game’s “content,” or an aspect of a play scenario’s function that might otherwise be considered a given or necessary. Criticality can provide an essential viewpoint or an analytical framework. Those using critical play as an approach might create a platform of rules by which to examine a specific issue — rules that would be somehow relevant to the issue itself. Critical play is characterized by a careful examination of social, cultural, political or even personal themes that function as alternates to popular play spaces”².

Dys4ia³ is an autobiographical game by Anna Anthropy about gender dysphoria and hormone therapy. It is a sequence of very short mini-games about the author’s experience of her transition from her natal body and sex to the one that corresponds to her gender. She explains how she cleverly uses the media of video games — that we said is mainly goal-driven to tell her story — in this quote from an interview: “This was a story about frustration - in what other form do people complain as much about being frustrated? A video game lets you set up goals for the player and make her fail to achieve them. A reader can’t fail a book. It’s an entirely different level of empathy”. The very interesting use of setting goals so that you will fail at trying to achieve them is a compelling use of the video game medium. This emphasizes on the experience of trying to achieve the goal, the frustration, rather than focusing on achieving it as most games do. As you experience and realize that those goals are unreachable, you feel empathy and question yourself about the subject at hand.

Papers, Please⁴ is another very interesting game about critical play, bureaucracy and immigration. It is set in the fictional dystopian nation

1 FLANAGAN, Mary, *Critical Play Radical Game Design*, Cambridge MA, The MIT Press, 2009, p. 6.

2 Ibid., p. 6.

3 Pictures of Dys4ia can be found in the appendix.

4 Pictures of Papers, Please can be found in the appendix.

of Arstotzka where you play an immigration officer. Your job is to check people's identification and papers to either allow or deny them entry into Arstotzka. You earn money based on how many people you have processed through and the bribes you have collected during your shift. You also get penalties that are deducted from your pay if you allow entry to anyone that is ineligible. At the end of your workday you must decide how to spend your pay on rent, food, heat and other necessities for the well-being of your family. There is a clear "time is money" context created by those condition, you must correctly process as many people as possible during a set time period to make as much money. But Papers, Please criticizes productivism, rationality and the instrumentalisation of human lives, and it does so by having you make difficult human decisions. Should you let that woman without an entry permit go through knowing that her husband is waiting for her on the other side? Would you allow entry to a political refugee seeking asylum who's access is denied? Should you accept bribes? Should you really obey to orders you don't agree with?

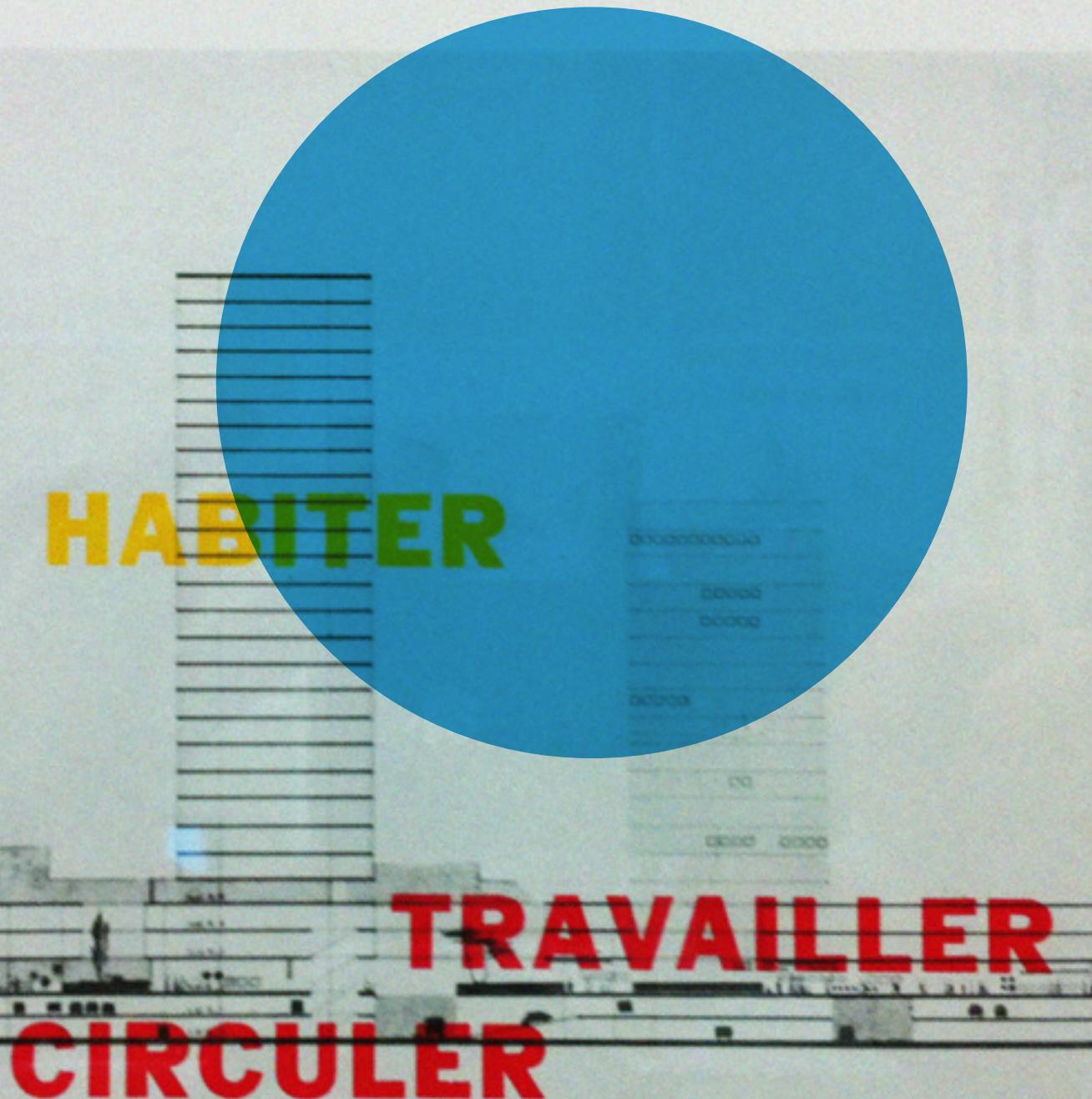
Games like these create poignant questions, questions that the player may not have asked themselves if not confronted to the situations in which the games put them. What these games do is create context for interaction, for play, making the play critical and of a political nature. "Play is a critical thinking tool"¹. These games are very important as they offer diverse points of view that are under-explored. They are made by people who explore the medium of video games rather than people who exploit the medium for what it has proved it could do. We need more games like these, we need more diversity and things that talk about under-explored subjects. We need to hear more unheard voices, expressing themselves through video games, to take the medium back from an industry that conveys capitalist values. We need more games like these that create problems and question society,

1 FLANAGAN, Mary, "TEDxDartmouth - Mary Flanagan - Critical Play", May 26 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mxTaFYYcEg>, accessed in October 2014.

and less games about consumption of entertainment. “Play is about creating a safe space for experimentation”¹. Experimentation is part of exploration, and we need more safe spaces for experimentation and exploration as it creates more acceptance in games and society and in turn, fosters diversity.

1 FLANAGAN, Mary, “TEDxDartmouth - Mary Flanagan - Critical Play”, May 26 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mxTaFYYcEg>, accessed in October 2014.

POLITICS & EXPLORATION



DWELL – WORK – CIRCULATE

a picture of Vertical Zoning by M. Holley



3) POLITICS & EXPLORATION

Growth

As we have talked about, our culture and politics play a consequential role in our approach to exploration and play. We have identified that productivism conditions our behavior in society and creates a need for tasks to feel somewhat productive or profitable. Exploration being about letting go, uncertainty and the unknown it is not as productive as other means and therefore put aside. Our political surroundings affect the way we think and act and create an environment where exploration isn't welcomed or encouraged, unless of course it is profitable or productive. We shall now study different elements of productivism and deriving ideologies that come to conflict with exploration and play.

Productivism and its quest for growth and productivity is, as we have mentioned before, opposed to the spirit of exploration and play. One of the main factors that is responsible for this is rationalization. Rationalization in sociology refers to the process where thought and action rooted in emotion, traditions and values are replaced by rational thought and action. It involves quantification and calculation in order to achieve a goal or result in the most efficient way. The purpose of rationalization is to accomplish efficiency, coordination and control of the natural and social environment. The german sociologist Max Weber who first introduced the term in late 20th century said bureaucracies were the most efficient and rational way in which human activity can be organized, as such the implementation of bureaucracies in governments is commonly given as an example of rationalization. Rationalization is the guiding principle behind the division of labour, scientific management or taylorism but it is also a source of dehumanization in society. Humans are said to be rational beings, as we use reason and logic, but this is only true to some extent, as we also do things based on our emotions or that would seem less useful or more

illogical than rational alternatives. “We play, and we know that we play, so we must be more than merely rational beings, for play is irrational”¹. In exploration and play there are some rational decisions that can be made, but the main aspect of exploration and play is the one of letting go, and this process of letting go requires irrationality. “The society founded on the expansion of alienated industrial labor becomes, quite naturally, from one end to another, unhealthy, noisy, ugly and dirty as a factory”².

As such productivism is a culture of exploitation rather than exploration, it is one of exploiting potential, resources and people. Exploitation might not be seen as negative, as we exploit land in order to produce food for example, and people might not see that as a bad thing. But the way we exploit things says a lot about how we relate to the world. We attempt to find ways to get a maximum out of something to profit from it, by squeezing out everything it has to offer. Ironically exploration is often used to find new resources to exploit, for example to find oil. We can see how productivist ideology in exploration is part of our culture by looking at how we treat serendipity, which by definition is a pleasant accidental surprise, and how we try to accelerate its occurrence, industrialize it almost. Such behavior shows the influence of productivism on us and how we are not interested in the exploration but rather in the result, in the discovery, and that we just want to get the process of exploration out of the way as fast as possible. This productivist attitude may be due to the fact that we have been taught and have come to the point where we believe that time is money, that it has a value, and that therefore we should not waste it, or spend it on things judged to be useless or worthless. It’s not *worth* our time. This brings us to

1 HUIZINGA, Johan, *Homo Ludens*, Boston, The Beacon Press, 1955, p. 4.

2 From the French “La société fondée sur l’expansion du travail industriel aliéné devient, bien normalement, de part en part, malsaine, bruyante, laide et sale comme une usine”. DEBORD, Guy, *La Société du Spectacle*, Directed by Guy Debord, France, 1973.

one of productivism's incarnation in political-economics: Capitalism.

Capitalism is an economic system that is characterized by the accumulation of capital, competitive markets and waged labor. As we might guess from its name, money plays a central role in capitalism as it is used as the standardized medium of exchange. Capitalism is the predominant economic system in the world alongside its close relative socialism. Even though France is currently run by a socialist party, Parti Socialiste (PS), we will focus on capitalism as it is the dominant system today and it is the one that gave birth to globalization, which, whether we would like it or not, affects us and the way we live today. Globalization, as French economist and CNRS Director of Research at the *Bureau d'économie théorique et appliquée* Frédéric Lordon puts it is a “generalized deregulation of all markets”¹ which he explains leads to “the intensification of competition”² and “financial deregulation”³. The latter is very important as he explains that it means the “liberalization of all capital movements. [...] Which brings the financial sphere to an ultra-dominant position in all the social relations of capitalism”⁴. Globalization is an extension of capitalism across the world, imposing its ideology through its financial power. We won't go further into explaining all of the economical issues of globalization and capitalism as it would require doing a whole new thesis on the subject, instead we will examine how capitalism on its own rules over our society, how it may controls and conditions us or influences our rational reasoning and logic and what this means for our behavior towards exploration and play.

1 From the French “le processus de déréglementation généralisé de tout les marchés”. LORDON, Frédéric, *Ma Mondialisation*, Directed by Gilles Perret, France, 2006.

2 From the French “l'intensification de la concurrence”. Ibid.

3 From the French “la déréglementation financière”. Ibid.

4 From the French “la libéralisation de tout les mouvements de capitaux [...] ça fait émerger la sphère financière en position ultra-dominante dans l'ensemble des rapports sociaux du capitalisme”. Ibid.

Capitalism, control and servitude

One of the first elements of capitalism that we will see which influences our behavior is alienation. Alienation in philosophy is the dispossession of the individual, which means the loss of control and of their own forces in favor of, another individual, a group or society in general. Alienation can make you feel foreign or disconnected from your own world, where you feel distanced from it and at the same time feel powerless to make this change. In his theory of alienation Karl Marx describes how people are estranged to the product of their labor because of the capitalist system. Capitalism uses human labor to produce commodities to sell and profit from on the market, on which the laborer's individual hard work, talents and skills are not recognized. As a result the laborer becomes alienated from their own labor, Marx even goes to say that man is estranged to man. They are alienated from their humanity. In total Marx identifies four types of alienation that occur to the laborer under the capitalist system: alienation of the worker from the worker, alienation of the worker from working, alienation of the worker from himself, as a producer and alienation of the worker from other workers. We won't go into details for each type of alienation in this thesis, we will just conclude this paragraph by saying that we, today, are alienated by work. We may not think so, but the reality is that we have accepted the fact that labor is a logical part of life, some people even go to the extent of saying that work is necessary to live a healthy life. But of course in a world where money is the standardized medium of exchange and that in order to obtain it we must work, we try to see the bright side of labor, as a necessary part of human life to purchase what matters.

Frédéric Lordon did some interesting work on capitalism, alienation, work and free will in his book *Capitalisme, désir et servitude. Marx et Spinoza*, in which he talks about an interesting notion that he calls the alpha angle. The alpha angle is the gap between the master desire — the desire of the entrepreneur or boss for their business to go in a certain direction, towards a goal that they have set, and for the employees to be subject to

that desire — and the desire of the individuals, the laborers, the employees — that have their own desires or *conatus*¹ that may not be going in the same direction as the master desire. As such, there is an angle between those two directions or desires, that Frédéric Lordon represents as the alpha angle that embodies the tension between both of those desires. The bigger the angle, the more friction there is in the attempt to go in either directions; the smaller the angle, the less friction there is, and the closer we are to merging the master desire and the individual desire into one unique desire. This is the capitalist dream. Its dream and the goal of neoliberal businesses according to Frédéric Lordon is to have “a man wanting to produce and desiring only to produce and a man happy to produce, a man happy with his salaried fate”². This grim capitalist utopia is dawning according to Lordon and is compared to the North Korean regime by Usul in his video³ on Lordon.

The example of North Korea is very relevant, as anybody with Western culture would obviously say that the people of North Korea are alienated, to the point where “it is difficult for us to imagine that they do not all try to resist internally”⁴ or to think that they might not actually fear the

1 Conatus, literally meaning *effort*, is according to Spinoza, an innate inclination of something to continue to exist and enhance itself.

2 “un homme désirant produire et ne désirant que produire et un homme content de produire, un homme heureux de sort sort salarial”.
LORDON, Frédérique, “LORDON ET LE CAPITALISME “WAOOW”,
D@NS LE TEXTE”, Arrêt sur images, reportage de Judith Bernard,
September 30 2010.

3 Usul, “L’Économiste (Frédéric Lordon)”,
October 30 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87sEeVj057Q&list=FLIyt2G9brgp5KTDkRS91TvQ>, accessed in October 2014.

4 “on a même du mal à imaginer qu’ils ne résistent pas tous intérieurement”. Ibid.

regime and comply under threat. Why can't their love for their leader and dictator be genuine and profound? Why is this so difficult for us to believe? "What if the authoritarian North Korean government had in fact created a "new man" that is docile, patriotic, sincere and devoted to the great leader? Admitting this would mean admitting universal servitude and especially the unstructured absolute power of conditioning on individuals. But of course it is always easier to see other people's alienations than seeing our own"¹. This is because we are convinced that we are masters of our cartesian free will to act and decide upon reasoning. "If the North Koreans learn to idolize their great leader, we, are taught, increasingly in the last 30 years to idolize money, the market and especially work"². This brings us to borrowing Lordon's notion of the alpha angle where we see the master desire not as the desire of the employer, but the desire of the capitalist system in general, and as such we as individuals are persuaded to be drawn towards it and to desire the same things.

Besides talking about economy in his work, Frédéric Lordon also talks about free will from a Spinozian point of view. Spinoza, the 17th century Dutch philosopher, was a determinist, and according to him human behavior is fully determined. He believes that we have no free will and that freedom

1 "et si le gouvernement autoritaire nord coréen avait bel et bien fait naître un homme nouveau, docile, patriote, sincère et dévoué au grand leader ? Admettre cela voudrait dire admettre la servitude universelle et surtout le pouvoir absolu destructuré du conditionnement sur les individus. Mais il est toujours plus facile de voir les alienations des autres que de voir les nôtres". Usul, "L'Économiste (Frédéric Lordon)", October 30 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87sEeVj057Q&list=FLIyt2G9brgp5KTDkRS91TvQ>, accessed in October 2014.

2 "si les Nord-Coréens apprennent à idolâtrer leur grand leader, nous, nous apprenons, et de plus en plus depuis 30 ans à idolâtrer l'argent, le marché et surtout le travail". Ibid.

is our capacity of knowing that we are determined and from understanding why we act as we do. In a letter to G.H. Schaller, Spinoza wrote that “men are conscious of their own desire, but are ignorant of the causes whereby that desire has been determined”¹. We cannot control our desires, we cannot decide or will ourselves to desire something. Our desires are determined, among other things, by our life course through which we have been shaped by our environment and surrounding structures. This brings us to assert that the environment and structures around us, namely productivism and capitalism, influence our desires. Considering that productivism and capitalism are, to some extent, opposed to play and exploration, and that our desires are determined by those structures, this would mean that we are determined to less likely be playful, to play or explore. As “for us, the opposite of play is earnest, also used in the more special sense of work”². Frédéric Lordon describes revolution as the becoming orthogonal or the becoming perpendicular of the alpha angle. Therefore if we assert that capitalism’s desires are opposed to play and exploration, can playfulness and exploratory behavior be a path towards revolution against capitalism and productivism?

Domination

What maintains productivism and capitalism is the behavior they induce, such as consumerism which is an ideology that encourages the acquisition of goods and services in ever-greater amounts. We, the people that consume are called consumers. Capitalism is dependent on consumption as it is what closes the cycle of money: laborers are paid to

1 Letter 62 (58) to G.H. Schaller from Spinoza, October 1974, accessible at: http://www.faculty.umb.edu/gary_zabel/Courses/Spinoza/Texts/Spinoza/let6258.htm, accessed in November 2014.

2 HUIZINGA, Johan, *Homo Ludens*, Boston, The Beacon Press, 1955, p. 44.

produce commodities, laborers become commodities themselves, laborers buy commodities with pay to respond to their needs and desires determined by capitalism itself, capitalist profits from sold commodities, capitalist reinvests profits in the production cycle. Consumerism is also of interest to us as it is greatly encouraged to attempt at making capitalism a sustainable economic system, but consumerism also influence how we relate to things, we accumulate things, we consume them. The way we consume can sometimes be compared to processing something, we may consume food for example, without necessarily paying attention to what we are eating, we just consume it. This kind of behavior can also be observed in media culture and as we position play and exploration as positive notions that oppose productivism and capitalism, games are also media that we consume. A good example of media culture consumption is the online game platform and marketplace Steam, as it frequently has sales, during which we feel the urge to attain an unreasonable amount of games that we desire. We sometimes buy games sold in bundles, as it feels more efficient or cost-effective, but the truth is that we may never play most of these games. The result of acquiring a great number of games may also make us want to complete each one of them quickly in order to play them all, as such we may say that we consume them, we consume entertainment. This efficient consumption approach to games, can be compared to how we may sometimes consume food, we may not feel or experience the taste as much. And this raises the question of are we truly “playing” those games, or are we simply responding to what the game asks of us and calling this activity “play”?

Another important element that perpetuates the spirit and ideology of productivism and capitalism is urbanism. As we see it, urbanism is the embodiment of politics in spatial form, and in a capitalist society, is the embodiment of capitalism in space. This space is the environment in which we grow, live, circulate and work. “The society that molds all of its surroundings has developed a special technique for shaping its very territory, the solid ground of this collection of tasks. Urbanism is capitalism’s seizure of the natural and human environment; developing logically into absolute

domination, capitalism can and must now remake the totality of space into its own setting”¹. As such, capitalist urbanism is an environment that can further determine us and our desires. This urbanism is built on capitalist principles to perpetuate capitalist values and as such does not encourage exploration or play, but rather it encourages efficiency and consumption.

“Urbanism is the modern fulfillment of the uninterrupted task which safeguards class power: the preservation of the atomization of workers who had been dangerously brought together by urban conditions of production. The constant struggle that had to be waged against every possible form of their coming together discovers its favored field in urbanism. After the experiences of the French Revolution, the efforts of all established powers to increase the means of maintaining order in the streets finally culminates in the suppression of the street. “With the present means of long-distance mass communication, sprawling isolation has proved an even more effective method of keeping a population under control”, says Lewis Mumford in *The City in History*, describing “henceforth a one-way world”. But the general movement of isolation, which is the reality of urbanism, must also include a controlled reintegration of workers depending on the needs of production and consumption that can be planned. Integration into the system requires that isolated individuals be recaptured and isolated together: factories and halls of culture, tourist resorts and housing developments are expressly organized to serve this pseudo-community that follows the isolated individual right into the family cell. The widespread use of receivers of the spectacular message² enables the individual to fill his isolation with the dominant images—images which derive their power precisely from this isolation”³. Guy Debord calls this isolation in order to control the people

1 DEBORD, Guy, *La société du spectacle*, Paris, Gallimard, 1992 reprint of the 1967 original, p. 165.

2 By “receivers of the spectacular message” Guy Debord means television and other such objects one-sided means of communication.

3 DEBORD, Guy, op. cit., p. 166.

the technique of separation. Separation cuts us off from social interactions and humanity in favor of capitalism.

Exploration and play are not encouraged by our capitalist-dominated society. First we saw how globalization spread capitalist ideology and imposed its structure worldwide making capitalist-thinking a requirement for other nations to compete in thing global financial deregulation. We talked about how the productivist vision of work under capitalism alienates us from our own humanity and therefore our playfulness, and how separation is imposed through media culture and urbanism. Capitalism's master desire pulls us towards it, we are conditioned by capitalism and its productivist values to desire to work, consume, produce and to be efficient in doing so and in how we spend our time. We are compelled to rationalize things, such as relationships, love, feelings and emotions as we are in search of control. We think we use cartesian thinking, we think we are masters and in control of our desires and choices, that we work and are serious and therefore not playful, because we have chosen not to be. We have grown in this productivist and capitalist environment since we were children, and we have, more of less, learned to accept its values and ideology. We idolize money and work and see playfulness as childish or not worthwhile, as we may confuse productivist and capitalist behavior or values for adulthood or adult behavior. We associate adulthood with seriousness and work, and childhood or childishness with play, wandering and carelessness. As such we explore things and play games that correspond to our productivist and capitalist needs for accumulation, consumption, efficiency and control. This state of mind does not encourage playfulness, playful play and therefore doesn't encourage exploration either, as they do not fulfill our productivist and capitalist desires.

Uniformity against diversity

Human life is immensely diverse and mankind has proved this throughout civilization by showing how extremely creative it is, though art

and culture. Traveling to another country and discovering a new culture — even if it has many common points with our own — is a unique experience and opens the mind to diversity. Just look at all the different types of cuisines from all over the world as an example. This diversity should be preserved as well as encouraged. But structures like capitalism and productivism are not so fond of diversity as it is harder to capture or control, not as efficient, and more difficult to profit from. If everyone were the same and liked the same things, it would be much easier for them, but the reality of things is that we are all very different, and we should cherish that difference. We can see this in urban spaces with a general movement of uniformity with the widespread of franchising and the disappearing independent outlets. As we have seen, and continue to see, these structures are actors of oppressions acting against humanity.

“Accepting the fact of being under the empire of passionnal servitude is therefore accepting to begin to see the world in terms of structures, it’s beginning to see each general and specific oppressions of which individuals are subject to”¹. We have already talked about productivism and capitalism as oppressive structure, but many others exists and act against diversity, like racism and sexism. We will focus on sexism, and more precisely on the patriarchal structure of our society. Patriarchy is a social system where males hold the primary power over women. This is of interest to us, while studying exploration and play, as sexism and patriarchy and other oppressive structures against diversity prevent and dissuade exploration and play, as these activities are very diverse indeed. We will therefore

1 From the French “accepter de se savoir sous l’empire de la servitude passionnelle est donc accepter de commencer à voir le monde en terme de structures, c’est commencer à voir chacune des oppressions générales et spécifiques auxquelles sont soumis les individus”. Usul, “L’Économiste (Frédéric Lordon)”, October 30 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87sEeVj057Q&list=FLiyt2G9brgp5KTDkRS91TvQ>, accessed in October 2014.

see how patriarchy and sexism in our society oppresses and attempts to exclude women in education and urbanism. This is important as we want to promote exploration and play for everyone, not just men, as such we must study the issues of our current society and environment in order to attempt at creating the best environment for exploration and play for everyone.

A French study shows that social injunction to virility during the construction of young boys' identities is what can explain their misbehavior in school. This happens primarily during puberty when human relationships become gendered, "boys find themselves caught between two normative systems. The first, conveyed by the school, advocates values of calmness, wisdom, work, obedience, discretion, virtues traditionally associated with femininity. The second, relayed by the community of peers and civil society, values manly behaviors and encourages boys to do the complete opposite: breaking rules, being rude, acting like a humbug, monopolizing attention, space, using their physical strength, showing off as sexually dominant..."¹. As such boys try to stand out by acting manly to not appear as feminine. "This paradoxical injunction reflects that of our contemporary society that accepts the coexistence of the principle of equality between women and men and a reality founded on the real inequality between the sexes, in all

1 From the French "les garçons se retrouvent en effet pris entre deux systèmes normatifs. Le premier, véhiculé par l'école, prône les valeurs de calme, de sagesse, de travail, d'obéissance, de discréction, vertus traditionnellement associées à la féminité. Le deuxième, relayé par la communauté des pairs et la société civile, valorise les comportements virils et encourage les garçons à tout le contraire : enfreindre les règles, se montrer insolents, jouer les fumistes, monopoliser l'attention, l'espace, faire usage de leur force physique, s'afficher comme sexuellement dominants...". AYRAL, Sylvie, RAYBAUD, Yves, "En finir avec la fabrique des garçons", November 6 2014, <https://lejournal.cnrs.fr/billets/en-finir-avec-la-fabrique-des-garcons>, accessed in November 2014.

social fields”¹. Subsequently, this creates a separation between the boys and girls in after-school activities, and this “gendering of activities is particularly favorable to boys, that benefit from almost 75% of the public budget destined to leisure for young people!”². In order to rethink the education of boys and try to solve this issue we must propose that educators “accept the abolition of certitudes and evidences in the domain of gender and sexuality. This proposition carries out a critical approach to pedagogy and educational activities. It shows how the “gender glasses” radically question an educational system that, under the pretext increasingly technical learning methods, perpetuates ever more unequal gendered social relationships”³.

These inequalities also affect how the city is practiced and built. Our first example is based on a study that shows that girls begin dropping out of leisure sport, cultural or general activities organized by municipalities from 6th grade. “While we build said neutral leisure activities and spaces,

1 From the French “Cette injonction paradoxale traduit celle de nos sociétés contemporaines qui acceptent la coexistence du principe d'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes et d'une réalité fondée sur l'inégalité réelle entre les sexes, dans tous les champs du social”. AYRAL, Sylvie, RAYBAUD, Yves, “En finir avec la fabrique des garçons”, November 6 2014, <https://lejournal.cnrs.fr/billets/en-finir-avec-la-fabrique-des-garcons>, accessed in November 2014.

2 From the French “non-mixité des activités est particulièrement favorable aux garçons, qui bénéficient de près de 75% des budgets publics destinés aux loisirs des jeunes !”. Ibid.

3 From the French “d'accepter l'abolition des certitudes et des évidences dans le domaine du genre et des sexualités. Cette proposition passe par une approche critique des pédagogies et des activités éducatives. Elle montre comment les « lunettes du genre » remettent en question de façon radicale un système d'éducation qui, sous couvert d'apprentissages de plus en plus techniques, perpétue des rapports sociaux de sexe toujours inégalitaires”. Ibid.

but that in reality are destined to boys (skateparks, indoor city stadiums, activities linked to “urban cultures” etc.). Simply because, even if soccer and skateboarding are not for boys only, we must admit that the practices are established by their the way they are carried out¹. These issues are usually overlooked by local politicians and are often dismissed by saying that “girls prefer staying at home” or that “they are more mature, they know how to take care of themselves, [...] the important thing, is to take care of the youth in greater difficulty, that are failing at school, before they turn bad”². This raises the second issue which is that urban space are built almost exclusively by men; architects, urban planners and politicians, almost all of them are men. Even “the participation of the citizens (neighborhood councils, public inquiries or consultation operations) are generally dominated by men”³. Women have less control over the city, and any change done to the city usually completely ignores this.

All of the issues that we have raised are of a political nature, as politics comes from the Greek *politikos* meaning “of, for, or relating to

1 From the French “Tandis que se met en place une offre de loisir se disant neutre, mais qui est en réalité destinée aux garçons (skateparcs, citystades, activités liées aux « cultures urbaines », etc.). Tout simplement parce que, même si le foot et le skate ne sont pas réservés aux garçons, il faut reconnaître que les pratiques sont consacrées par l’usage”. RAYBAUD, Yves, “Une ville faite pour les garçons”, March 21 2014, <https://lejournal.cnrs.fr/billets/une-ville-faite-pour-les-garcons>, accessed in November 2014.

2 From the French “Les filles sont plus mûres, elles savent mieux s’occuper, [...] ce qui est important, c’est de s’occuper des jeunes les plus difficiles, en échec scolaire, avant qu’ils ne tournent mal” local politicians cited in: Ibid.

3 From the French “La participation citoyenne (conseils de quartier, enquêtes publiques ou opérations de concertation) est généralement dominée par les hommes”. Ibid.

citizens". And we have seen that politicians have the power to and can change things, but the worrying trend of depoliticization of topics such as sexism, sexual education, gender issues and so on has tried to remove such important topics from political influence or activity. Nicolas Sarkozy, the former president of France from 2007 to 2012, during a long speech he gave in favor of work in Lille on February 23 2012, declared he had raised work to the rank "a cardinal value of the Republic". The cardinal virtues are a set of four virtues initially discussed by Plato in *The Republic* between 426 and 435, they are: prudence, justice, temperance and courage. The cardinal virtues are the basic virtues required for a virtuous life. Thus, when Sarkozy said he raised work to the rank of a cardinal value, not only did he want to convey that he believes that work is required for a virtuous life, but he depoliticized the topic of work. "The debate is moved to the field of morality. Work now a value no longer has to be questioned"¹. Since then politicians have talked about the "*valeur travail*" or "work value" as something natural. Depoliticization is dangerous as it removes the option for political debate on a certain topic. People today, mainly conservatives, also take part in this trend of depoliticizing topics such as sexual education, gender equality and gay marriage, as if the debate within these subjects were a question of moral right or wrong. As we have seen politicians depoliticize topics such as sexism in education and urbanism. How can we imagine society functioning properly when people and politicians depoliticize such important topics? We need to re-politicize these subjects as they are sources of current social issues. Having gained in knowledge and understanding of today's underlying problems, what conditions our behavior and desires and what makes us lose touch with playfulness and exploration, we will now

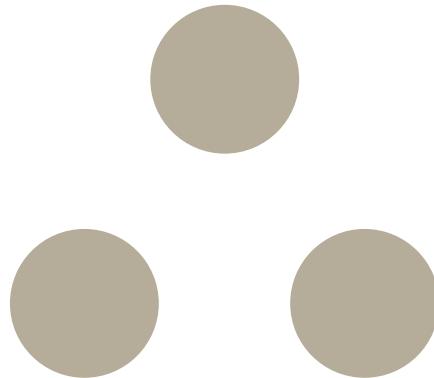
1 From the French "le débat se déplace sur le terrain de la morale. Le travail devenu une valeur n'a plus à être remis en question". Usul, "L'Économiste (Frédéric Lordon)", October 30 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=87sEeVj057Q&list=FLiyt2G9brgp5KTDkRS91TvQ>, accessed in October 2014.

attempt to raise hypotheses in search for practical solutions.



WHERE
DO
WE GO
FROM
HERE?





III.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

We are born explorers but as we mature into adults our culture and environment erodes our exploratory abilities and our playfulness in favor of compliance and general productivity. We have observed how we behave, and analyzed why based on theoretical hypothesis on education, culture and politics to understand how our environment conditions us and our relation to exploration and play. We will now make hypotheses in more practical territories in which we will ask ourselves how can we (re) encourage exploration and play in culture? Firstly we will see how to build, rebuild and cultivate our sense of exploration and play, mainly through education and urbanism. Secondly we will see how getting lost intentionally may allow us to explore and re-explore, discover and re-discover things we might know already or in the attempt to discover something we don't. And lastly we will question ourselves about playfulness in general.



**BUILDING
REBUILDING
CULTIVATING**

**OUR SENSE
OF EXPLORATION
AND PLAY**

1) BUILDING, REBUILDING AND CULTIVATING OUR SENSE OF EXPLORATION AND PLAY

Relearning to explore and never unlearning to explore

To build, rebuild or cultivate our exploratory and playful behavior we need an overall better environment in which we can grow, and as we have seen a productivist and capitalist society isn't such an environment, as it is focused on its own development at the expense of general humanity. Changing the way society works is an extremely difficult task, and we will not solve any of these problems in this thesis. What we can do though, is find smaller more practical territories in which we can make new hypotheses that may lead to practical solutions. As such we will begin by focusing on education and school, as it is where we learn to learn, to relate to others and to live in society. Education is the foundation of our society, and to create a better, more playful society we need a better education system that encourages exploration. We need education centered around the students and their self-development rather than centered around the market and its needs. Students should be encouraged to discover what they like to do rather than asking them to choose from a limited list of options. Students need to be given this opportunity to explore. Pablo Picasso said that "all children are born artists, the problem is to remain an artist as we grow up", we believe that this is true for exploration, and therefore we will interpret it in the following way: children are born playful explorers, the problem is to remain a playful explorer as we grow up.

Autonomy is an important factor in exploration, we must be able to rely on ourselves, to trust ourselves and our instincts in order to explore and not have to depend on others. Structures like capitalism want and need people to be dependent, in order to dominate and survive, as, if students become too autonomous they may become a danger to the structure, by questioning it or acting against it. This is what happened to mutual schools or mutual instruction, also called the monitorial system. This model appeared

as early as in mid-18th century in France but became more widespread during the 19th century in Europe. They were educational establishments created to educate poor children, they had little means and a very limited amount of teachers, some establishments could have a single teacher for 300 students. As such, the model was based on having students teach each other, by having older students teach younger ones, and it worked extraordinarily well, students were learning faster than in regular schools. But “these schools had to close as the conservatives of the time thought that the students were not taught to respect authority and that they would question it when asked to follow orders”¹. The autonomy that the students acquired by such an interesting education model became feared by conservatives, but why should they be afraid? Conservatives are mostly people with wealth, power, and privileges and they want to conserve them, they want to keep them. As such, autonomy is perceived as a danger to them, and to capitalism, as they fear revolt and losing what they seek to keep. Autonomy, which leads to critical thinking, is power. The people should have power and should not be dominated or oppressed by structures. Having said this, we can then ask ourselves, what if education what focused on the students’ self-development through exploration to encourage autonomy?

Earlier we have seen that diversity is an important part of culture and that we must encourage it, which leads to a better and more accepting environment in which we can explore. To encourage diversity we need acceptance, and that is, as we see it one of the social roles of education, to create a safe social environment for meeting others, for fostering diversity. We have talked about the technique of separation in urbanism and through

1 From the French “Ces écoles ont dû fermer car les conservateurs de l'époque pensaient que les élèves n'apprenaient pas à respecter l'autorité et qu'ils questionneraient quand on leur demanderait de marcher au pas”. TADDEI, François, “TEDxParis 2010 - François Taddei - Pour un nouveau modèle d'éducation”, February 7 2010, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=60_xXe5IAkI, accessed in October 2014.

media, creating isolation in order to control, and we could say that it has also been applied to education, by creating isolation with division into classes and cultivating a competitive environment, by creating a one-way broadcast of information transmitted by the teacher, but also with the more recent MOOCs or massive open online courses. MOOCs are online platforms that provide diverse courses, from computer programming to social sciences, through videos or readings alongside several other features such as tests and chatrooms or forums. The MOOC industry is divided in non-profit providers like Khan Academy and for-profits like Udacity and Coursera. MOOCs can be quite convenient as they are free, open and accessible on the internet, and are seen as an efficient and cost-effective alternative to today's more "physical" education. Although MOOCs are interesting, we should take into account that considering them as a replacement would be a great problem as it further reinforces the separation, as they create isolation and provide limited social interactions. We need social diversity and social interactions in our social environments, in the city, in towns and in schools. If education's future is primarily based on MOOCs, then it will result in even more social discrimination and segregation. We said that education is the foundation of our society, as such we need to teach students to embrace diversity, its role in society should be the opposite of the technique of separation. What if education focused itself on the students' social development and social issues rather than solely on school subjects and their ability to learn in order to encourage acceptance and foster diversity?

Such a place exists, an experimental establishment, called the LAP or *Lycée autogéré de Paris* created in 1982 under the *Ministre de l'Éducation nationale* Alain Savary. It is a self-managed high school in Paris, which means that the teachers and the students all take part in the management and maintenance of the establishment. Students are not required to attend class and there are no standardized tests except for the baccalauréat¹ for

1 The baccalauréat is the diploma obtained at the end of the *lycée*, high school or secondary education.

which students are not required to study. Any management decisions are made with whoever is interested in being involved, using democratic votes. The LAP is a place where students can explore as they are given the liberty to do so, they are given responsibilities and have a social role in the community that is their school. The fact that they are not obliged to attend class is crucial as the ones that do choose to attend, are therefore self-motivated and engaged. The LAP is a place where debate is encouraged and this creates implication in students, but also helps cultivate critical thinking. Not all of the students necessarily obtain the baccalauréat, but that isn't the goal of the establishment, the goal is for the students to accomplish themselves, to explore and to learn what they like to do. As a student testifies: "I got so invested in the school that I forgot about class. As a matter of fact, it's at the LAP that I discovered my interest for sound engineering"¹. What if more schools were like the LAP? What if experimental structures like these became more mainstream? What if experimentation became one of the key focus points of education, to perpetually redefine itself?

Let us now imagine what the future of education as we would want it to be would look like. We have seen that today education inspires a competitive spirit at the expense of collaboration between students, that the social relationships with teachers are very hierarchical and do not encourage exchange and that the students' attitude towards education is very passive, as interaction is not incited. We consume knowledge as we are taught to do so. Education is not experienced as social, the social aspect of education is found in the fact that we are confronted to others at school, that we meet other students, but that it itself is detached from the notion of learning. This non-social aspect of learning is mostly due to the one-way flow of knowledge, from teacher to student, that conditions a poor environment

1 From the French "J'me suis tellement investi dans le lycée que j'en ai oublié les cours. En fait, c'est au LAP que j'ai découvert mon intérêt pour les métiers du son". LAP Student, cited in: AURITA, Aurélia, *LAP ! un roman d'apprentissage*, Les Impressions Nouvelles, 2014.

for interaction. As such, education should be more social, students should work together and bring something to the group while also benefiting from the group in ways that would not have otherwise been possible on an individual basis. This is the whole point of being together to learn. We need a more human behavior of togetherness in education, helping each other out and collaborating on becoming citizens, adults and part of society. “He who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god”¹. Learning to live together is a precondition to playing together and leading a playful life in society. From this we may ask ourselves, what if schools tomorrow asked questions instead of teaching answers?

Today we have access to the internet and we are heading towards abundantly free and accessible information everywhere, we learn so much outside of school that we could easily imagine learning without it. But schools, as we have seen are important as they have can be the foundation for a more unified society. Schools will not be the places where we will go to find knowledge anymore, in the future we will go to school to learn how to think with all this information, to share, explore, experiment and collaborate with others. In a world where information and its sources are abundant, we must know which ones and who to trust. This is why cultivating a sense of critical thinking to become autonomous is essential, as we create information so fast that we need to rely on ourselves to sort the good from the bad. The schools should not impose a particular way of thinking to the students, but rather help the students develop their own while introducing them to school of thoughts. The teachers’ won’t be teachers anymore, but mentors, facilitators and guides, they will help the students explore and learn together by creating the proper conditions for such interactions, they will make sure that the environment in which the students are conducive to exploration and self-development. As such,

1 Aristotle, *Politics*, Book I, accessible at: http://www.constitution.org/ari/polit_01.htm, accessed in November 2014.

learning will be peer-to-peer again, like its mutual instruction predecessor, and this will become commonplace. The idea behind such education would be to foster autonomy, critical thinking and not unlearning to be curious and creative, to found a society that embraces exploration. The education of tomorrow seeks to educate independent minds, rather than manufacture minds ready for employment.

We have learned about different experimental educational systems, and observed how remarkable the results were. All of them were centered on the learner, the student, their well-being, and development. This brings us back to what Céline Alvarez taught us about the learning process, from which we could ask ourselves what if education was really built around the learning process according to cognitive science? We saw how the young children learned with joy and implication as they were truly interested and engaged in the activity that they were doing, but we also observed similar things from what we have learned about the LAP and mutual instruction. As such, couldn't we come to the conclusion that exploratory self-driven education is more efficient than regular education? This might seem strange as we have opposed exploration and productivity, but from what we have observed from these experiments is that students learned more efficiently than they would have in a regular educational system. This may also lead us to ask ourselves if the search for productivity, efficiency and control in education is its own obstacle? The idea is not to create a new productivism, but to continue in criticizing the model, by showing how it mostly benefits itself at the expense of the individuals involved and to continue proposing alternatives centered around exploration and autonomy.

Urbanism, exploration and play

Today's urbanism is built on productivist and capitalist ideologies, it is designed to be used in a specific way to develop domination and maintain these structures and suppressing exploration and play. As such, we see urbanism as a practical territory for raising hypotheses that can lead

to practical solutions to cultivating our sense of exploration and play, and encouraging it within the city as part of everyday life. Play is currently not absent of urban spaces, there are playgrounds and other types of spaces that were designed for leisure, but there is “a trend in urban planning that consists in determining a normalized and predictable practice of urban space by annihilating any ambiguity of use and any possibilities for experimentation”¹. This is what the sociologist Marc Brevigilieri refers to as the “*ville garantie*” or “guaranteed city” which leaves little freedom for interpretation. Our playful behavior in the city is determined, it is programmed and designed, there is a “will to control the unpredictable [...] even though it may produce a sensation of freedom, even abandonment, this type of structure in reality offers only a limited experience”². Productivism want things to be predictable to maintain its efficiency, as unpredictability makes it more difficult to foresee potential events that may compromise growth. “Everything must be anticipated, calculated and normalized in in order to reach specific and certified goals, but mainly to evacuate any uncertainty automatically prefiguring ideas of disorder and of insecurity.

1 From the French “une tendance de planification qui consiste à déterminer une utilisation normale et prévisible de l'espace urbain en annihilant tout flou d'usage et toute possibilité d'expérimentation”. CURNIER, Sonia, “Programmer le jeu dans l'espace public ?”, November 10 2014, <http://www.metropolitiques.eu/Programmer-le-jeu-dans-l-espace.html>, accessed in November 2014.

2 From the French “volonté de maîtriser l'imprévisible [...] bien que produisant une sensation de liberté, voire d'évasion, ce type de dispositif n'offre en réalité qu'une expérience limitée”. Ibid.

But uncertainty is precisely another fundamental aspect of play”¹ according to Roger Caillois, as well as being a fundamental aspect of exploration. We need to leave room for uncertainty in urban spaces, leave room for disorder, risks, the unexpected, and freedom of interpretation. We need to leave room for reappropriation and *détournement* of the city by its citizens.

Détourner in French means to hijack, it is to take something and doing something else with it, something that was not intended to be done with it. *Détournement* was notably used by the Situationists or Situationist International (SI) to fight against capitalist ideology in urbanism and other areas. The Situationist International were a group of international, mostly Marxist, avant-garde artists, intellectuals and political theorists, it was created in 1957 and disbanded in 1972. The Situationists argue that capitalism manufactures false desires with ubiquitous advertising, the glorification of accumulated capital, and more broadly in the abstraction and reification² of the more ephemeral experiences of authentic life into commodities. The experimental direction of situationist activity consisted in setting up temporary environments favorable to the fulfillment of true and authentic human desires. It is dismantling the structures that condition us by creating ephemeral situations. The Situationists explored alternative life experiences by the construction of situations, unitary urbanism and

1 From the French “tout devrait être anticipé, calculé et normalisé en vue d’atteindre des objectifs précis et certifiés, mais surtout afin d’évacuer toute incertitude qui préfigure automatiquement des idées de trouble et d’insécurité. Or l’incertitude est justement un autre trait fondamental du jeu”. CURNIER, Sonia, “Programmer le jeu dans l'espace public ?”, November 10 2014, <http://www.metropolitiques.eu/Programmer-le-jeu-dans-l-espace.html>, accessed in November 2014.

2 Reification according to Marx, from the german *Verdinglichung*, literally means “making into a thing” or objectification.

psychogeography¹, in order to foster play, freedom and critical thinking. The Situationists apart from being a group that made and inspired many utopian projects were also a great political influence during the time of their existence. They played a considerable role in the events of the May 1968 uprisings in France to the extent where their political perspective and ideas fueled the crisis by providing a central theoretic foundation. This is to show that ideologies, such as the Situationists' can make a change and get people to rally and protest together for their rights and freedom.

Unitary Urbanism or UU was created by the Lettrist International founded by Guy Debord, that then was further developed by the Situationists International, it is “not a doctrine of urbanism but a critique of urbanism”². In the Unitary Urbanism ideal, the structural and artistic elements of metropolitan surroundings are merged into such grey area that one cannot identify where function ends and play begins. The resulting society, while it caters to fundamental needs, does so in an atmosphere of continual exploration, leisure, and stimulating ambience. “UU is not ideally separated from the current terrain of cities. UU is developed out of the experience of this terrain and based on existing constructions. As a result, it is just as important that we exploit the existing decors — through the affirmation of a playful urban space such as is revealed by the derive — as it is that we construct completely unknown ones. [...] UU is opposed to the temporal fixation of cities. It leads instead to the advocacy of a permanent transformation, an accelerated movement of the abandonment and reconstruction of the city in temporal and at times spatial terms. [...] It is the foundation for a civilization of leisure and play. One should note that

1 Psychogeography according to Guy Debord is the study of the specific effects of the geographical environment (whether consciously organized or not) on the emotions and behavior of individuals.

2 Unattributed, “Unitary Urbanism at the end of the 1950s”, *Internationale Situationniste* #3, December 1959, <http://www.notbored.org/UU.html>, accessed in November 2014.

in the shackles of the current economic system, technology has been used to further multiply the pseudo-games of passivity and social disintegration (television), while the new forms of playful participation that are made possible by this same technology are regulated and policed. [...] If UU refuses to separate theory from practice, this is not only in order to promote construction (or research on construction by means of models) along with theoretical ideas. The point of a such a refusal is above all not to separate the direct, collectively experienced, playful use of the city from the aspect of urbanism that involves construction”¹.

One of the utopian projects that appeared out of the Situationist International movement that employs Unitary Urbanism is New Babylon by Constant. Constant Nieuwenhuys was a Dutch artist and architect described as “the representative of a humanist and political non-conformism, that denounces routine, rules and canonized customs”². New Babylon is a utopian social anti-capitalist city imagined for Homo Ludens, the man at play — term first used by Johan Huizinga — while supposing that the Marxist kingdom of freedom is feasible. It imagines a world where technologies would advance to a point where all form of human labor and work could be automated, leaving people with an abundance of leisure time, free to play to the point where the competitive system of capitalism would be obsolete. “It is obvious that a person free to use his time for the whole of his life, free to go where he wants, when he wants, cannot make the greatest use of his freedom in a world ruled by the clock and the imperative of a fixed abode. As a way of life Homo Ludens will demand,

1 Unattributed, “Unitary Urbanism at the end of the 1950s”, *Internationale Situationniste* #3, December 1959, <http://www.notbored.org/UU.html>, accessed in November 2014.

2 From the French “le représentant d’un non-conformisme humaniste et politique, qui dénonçait la routine, les règles et les coutumes canonisées”. JAFFE, H.L.J., “les contestataires”, *OPUS INTERNATIONAL*, 27, September 1971, p. 18.

firstly, that he responds to his need for playing, for adventure, for mobility, as well as all the conditions that facilitate the free creation of his own life. Until then, the principle activity of man had been the exploration of his natural surroundings. *Homo Ludens* himself will seek to transform, to recreate, those surroundings, that world, according to his new needs. The exploration and creation of the environment will then happen to coincide because, in creating his domain to explore, *Homo Ludens* will apply himself to exploring his own creation. Thus we will be present at an uninterrupted process of creation and re-creation, sustained by a generalized creativity that is manifested in all domains of activity”¹. This utopia is clearly opposed to how we practice our environment today, we are disconnected from its creation, we are not encouraged to play with it or to explore it in ways that were not intended by its design. We find that talking about such utopias is important as it allows us to question today to build a better tomorrow. Even though utopias are often seen as useless by people with productivist and capitalist mindsets as they are associated with unfulfillable dreams, they are important. Utopias allow us to think our future, they picture the will to change things in a certain way, and in doing so point to a specific problem about today. Utopias, as we see them, are not about solving problems, but also about creating problems, they are about questioning current situations, and exploring possibilities. Today, we need to create more utopias in order to expose and criticize the status quo.

Exploring to create and creating to explore. This is what you may find yourself doing in the video game Minecraft. Minecraft was created by Markus “Notch” Persson, and later developed with his newly created company Mojang since 2009. It is a game that can be played offline or online and is of the sandbox genre, which means that its environment — just like a classic sandbox — is a playground in which you can create what you desire

1 NIEUWENHUYSEN, Constant, exhibition catalogue published by the Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1974, accessible at: <http://www.notbored.org/new-babylon.html>, accessed in November 2014.

using the environment itself. As opposed to a classic sandbox, Minecraft is a digital game that uses cubes instead of sand as its building blocks, it is like a digital Lego sandbox game. You can collect cubes of different materials: dirt, rock, wood, sand, and so on, by digging, mining, chopping trees etc. to then use them to create whatever you like. Minecraft uses procedural generation to generate game worlds, as such, when you play Minecraft for the first time, the game generates a brand new unexplored world. It also continues procedurally generating the world as you explore it, making it virtually infinite. Since its first public release in May 2009 Minecraft has grown into the best selling game on the planet. This last detail is only of importance to us considering what people do in the game: explore, create and play.

Minecraft may seem completely disconnected from utopias like New Babylon at first glance, while in fact we could consider it being a fulfillment of the utopian project through the medium of video games, as it embodies everything of what New Babylon is about. “Minecraft is New Babylon”¹ the youtuber skronickkronick declares. When playing Minecraft, you are a *Homo Ludens*, you are a New Babylonian, you live in a world that you can explore and constantly transform. “The essence of New Babylonian culture is playing with the elements that make up the environment. Such play is possible due to the integral technical control of all those elements, which thus become a conscious creation of the environment”². “New Babylon is the work of the New Babylonians alone, the product of their culture. For us, it is

1 skronickkronick, “Minecraft Urbanism: Utopia, Urban Augmented Reality, and the Games of Cybergéography”, December 14 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJMqzVnrI7g>, accessed in Juin 2014.

2 NIEUWENHUYSEN, Constant, exhibition catalogue published by the Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1974, accessible at: <http://www.notbored.org/new-babylon.html>, accessed in November 2014.

only a model of reflection and play”¹. Minecraft is amazing not only because it is New Babylon but because it can go further than simply conveying this utopian vision, it can make you experience it, you can be a New Babylonian. This is possible because Minecraft is everything that today’s urbanism isn’t, Minecraft is not a “*ville garantie*” or “guaranteed city”, Minecraft allows complete freedom of interpretation, it allows *détournement*. Speaking of *détournement*, Minecraft has been used in an unimaginable number of different ways in which it wasn’t initially designed for. Minecraft has been used to teach in classrooms to get students to collaborate on projects, people have set up Minecraft servers to teach Japanese using only in-game elements and initiatives like Block by Block² have used Minecraft as a tool for getting women and the young — whose voices are not usually heard — involved in the planning of urban public spaces in developing countries. What if urbanism was freed from the shackles of productivism and capitalism? What if we could all participate in the creation and transformation of our surroundings? Until then, how can we citizens use the technique of *détournement* to reclaim the environment in which we live?

We need an urbanism centered on playfulness and diversity to encourage respect, acceptance and exploration. Everyone, whatever age, gender, sexual orientation, race or disability should be able to practice urban spaces without feeling discriminated. We need to use the technique of *détournement* to counter separation and take back urban spaces from the capitalist society that has seized urbanism, making urban space not primarily a place of transit from home to work, but a place for social life, play, exploration, freedom of interpretation and uncertainty.

1 NIEUWENHUYSEN, Constant, exhibition catalogue published by the Haags Gemeentemuseum, The Hague, 1974, accessible at: <http://www.notbored.org/new-babylon.html>, accessed in November 2014.

2 Block by Block: <http://blockbyblock.org/>



LOSING ONESELF



2) LOSING ONESELF

Computers as tools for exploration

We use computers and machines to create order, to organise things, to solve problems, to produce and reproduce things on an industrial scale with as few flaws as possible. We use computers and the internet to find things, to find information online, and to sort information. But what if we could use computers and machines to get lost? What if we used computers to create disorder, problems, flaws and uncertainty? As we saw with the example of Minecraft, computers can generate infinite worlds for us to explore, to transform, to get lost in to then re-explore, as such, we can imagine using computers and machine to create thing in which to get lost in. Procedural generation can allow constant exploration and discovery, as we have seen in video games, as there are little physical limitations. As such can also combine procedural generation with other industrial production techniques that were built to make flawless identical objects and *détourne* them to create uncertain outcome to create objects or environments to get lost in. Procedural generation may seem like something recent but “designers of the avant-garde such as Archizoom saw the expanse of the computer as a tool for generating architectural forms, drawing pseudo-plans for their No-Stop City over computer punch cards”¹. No-Stop City, or “City, assembly line of social issues, ideology and theory of the metropolis” as it was titled when first published in the review Casabella in 1970, is a critical utopia, a model of global urbanization where design is the essential conceptual instrument used in the mutation of living patterns and territories. No-Stop City or the city with no end resembles the organization of a factory or of a

1 skronickkronick, “Minecraft Urbanism: Utopia, Urban Augmented Reality, and the Games of Cybergeography”, December 14 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJMqzVnrI7g>, accessed in Juin 2014.

supermarket and implements “the idea of the fading away of architecture within metropolis” as Andrea Branzi, one of the members of Archizoom, puts it. Today we see procedural generation becoming more widespread as technologies become more accessible, their *détournement* becomes more accessible as well.

While we look at procedural generation or also called generative design as a territory for practical solutions to get people to explore by getting lost, we should also see it as a way for the creators themselves to explore and to get lost in their procedurally generated creations. Creating generative designs requires exploring design possibilities, iteration and embracing uncertainty, as you are constantly going back and forth between creating the design by programming it, and exploring the outcome by running your program. As most people use procedural generation in video games to generate things like infinite levels, others use procedural generation as a exploratory design process itself. Fernando Ramallo, creator of Panoramical with David Kanaga said “what is interesting to me about this is using it mostly as a tool for discovery, to create simple rules and systems, observing the outcomes and getting results that I wouldn’t have thought of, that I couldn’t predict”¹. Playing around with variables when running generative designs is like “controlling the chaos”² he describes. This process reminds us of the Homo Ludens that creates their domain to explore, to then apply themselves to exploring their own creation. What we find interesting about generative design is that it brings uncertainty into the creative process on a computer, it makes designing with a computer an exploratory journey of its own. Generative design is about wandering through code and ideas, its a journey of unexpected encounters and of unexpected creation. As such, what if we used generative design to criticize today’s industrial design and

1 RAMALLO, Fernando, “Happy Recipes For Weird Things”, November 9 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nr14ckQ1K24>, accessed in November 2014.

2 Ibid.

the mass production of commodities by generating imperfections, glitches and creating problems in otherwise perfectly functioning objects?

Willingly losing oneself in order to be present

“To be lost is to be fully present, and to be fully present is to be capable of being in uncertainty and mystery. And one does not get lost but loses oneself, with the implication that it is a conscious choice, a chosen surrender, a psychic state achievable through geography”¹. Being lost is like being consciously ignorant, it is like seeking ignorance, you know you are lost, you know you are ignorant, and therefore you listen, you listen to your surroundings, you listen to yourself, to your instincts and not to your prejudices. You are present. We could consider activities like blind tasting in wine to be about seeking ignorance or to get lost. Blind tasting is about not being influenced. You hide as much evidence and information as possible in order to focus on the taste and smell. The idea is to focus on what you feel and not on what you think you feel or would like to feel, you listen to your senses and not to your mind. In a French graphic novel *Les Ignorants* by Etienne Davodeau, there is a passage where Etienne, the comic artist, and his wine maker friend blind taste wines. At some point Etienne tastes a wine that he is not certain of liking, to which his friend tells him to dump it in the sink, which he ends up by doing. To which his friend says “I know people that would be ready to sacrifice quite a lot to drink this wine. We’re talking about several hundreds of euros at the auctions...

1 SOLNIT, Rebecca, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, US, Penguin Books, 2006, p. 6.

What is interesting is, that you, ignorant, you allow yourself to not like it¹. When tasting the following wine, Etienne asks “What is it?”² to which his friend responds “Don’t ask yourself questions! Taste!”³. Having worked in a vineyard and having conducted wine tastings with customers, usually what they ask you is “which one is the best?”, to which I would always say “the best one is the one you like”. People rely on information or ratings to know what to consume and strangely enough they also want to know what they *should* like. The idea behind blind tasting is to regain this impartial judgment, to not have to depend on something or someone else to know, or to feel — we should say — what you like. This reminds us of what we said earlier about structures like capitalism that control our desires and how we perceive things. What if we could use techniques like blind tasting in order to make people more autonomous and free from biases? What if we could empower people by making them consciously ignorant?

We rely too much on information. Just as we have said, we need a label on the bottle of wine to tell us what to feel or what to taste — “*beautiful aromas of red berries and blackcurrant, perfect with red meats*” — we have become dependent of such tools that “help” us. It is just like using a GPS to get around, it is very convenient, it gets you where you wanted to go and usually in the most efficient way. Or a recipe book which holds hundreds of delicious recipes, ideas and combinations of ingredients that lead to making delectable dishes. But as we continue using such tools in our daily lives, we become more dependent of them. At some point we realize that we can’t

1 From the French “Je connais des gens prêts à pas mal de sacrifices pour boire ce vin. Aux enchères on parle de plusieurs centaines d'euros... Ce qui est intéressant, c'est que toi, ignorant, tu t'autorises à ne pas l'aimer”. Richard Leroy, cited in: DAVODEAU, Etienne, *Les Ignorants*, Futuropolis, 2011.

2 From the French “C'est quoi ?”. DAVODEAU, Etienne, *Les Ignorants*, Futuropolis, 2011.

3 From the French “Te pose pas de questions ! Goûte !”. Ibid.

find our way without our GPS, or that we cannot come up with an idea of what to cook tonight without our recipe book. We come to a point where we are not only dependent of those tools, but that to some extent we are controllable by the people that conceive those tools. When exploring a city by yourself or with someone using a map to get around, you are an *actor* of your movements in the landscape, you chose where to go and must find a way to go there by yourself. But if that someone knows their way around, you may end up simply following them, becoming only a *spectator*. But the issue at hand is that the tools that we use — unlike human beings — are mostly designed to make us dependent of them. They are not conceived to make us, users, autonomous and independent. This is what we see as the real problem. As such we ask ourselves, what if our tools made it their goal to get us lost, so that we would have to find our way around ourselves? What if we lost trust in our tools in order to gain trust in ourselves?

Psychogeography, that we have briefly mentioned before, is an approach to geography that emphasizes on playfulness and *dérive*, also called “drifting”, around urban environments. *Dérive* being, in psychogeography, an unplanned journey through the landscape. Psychogeography was defined by Guy Debord in 1955 as the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behavior of individuals. More recently it has also been described as “a whole toy box full of playful, inventive strategies for exploring cities [...] just about anything that takes pedestrians off their predictable paths and jolts them into a new awareness of the urban landscape”¹. Today we can find projects that were inspired by psychogeography, to encourage people to get lost in the landscape, mostly cities, in order to achieve *dérive*. One such project is AWOL by Dan Cottrel, a compass that doesn’t work and a set of abstract non-maps that attempt to get you lost by making you

1 HART, Joseph, “A New Way of Walking”, July/August 2004, <http://www.utne.com/community/a-new-way-of-walking.aspx#axzz3JscD9f9t>, accessed in November 2014.

follow procedural paths with instructions like: first left, third right, second right, repeat. Crowsflight is another psychogeography experiment, it is an application on iOS that tries to get you to reach your destination but leaves the decision making up to you when it comes to directions. Its compass-like interface tries to indicate in what general direction you should walk in to get to where you want to go. It does not tell you to take a right or to take the third exit on a roundabout, it just shows you a cone-like area on its interface that symbolizes where you should probably be heading if you want to reach your destination. Experiments like these are great, as *dérive* is necessary because of our increasingly monotonous experience of everyday life due to structures like productivism and capitalism. How can we encourage *dérive*? What if we created new situations to get people to *dérive* in other aspects of their everyday lives?

play

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3) PLAYFULNESS

Designing for playfulness

As we talk about exploration, getting lost and *dérive*, we find ourselves back at where we started: playfulness. Playfulness is what makes it possible for us to explore, intentionally getting lost and being able to *dérive*, without playful behavior we wouldn't be able to bring ourselves to doing any of these activities. Indeed, today most of our playful behavior is channeled in video games, playing video games is the predominant form of play carried out. We have seen how games today may be tailored to our productivist need for efficiency and problem solving, but we have also seen how some are opposed to this vision. As such we come back to what Paolo Pedercini said: "It's a slow and collective process of hacking accounting machines into expressive machines"¹. And continues on by saying that "a new game aesthetic has to be explored: one that revels in problem-making over problem-solving, that celebrates paradoxes and ruptures, that doesn't eschew broken and dysfunctional systems because the broken and dysfunctional systems governing our lives need to be unpacked and not idealized"². "Don't solve it, play it"³ said a game developer talking about Hohokum⁴. Hohokum, created by Honeyslug, Richard Hogg and Sony Santa Monica, is this game or playful toy where you control a snake-like creature and just wander around and explore a set of interconnected worlds with no set objectives.

1 PEDERCINI, Paolo, "Videogames and the Spirit of Capitalism", February 14 2014, <http://www.molleindustria.org/blog/videogames-and-the-spirit-of-capitalism/>, accessed in Juin 2014.

2 Ibid.

3 Rob Remakes, "Playing videogames", August 17 2014, <http://www.merseyremakes.co.uk/gibber/2014/08/playing-videogames/>, accessed in September 2014.

4 Pictures of Hohokum can be found in the appendix.

The game experience was compared to flying a kite by Richard Hogg. But as we see from the earlier quote, people are not used to games like these and have a hard time enjoying them as they have lost their playfulness due to the video game industry and its “business of recycling tired ideas that were dressed in ever-prettier clothing”¹. This is what we were talking about when we mentioned increasingly monotonous experience of everyday life due to structures like productivism and capitalism. As a result of responding to a monotonous demand that the video game industry creates itself “the great plains of the medium’s unexplored territory were left unexplored”².

What if instead of exploring via video games, we looked at video game design as exploration? And explore the mediums’ terra incognita? This is what designers like Heather Kelley do, they explore the unexplored in the medium of video games, in her case, she explores in the area of the senses. I had the opportunity to collaborate with Heather and worked on exploring smell, taste and interaction in video game-like installations. During this period, one thing was clear and it was that we did not know what we were doing, we were ignorant, and only had an idea of where we wanted to go, without knowing how to get there. As such, we explored, we experimented and attempted things that lead to many failures. The process of finding how to get where we wanted to go, which was to built an interactive sculpture that interacted with its environment thorough smell, was a playful one, as it was a journey of uncertainty an constant tension. Without playfulness, we would have never been able to do what we came to achieve. Playfulness was our compass that did not work, to quote Dan Cottrels’ AWOL, and our exploratory optimism in the terra incognita that is smell in video games. What if we could encourage such playful behavior in everyone, to the point

1 CRAWFORD, Chris, cited in: PARKIN, Simon, “30 Years Later, One Man Is Still Trying To Fix Video Games”, December 27 2013, <http://kotaku.com/30-years-later-one-mans-still-trying-to-fix-video-gam-1490377821>, accessed in October 2014.

2 Ibid.

where we would all be designers and explorers of our own games?

Some designers explore video games as a medium to encourage playfulness outside of computers and devices, to bring playfulness into everyday life. One example is Tiny Games by Hide&Seek, which is an iOS application that gives you simple rules to create a game based on where you are and what kind of things are in your surroundings. Another example is Friendstrap an iOS game by Game Oven that generates unusual conversation topics where both players have to hold the device while talking about various things such as: virginity, being an alien and peeing in the shower. These games help create situations. Situations that we then might create by ourselves without the help of the game, the game is merely a window that shows us playful possibilities in everyday life. Playful possibilities that we have forgotten, that we have put aside of our daily life.

As we gradually focus ourselves on design to explore or design as a practice that can encourage exploration and playfulness, we must not forget that designers, and creators in general have a responsibility towards the people that use what they create. When designing things that people use, you influence their behavior, whether it is a road sign, a game, a city, park or sex toy, you are acting as an alteration in someone's life. We have seen examples in fields like education, video games and politics that the (design) choices that we make are not without consequences, and as such we have the responsibility to make the right or best (design) choices for the people subject to our creations. We need to yield autonomy and leave room for freedom of interpretation, we should not attempt to control people for the benefit of ourselves, we must not contribute to the expansion of systems of oppression, we must not alienate through design. "In our time functionalism (an inevitable expression of technological advance) is attempting to entirely eliminate play. The partisans of "industrial design" complain that their projects are spoiled by people's playful tendencies. At the same time, industrial commerce crudely exploits these tendencies by diverting them to a demand for constant superficial renovation of utilitarian products. We obviously have no interest in encouraging the continuous

artistic renovation of refrigerator designs. But a moralizing functionalism is incapable of getting to the heart of the problem. The only progressive way out is to liberate the tendency toward play elsewhere, and on a larger scale. Short of this, all the naïve indignation of the theorists of industrial design will not change the basic fact that the private automobile, for example, is primarily an idiotic toy and only secondarily a means of transportation. As opposed to all the regressive forms of play — which are regressions to its infantile stage and are invariably linked to reactionary politics — it is necessary to promote the experimental forms of a game of revolution”¹.

This finally leads us to talk about exploration through design. In order to encourage exploration and playfulness, designers must explore and play themselves, they must dive into the unknown and embrace uncertainty. Daniel Fallman calls this design research activity: design exploration. “In design exploration, the most important question is: “What if?” As a sign of recognition, design exploration research almost always excels in what Schön calls “problem-setting,” and Ehn refers to as “transcendence” (i.e., exploring possibilities outside of current paradigms—whether these are paradigm of style, use, technology, or economical boundaries). Yet another sign of recognition is the fact that the typical client in this activity area is the researcher’s own research agenda. These projects often are self-initiated. Design in this area typically is driven neither by how well the product fits into an existing or expected future market, nor based on the observed needs of a group of users. Rather, design becomes a statement of what is possible, what would be desirable or ideal, or just to show alternatives and examples”².

1 DEBORD, Guy, *Internationale situationniste* #1, June 1958, accessible at: <http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/problems.html>, accessed in November 2014.

2 FALLMAN, Daniel, *The Interaction Design Research Triangle on Design Exploration*, published in *Design Issues*: Volume 24 Number 3, 2008, accessible at: <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/desi.2008.24.3.4>, accessed in October 2014.

“Design exploration often seeks to [...] provoke, criticize, and experiment to reveal alternatives to the expected and traditional, to transcend accepted paradigms, to bring matters to a head, and to be proactive and societal in its expression. Often driven by ideals or theory, design exploration provides what we see as a necessary space for aesthetic concerns in interaction design research. The artifacts coming out of design exploration often are societal in character, and sometimes even subversive”¹. Is it difficult not to look back at the works of the Situationists and not think that their efforts were design exploration. Provoking, criticizing and experimenting by creating situations, political theories and utopias: Psychogeography, *dérive*, *détournement*, *la société du spectacle*, Unitary Urbanism and New Babylon. Design exploration is an important step for design in a world where critical thinking is increasingly essential, it is the designers’ duty to provoke, criticize and experiment in favor of the people. To question and to maintain a society free of oppression, for diversity to flourish, and for exploration and play to be part of everyday life.

A playful life

“We never lose our playfulness. We may hide it. We may hide it even from ourselves. But, given the excuse, we always know exactly where to find it”². Productivism makes us lose touch with playfulness. We must regain touch with our playfulness, cherish it and allow it to flourish in order to lead a playful life. This playful life may not be the life of a *Homo Ludens* as

1 FALLMAN, Daniel, *The Interaction Design Research Triangle on Design Exploration*, published in Design Issues: Volume 24 Number 3, 2008, accessible at: <http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/desi.2008.24.3.4>, accessed in October 2014.

2 The Oaqui, cited in: DE KOVEN, Bernard, “We Never Lose our Playfulness”, October 17 2014, <http://www.aplayfulpath.com/never-lose-playfulness/>, accessed in November 2014.

imagined by Constant, but a playful life, still. A life of constant exploration and creation. We could compare leading a playful life is to maintaining a relationship with other human beings, either a friendship or love. It is of constant renewal and discovery, it is about being stupid, ignorant and losing yourself to rediscover what you may have taken for granted, for yourself or regarding others. Being playful is loving yourself. Leading a playful life is to see opportunity for play everywhere, it is to see opportunity for *détournement* everywhere and to be able to *dérive*. Be playful. Sit down in the grass and look at the clouds, find faces in architecture and inanimate objects, have playful sex, get lost in the city, randomly pick a subway station that you have never been to and go there, cook something you have never cooked before, dance, even if you think you're not good at it, I'm not but I do it anyway. Create situations, criticize the status quo, be spontaneous, but be respectful, take your time, be different, explore, feel, don't lose touch with your inner child, never "grow up", never stop being playful, take risks, don't take things too seriously (except play) and finish your thesis with a smiley face.

:)

CONCLUSION

Having stated the reasons for our interest in exploration and play, we began by attempting to define both notions clearly and thoroughly as well as playfulness. We observed similarities and differences in both notions and came to say that exploration is a form of play. This led us to discuss our initial observations on the subjects. We observed that children had a natural ability to explore, that they were born explorers and were immensely curious. But we also observed that with time, and as children grew older, they lost touch with their exploratory abilities, as they developed into a more mature and serious self, leaving less room for play and exploration. We learned that as civilization becomes more complex and as techniques of production and social life itself become more finely organized, it grows more serious and assigns only secondary place to playing. We then raised hypotheses in order to understand the change in behavior towards exploration and play that we observed. We began by hypothesizing that education was one of the main factors that altered our behavior towards exploration and play, as it changes our relationship to knowledge and conditions us to fear mistakes. We then asked ourselves if society itself and the culture it conveys was not to blame for this change of behavior. To finally hypothesize that our society and its economic system heavily relying on productivism, the search for growth, productivity and efficiency was at the source of our change of behavior as we grew up and matured into adults. From these hypotheses we explored problematizing notions and tensions present within our subjects and the hypotheses that we made, in order to better understand how this change of behavior is conditioned.

We are born explorers, but we grow up in an environment that shapes us to lose touch with our natural exploratory behavior. We studied how education and schools, through the way they function stigmatize mistakes and failure, educating children out of their creative capacities, not rewarding curiosity, while neglecting children's sense of exploration. We

looked at how curiosity drives children to learn, and what happens if you let them explore by themselves, by founding an education centered around the learning process according to cognitive science. We saw how extraordinary the results were compared to more classic schools and education. Following this, we looked at how seeking ignorance and carrying out research is tied to exploration. We then explored and studied the notions of goal and journey in a heavily productivist society, the way we play in such a society, and the spirit of capitalism in video games. We seek efficiency and control in video games, to fulfill our productivist desires. We have also talked about games that rejected these widespread “rigid goal-oriented gameplays in favor of exploration and non-linear storytelling”¹ such as Proteus and digital toys like Patatap. We then looked into political play or critical play and games that conveyed political messages, that create poignant questions about society. Following this we tackled the subject of politics and our economic system, capitalism, and their influence on our behavior towards exploration and play. We saw how capitalism alienates us from humanity through work, how we are determined by it and how it conditions our desires to benefit itself. We saw how it seized urbanism in order to develop its domination and remake the totality of space into its own setting and how it creates separation and isolation to control and impede autonomy. We finally talked about how oppressive structures like productivism, capitalism, patriarchy and sexism act against the development of diversity and equality among citizens, greatly impeding exploration and play. From studying the tensions present between exploration, play and what makes up today’s society and our environment we gained knowledge of what conditions our behavior and what affects our approach to exploration, play and playfulness.

Having understood what conditioned us to lose touch with our exploratory abilities and playfulness we raised new hypotheses in more

1 PEDERCINI, Paolo, “Videogames and the Spirit of Capitalism”, February 14 2014, <http://www.molleindustria.org/blog/videogames-and-the-spirit-of-capitalism/>, accessed in Juin 2014.

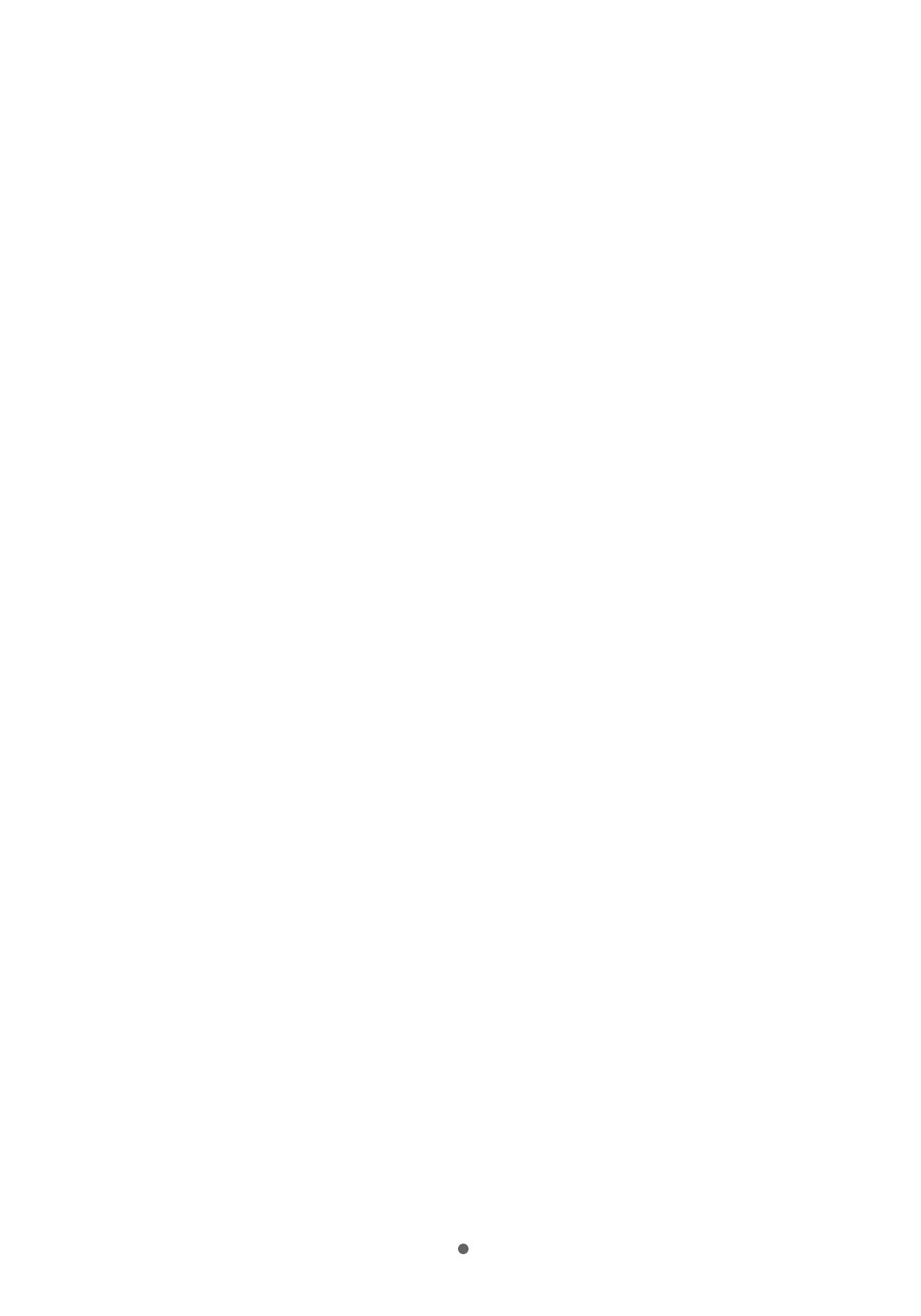


practical territories to re-encourage such behavior. We first looked into how we could build, rebuild and cultivate our exploratory and playful spirit, mainly through education and urbanism. We looked at how we could nurture our sense of exploration and play, through student-centered education, focused on the students self-development, fostering critical thinking and autonomy. We then talked about the social role of education, how it needs to encourage acceptance to foster diversity and what the future of education should look like to reach these needs. We then stated the paradox that exploration in education may be more productive than its classic productivism-inspired model. Following this, we addressed the subject of urbanism where we learned about current urbanism trends that determined or “guaranteed” the practice of spaces and playful spaces in the city. We looked at urbanism as a territory for possible solutions to encourage and foster exploration and play through the study of Situationist experiments and utopias like *détournement*, Unitary Urbanism and Constant’s New Babylon. In exploring New Babylon we became more familiar with the concept of Homo Ludens, this man at play, creating to explore and exploring their creation in a cycle of constant transformation of their environment. We compared Minecraft to New Babylon, and came to the conclusion that “Minecraft is New Babylon”¹. We then looked at how intentionally losing oneself could help one be more autonomous and explore. We saw computers and procedural generation as a way of losing oneself, but also as a tool for discovery to stumble into ideas and things we would not have thought of. We looked at how we are dependent on information and tools, to be told what to think and what to do, as such we explored the Situationist concept of psychogeography and *dérive*, and looked at how we could lose trust in tools to gain trust in ourselves. This led us to conclude our thesis by talking about playfulness, inducing playfulness

1 skronickkronick, “Minecraft Urbanism: Utopia, Urban Augmented Reality, and the Games of Cybergéography”, December 14 2010, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJMqzVnrI7g>, accessed in Juin 2014.

through the creation of tiny situations, the responsibility of creators or our environment that condition such situations, design exploration and what a playful life can be like.

This brings us to conclude by laying down three problematizing notions that we have come across and that we find essential in addressing the subjects of exploration and play. The first notion is autonomy, as we saw that it the development of a sense of critical thinking was necessary to explore, as exploration is diving into the unknown. Facing the unknown, we must trust ourselves, and follow our instincts, as such autonomy is a key notion that allows for exploration, but also that exploration reinforces. We then have acceptance, as we saw that in order to explore we need to feel at ease in our environment and not oppressed, we need a tolerant environment, that encourages play, diversity and exploration, as well as the diversity that exploration creates. Finally, our third key notion is playfulness, that we saw was essential to exploration. Without playfulness we become too serious and avoid any type of letting go, which is necessary to explore. Playfulness is the abandonment which we need in order to explore. We will now lay down three problematizing questions using the notions we have mentioned in order to lead us towards paths of reflection in attempt to fulfill our initial question through design. Thus, as a designer, how can I make people lose trust in their tools in order to gain trust in themselves, for them to become more autonomous and explore by themselves? As a designer, how can I encourage acceptance through play and the creation of situations, in order to foster diversity and fight against oppressive structures? As a designer, how can I use the technique of *détournement* in order to invite playfulness back into our everyday lives and in our environment, as well as encouraging *dérive*?



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GLOSSARY

Alienation: is the dispossession of the individual, the loss of control of their own forces in favor of, another individual, a group or society in general.

Alpha angle: (according to Frédéric Lordon) is the angle between the master desire (boss or company) and the desire of the individual (worker).

Autonomy: (from the Ancient Greek auto- «self» and nomos “law») meaning «one who gives oneself one's own law», it is the capacity of a rational individual to make an informed, un-coerced decision.

Capitalism: an economic system that is characterized by the accumulation of capital, competitive markets and waged labor.

Conatus: literally meaning effort, is according to Spinoza, an innate inclination of something to continue to exist and enhance itself.

Dérive: (according to Guy Debord) is a mode of experimental behavior linked to the conditions of urban society: a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances.

Détournement: literally meaning to hijack, it is to take something and doing something else with it, something that was not intended to be done with it.

Efficiency: being efficient.

Efficient: achieving maximum productivity with minimum wasted effort or expense.

Exploration: the act of exploring an unfamiliar area. searching for the purpose of discovery of either information or resources.

Exploration (figurative): an aimless less efficient form of exploration.

Game: structured playing.

Play: a voluntary activity or occupation executed within certain fixed limits of time and place, according to rules freely accepted but absolutely binding, having its aim in itself and accompanied by a feeling of tension, joy and the consciousness that it's “different” from “ordinary life”.

Playful play: (as distinct from the broader biological category of play) is accompanied by a particular positive mood state in which the individual is

more inclined to behave (and, in the case of humans, think) in a spontaneous and flexible way.

Playfulness: the tendency toward a particular behavior or action. the propensity to see the light or bright side of life, to joke with other people, and not to take things too seriously in life, keeping a positive state of mind.

Productive: producing or able to produce large amounts of goods, crops, or other commodities.

Productivism: (or growthism) is the belief that measurable economic productivity and growth are the purpose of human organization (e.g., work), and that «more production is necessarily good».

Productivity: being productive.

Psychogeography: (according to Guy Debord) is the study of the specific effects of the geographical environment (whether consciously organized or not) on the emotions and behavior of individuals.

Rationalization: (in sociology) refers to the process where thought and action rooted in emotion, traditions and values are replaced by rational thought and action.

Reification: (according to Marx) from the german Verdinglichung, literally means “making into a thing” or objectification.

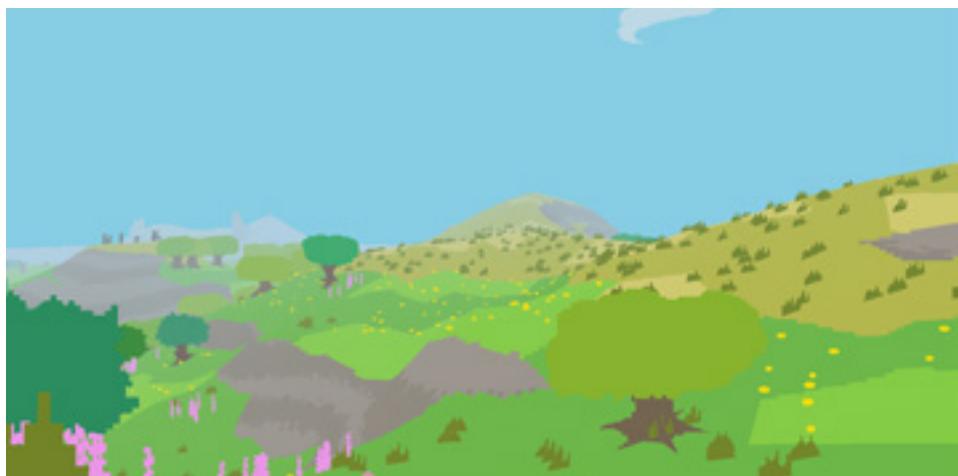
Serendipity: The occurrence and development of events by chance in a happy or beneficial way.

APPENDIX

*Pictures of video games
in order of appearance.*

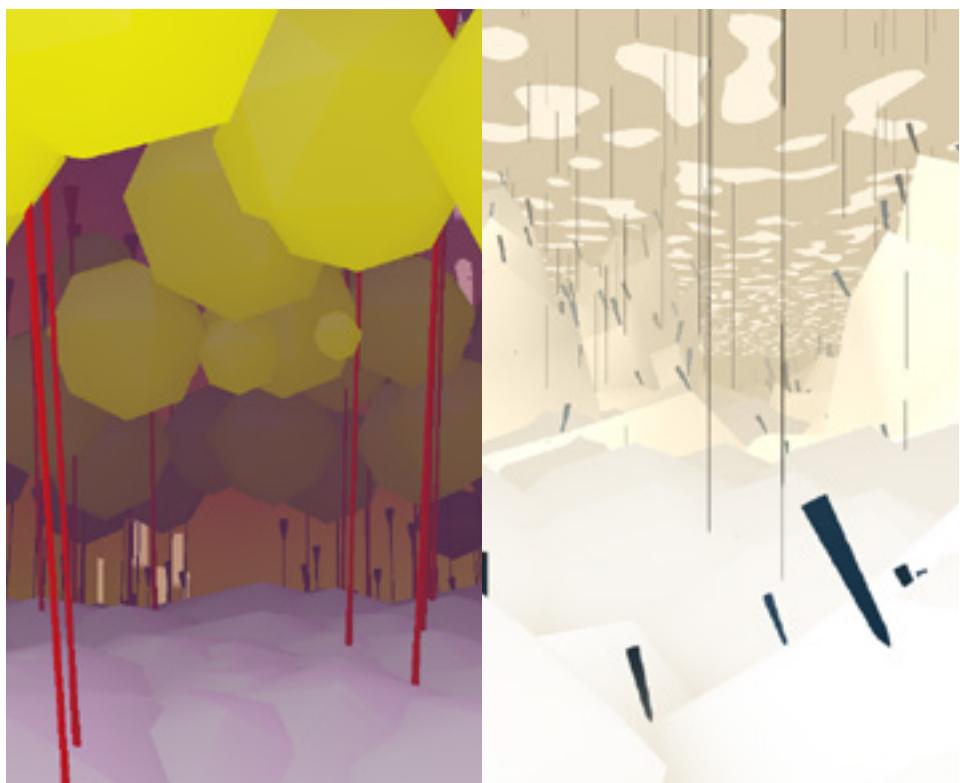
PROTEUS

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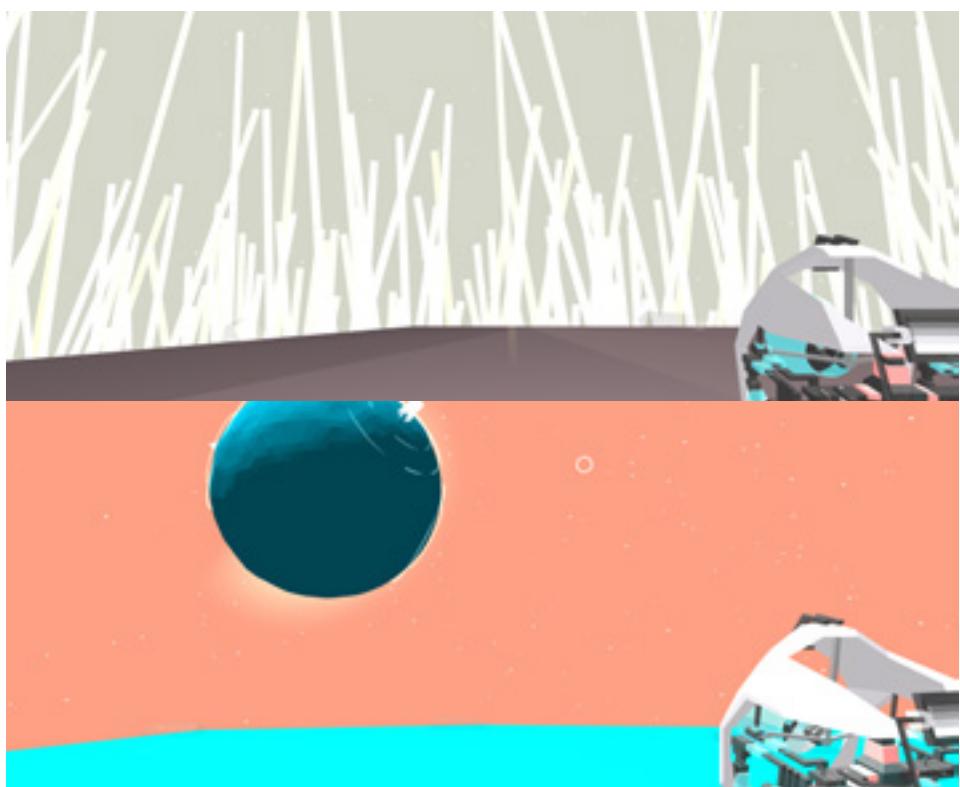
PANORAMICAL

panoramic.al



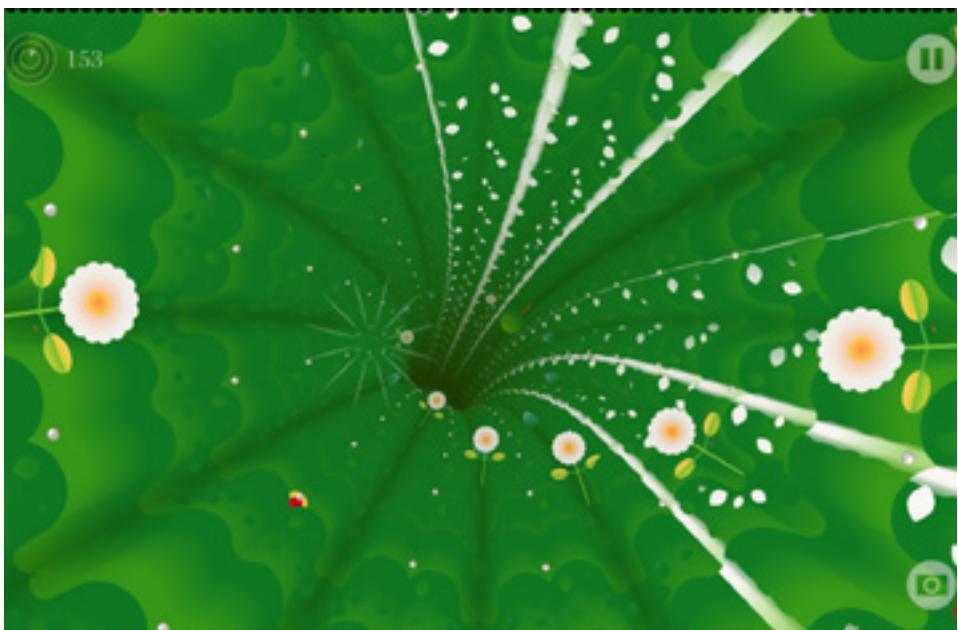
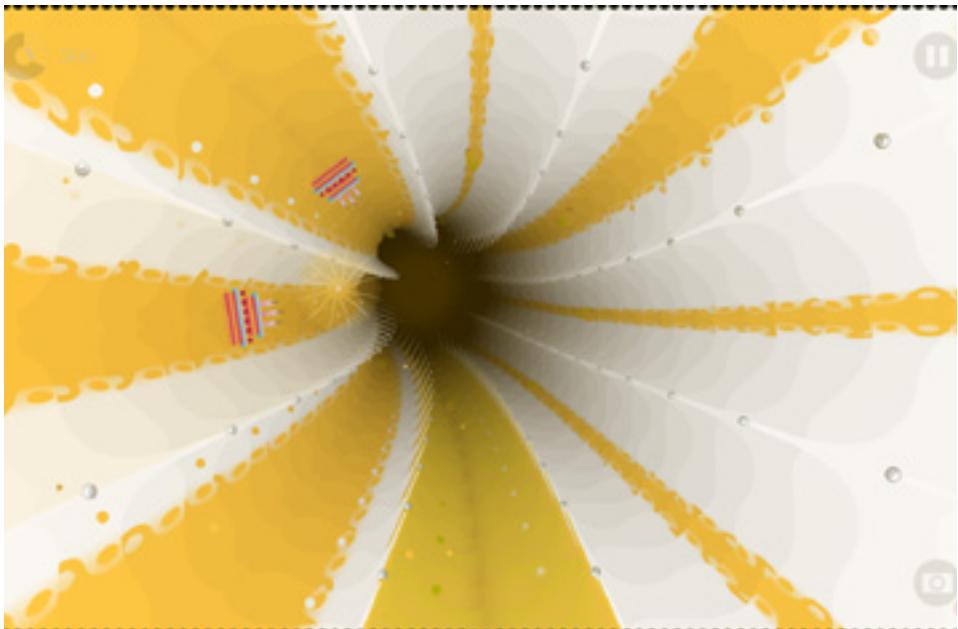
MIRRORMOON EP

mirrormoongame.com



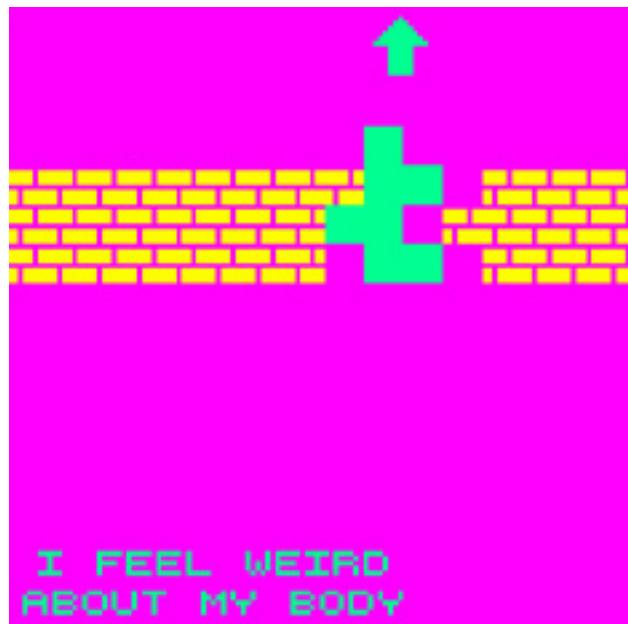
LUXURIA SUPERBIA

luxuria-superbia.com



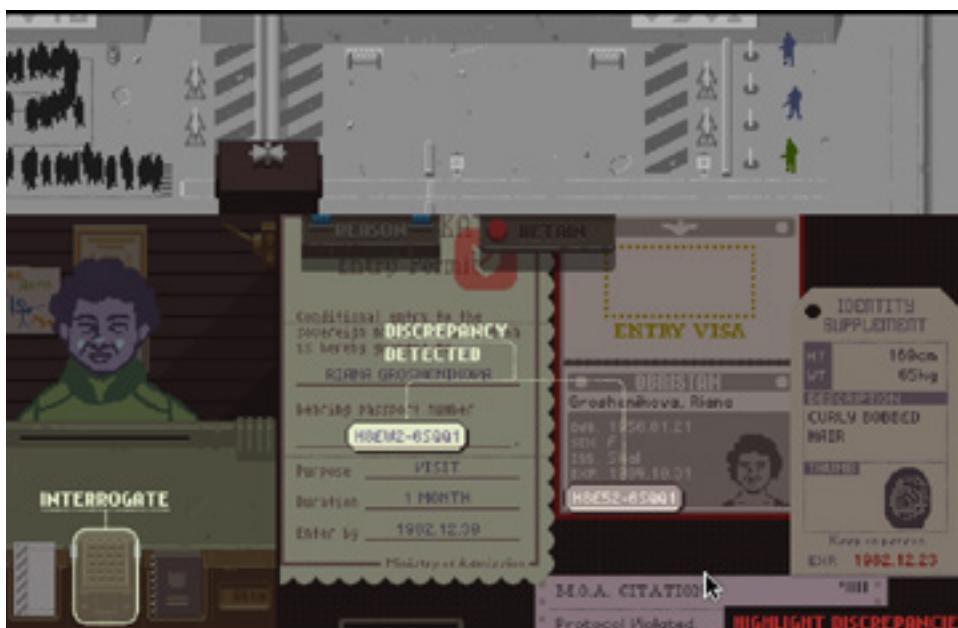
DYS4IA

www.newgrounds.com/portal/view/591565



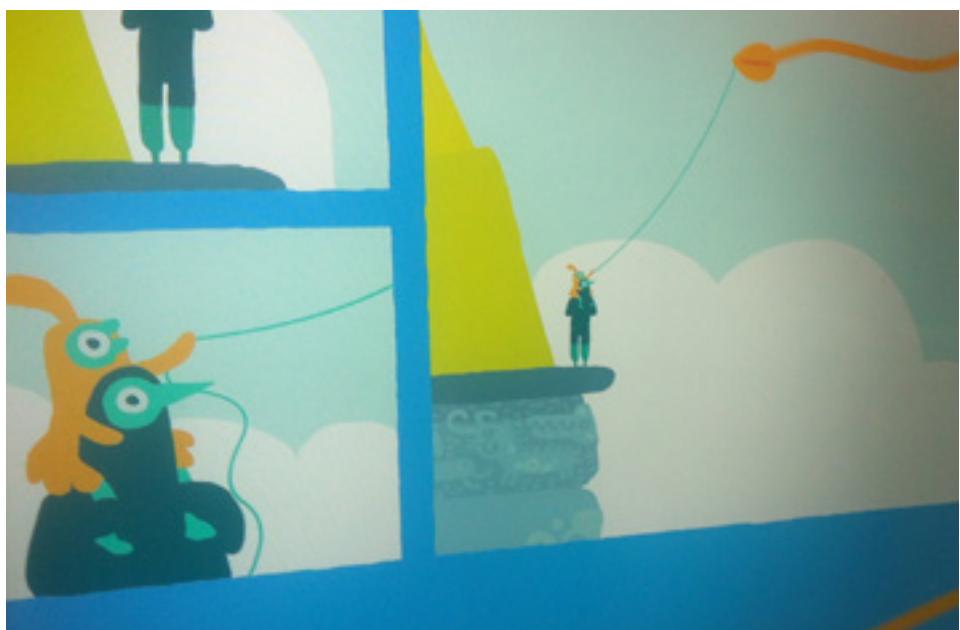
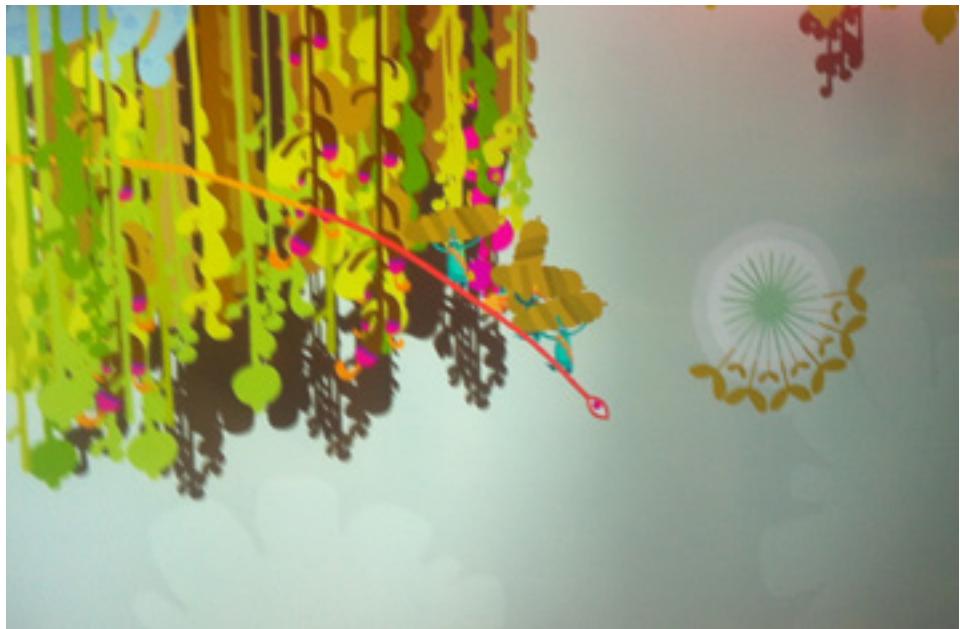
PAPERS, PLEASE

papersplea.se



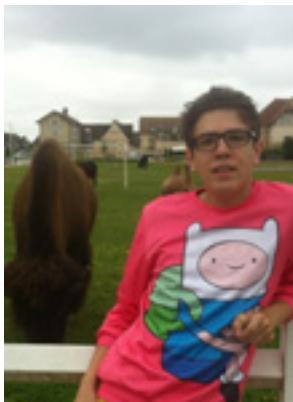
HOHOKUM

hohokum.playstation.com



2015 Diploma

Alexandre
LEJEUNE



Exploration, play & productivism

In a world abundant in games, information and knowledge, how do we play and explore? Exploration and play require abandonment to the unknown and to uncertainty, but how is this possible in a society in search of growth and productivity and of constant production of knowns and certainties?

Children are born explorers and play naturally, but we grow more serious due to our culture of work and production. Johan Huizinga said that play is of a higher order than seriousness, "for seriousness seeks to exclude play, whereas play can very well include seriousness". To what point is the organisation of society around work an obstacle for exploration and play? And how can we explore and play in such an oppressive environment?

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