



The conception of Gamification and Artification on the context of exhibition of Festival International of Language Electronic.

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Abstract

This article is an outgrowth of the work presented at the 13th. International Conference on Art and Technology and published in their proceedings in October 2014. This article expects to elucidate the conception of Gamification and Artification on the context of exhibition of the Electronic Language International Festival, the FILE. From an *in loco* research, the analysis of some pieces and how the event is propagated and from interviews made with members from the educative part of the event, the proposition here is to discuss how the process of Gamification is mediated rather than the Artification.

Keywords: FILE, Gamification, Artification
Introduction: FILE as a study case

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Introduction: FILE as a study case

The *Festival Internacional de Linguagem Eletrônica* (Electronic Language International Festival), the FILE, is defined as “a nonprofit cultural organization that, since 2000, has been promoting meeting points for the dissemination and the discussion of the artistic and cultural production made with several technological tools.” (FILE, 2013). From the festival, it is possible to map out how the digital arts have been produced not only in Brazil, but also in other countries, once FILE exhibit the work of artists from around the world.

Since 2004, the FIESP (The Industrial Federation of the State of São Paulo) building, in São Paulo, hosts the FILE. Besides, FIESP and SESI (Industrial Social Service) are responsible for the event organization.

The selection of works for the festival is made through an Internet application: the artists register their accomplishments in categories (Electronic Sonority, Interactive Art, and Digital Language) in order to be selected. The works are subdivided in exhibitions. The 2013 FILE, for instance, subdivided the exhibit into: FILE *Anima +*, *Maquinema*, *Tablet*, *Hypersonica*, and interactive installations; the novelty of the year was the *FILE LED show*. Thereby, the only relation between the works is established by the fact of using the digital support as a common axis.

In 2013, the assembling of the event, and the 14th edition first exhibition days has been monitored and some considerations has been made in order to be explored. Thus, this paper addresses the possibility of thinking the concept of gamification vs. Artification in the studied Festival exhibition context. The analysis of a work in exhibition in this edition also takes place, so as to elucidate how the quoted concepts are mediated at FILE.

The exhibit in 2013 took up several spaces of FIESP building: on the outer façade the *FILE Led Show* took place, at the mezzanine, the FILE games could be seen, the Ruth Cardoso gallery was headed to interactive works and moving out from the gallery space, the Trianon Masp Subway Station was intended to the FILE *metro*.

The appeal given to the interactive aspect of the works becomes clear by observing the event place space and surroundings. It can be used as an example a visitor, that, as soon as he arrives at FILE by subway, even before reaching the gallery, would find the first interactive work by coming across Juliana Cerqueira’s *Corpo Digitalizado*, that digitalizes the user’s body. Installed at the station, this work would announce to the visitor what was waiting for him at the exhibition, but this experience was available for anyone at the station, even for the ones who had never heard about the event.

The presents on *Avenida Paulista* could interact with the “*video mapping*” at night, which was projected onto FIESP building. The building served as a support for the interactive work by the French group *Architecture 1024* that was part of the first FILE Led Show (FILE LED SHOW 2013). Even without entering the gallery, the audience could change the led display images through voice commands that would change the graphic behavior and therefore, would change the algorithms. Thus, beyond the algorithms, which certainly would not mean anything to a great deal of the spectators, the visible parts could also change: the colors, the shapes, and the textures, thus

creating new images. The mezzanine, being a transparent gallery, let the FILE Games content overflow, and from the avenue any passer-by could see other people playing at that space.

Besides the external space announces the exhibition and the possible interactivity, the Ruth Cardoso gallery, the main art gallery of the building and entrance door to the exhibition is intended for the FILE Interactive Installations.

About the concept of interactivity

When we talk about interactivity, we refer to a system (computer, device), operated by a user (person). If there is correspondence between the members of this relationship, the communication is possible. Dealing with interactive art, we refer to a dialogical relationship created between the work and the spectator, that is, when there is communication, the work takes place.

The work in this case, does not exist without the interactor, and, according to Joshua Noble (2012:16), the interactive art object is the "situation generated by the system", and the object of the non-interactive art is the finished work.

The system, according to Noble, is made for the user and the interaction happens through messages sent by the user addressed to the system. The mean between the system and the user is the interface programmed by the artist. The interface makes possible the dialogue by the user (interactor) and the device, and the programming procedure becomes artistic material. Being the interface the mean of communication between the user and the system, it directs what is possible or not, and how the user ought to act (if the one has to sing or talk, for instance) and what the character of the interaction is (if the work is going to respond through lights, rising, shocking, etc).

According to Noble (2012 : 7), the most difficult part while creating an interface is to make the system answer to the user's message. For the author (op.cit), attractiveness and functionality are important parts for the user.

"The attractiveness of an interface is an important part for making an interaction pleasant to a user; the colors, text, symmetry, sounds and graphic are important and are communicative elements that shape a great deal about what a user thinks about your system (...) The functionality of an interface is part of what makes a system good for a task and what makes a user able to use your system. Even if what that system does is rather opaque, the user still needs a functional interface that shows him what his input does and gives him feedback."

The construction of the exhibition in analysis, whether inside the gallery or around it, is made in a way so as the people are able to play and interact with the works, and besides the various interactive works, some obey a specific playful aesthetic and the games (abiding by criteria of attractiveness, as pointed out by Noble).

The concepts of Gamification and Artification discussed in the FILE exhibition context

Thinking about the exhibition as a whole and in order to go on, we can notice with this first analysis of the expositive environment is that despite the FILE exhibit works of artists dedicated to the development of the art based on digital technologies, the

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exhibition becomes a fun place in the first moment and the event mediation is centered in the works interaction. By talking about mediation we make reference to the process, that according to DARRAS (2009 : 37) involves a semiotic process "that intervenes along the diffusion operations and propagation of the cultural objects".

The FILE mediation takes place through several instances, beginning by the spatial formatting, by the media speech, as well as by the monitors, responsible for the cultural mediation. The mediators of the group called "educative" stands at the gallery as long as FILE lasts. In one of the interviews[1] made with one of these monitors, he was asked if it was necessary to make clear for the audience the meaning of the interactive works and the interviewed replied:

[...] as it is all together, people already know that they can play with the works. People seldom came to me and asked whether they could play or not. [...] You enter and see a mess, like a party, full of noises. It is not a party, but a place with the things noise. People are seeing that something is happening [...] sometimes the surprise was getting the source of the interaction. (interviewed number 4, 2014)

FILE becomes a fun space as to what is described by the interviewed, where lots of people interacts with the works and they find interactive rules quite a few times. It defines the people's relation with the works.

Thereby, it is believed that to figure FILE, the concept of Gamification is important. The Gamification is a widely discussed term and it refers to a procedure capable of transforming everyday actions into games (ESCRIBANO, 2013). The term has been created in the digital media sector (DETEREDING et al., 2011) but it got a great repercussion in the business sector by referring to procedures such as selling strategies and products dissemination. In this context, the Brazilian magazine *EXAME*'s website (MOREIRA, 2011) brings the following concept for gamification:

[..] It is the interaction strategy between people and business places based on the offering of incentives that stimulate the public engagement with the brands through a playful way. In practice, the company offer rewards to participants the perform tasks pre-determined, aimed at the recommendation, disclosure, the assessment or the capitation of new costumers for the brand.

Escribano also brings Zchermann's point of view (apud. ESCRIBANO, 2013:59) to define the process, according to him "in tactical terms, the gamification can be understood as the usage of elements that belong to the games system with mercantile goals [...]" in this way the gamification is being used in order to create experiences that refer to the videogames in several fields, like health, finances, government, education, etc. That is, it is witnessed a process of "cultural gamification" and the games are increasingly mediating people's lives. However, according to the quoted author, the games have always been part of mankind's history. Daily, we use the word "game" in a metaphorical sense in lots of situations (i.e " make a game", "fair play", "get in the game", "play dirty", etc.) , but due to the digital technologies of information and communication the process is perpetuated. Escribano (op.cit) clarifies the since the seventies and early eighties, "all aspects of life (idleness, education, labor and militarization) have been progressively digitalizing themselves and all the people start to share the computer mediation [...] "[2]. (Our translation)

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Olga Beza (2011) highlights that the videogames are among the most popular means of entertainment of the world and there is a change of mind about the games. According to her (2011 : 3):

“For many years, playing games was considered to be a waste of time (...) Nowadays, games or aspect of games(...) will invade our everyday life in order to —steerll our interaction with services and products towards more engaging experiences. Individuals will be more motivated, more efficient and happier with very little effort and cost.”

-Before this “cultural gamification”, it is possible to think that FILE gamficates the environment of the exhibition (not only this one, as quoted, transcending sometimes the gallery space) and as an instance the works in exhibit, as a marketing strategy aimed to attract the audience, by turning the environment into something fun and attractive through the works interactive power.

Therefore, it is believed that another term that deserves our attention in order to contrast with the gamification in the context of FILE, it is the concept of Artification. Coming from the Art Sociology, this other term is referred to the process, which according to Nathalie Heinich and Roberta Shapiro (HEINICH; SHAPIRO, 2012), involves social changes, the rise of new objects and new practices. The artification turns the non-art into art and besides that it modifies the object *corpus*, the social actions involved are also modified.

Searching around the history of the art and technology, it is possible to understand the process of artification suffered by it. Some authors (PAUL,2003; KRAJEWSKY, 2006; LIESER, 2009), points out that with the technological evolution, the rising of computers and Internet, art has developed using the available technological apparatus: net art, browser art, software art, internet art, interactive art, among others assets used by the artists.

Heinich and Shapiro (op.cit) cast items required for something to become art, among them we can highlight some that can be seen in the process of art and technology: the displacement or extraction of production in its initial production context, that is, the technology close to the art and the art close to the technology; the re-categorization and the dawn of new forms of classification: video-art, game-art, internet-art, interactive art; dissemination, by means of festivals, sponsorship, for instance, of private companies that support and carry out these festivals, like FIESP, that holds the FILE in Brazil; the intellectualization, that is, the appearance of studies in this area.

The festival we are studying covers the “artificated” production and presents works that explore digital technologies; however the FILE mediation is molded in order to resist the artification process. This issue was predicted by Heinich and Shapiró. According to them, (op.cit) it is usual in the artification process that “institutional actors” become worried in the resistance of artification and work for the “desartification”, in the name, many times, of the quality and conformity, in order to keep rules and defend the group interests, keeping the others aside.

From the characteristics pointed out in the process of gamification, the studied case, what happens can be understood as a process of “desartification” , once the discourse and mediation made for the event, tend to resist the process or artification in detriment of the gamification.

"Monkey Business" analysis

In order to come to conclusions about the discussed process, it is proposed an analysis of the work "monkey business", in exhibition in the interactive installations section during the first days[3] of the 14th edition of FILE.

This work made by the artists Ralph Kistler and Jan M. Sieber is composed of a stuffed monkey, called Mogito, which is 75cm tall and the dimensions are: 180cm x 80cm x 25cm. According to the event website (FILE 2013)

A cute toy monkey is hung on a wall in the position of warm-up equipment. With a friendly greeting, the toy begins to react to the visitor's movements and it immediately copies each one of the visitor's gestures with its arms, legs, head, and chest. You can let the monkey easily acting or invite it to a crazy dance. However, in a subtle way, the monkey asks for another movement that you have never done. By joining the game, you unconsciously loses control of the situation and, after the alluring meeting, perhaps you start asking: What this monkey's intention? Who manipulates who?

Sensors inside the monkey receive the user's presence and the monkey starts repeating the one's movement. At last, the monkey is able to make movements that induct the user's actions.

This work is composed of a Microsoft X-box Kinect, a computer, a microcontroller, electronic components and motor nerves and they are covered by synthetic fabrics, in addition to ropes and steel. The work discusses the interaction as manipulation and the intervention takes place between spectator-interface, the spectator transmits a message through its presence that, registered by the Kinect a processed by the *processing*[4]. The data are sent to the microcontroller Arduino[5], which gives them back with other movements. The interaction also takes place, between interface and spectator, when the monkey starts moving and the spectator reproduces its movements.

Some reports about the 14th FILE edition during its period on display have highlighted the work analyzed through its playful and fun aspects. We chose some examples in order to understand the way which the dissemination concerning this edition around the "monkey business" happened. An online report made by "*Guia Folha*" (WOLF, 2013) showed the following headline: "FILE festival brings interactive installations to *Avenida Paulista*". Among the highlights quoted by "*Folha*", "Monkey Business" was present. In the work description was said that the stuffed monkey "imitates faithfully the visitors' moves" through a sensor that calls it the "perfect mimic".

A report made by the channel "*Negócios do Bem*" (FILE, 2013/2014) has showed the work in a "funny interactivity space", in which, according to the reporter, "a monkey imitates you, and then becomes rebel making you follow its moves".

The website "*Guia da Semana*" (2013) has selected some "amazing attractions of the main art and interactivity event in Brazil", and among these attractions, there was the installation we are discussing about, that according to the site: " 'Monkey Business' counts on Mogito monkey, that, through a sensor, can faithfully imitate the visitor's moves".

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On the report showed by the TV news "*Bom dia SP*" after showing lots of works of the interactive sector, the reporter puts the "monkey business" out and comments: "After so much interaction with the machine, a little monkey that imitate the human movement makes us reflect", and Jam M. Sieber, one of the work authors, when interviewed said: "[...] in the end of the process it is difficult to say who controls who".

In the reports quoted above, the interaction possibility is highlighted rather than any analysis concerning the work discourse and the toy monkey, which had attractiveness and functionality, characteristics pointed by Noble (2012), it has called the visitors and the media's attention by imitating movements, behaving as a "perfect mimic" and creates a funny interaction environment. On the interview made with that edition's monitors, the work analyzed was mentioned by the promised interaction and this can be related to the way that the work was advertised. Related to the question about some specific work the people were looking for the interviewed (interviewed number 1, 2014) has answered: "Yes, Monkey business! When it left the event, a lot of people got upset and that was the work that the media explored the most, and promised the greatest interactivity".

Concerning this question: "Talking about the audience, did they use to show any knowledge that it was a art and technology exhibition?". The answer was (interviewed number 05, 2014): "Yes, I think that what happens is that the most recognized channels advertises it[...]. Therefore they had a slight notion. And they came mostly to see the monkey work, that happened to become the main attraction, but it did not last for a long time in the exhibition, so many people got there intending to see the work and it was not there anymore".



Fig. 1 Monkey Business, 2011, of Ralph Kistler and Jan Sieber. Source: Elisiana Candian, 2013.

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Some reports published on technologies sites that referred to the work, approached the innovating use that the artists gave for the Kinect. These reports, besides referring to the fact that the little monkey imitates, they also refer to the way that the artists have hacked and subverted the device usage. About this, it is important to stick out that the Kinect release was in 2010 and the work was made in 2011, therefore the artists were one of the first to use it in this way. For instance, the site Fayerwayer (GIMENO, 2011, our translation), compares Monkey Business to the game Simon Says[6]. "Why would you use your Kinect, if you cannot play Simon Says with a stuffed monkey? Actually, for nothing. Fortunately for Microsoft, and for us, Jan Sieber and Ralph Kistler managed to hack the device and give us this essential usage." [7]

The description made by the site "Edge Magazin" believes that "the Kinect future is about to be connected to a toy monkey that is soft with a robotic skeleton" (EDGE, 2011).

A documentary made by Susan Maria Hempel (2014), shows the work construction, showing the little monkey as someone with the desire of becoming articulated, like a human being. Then the artists are showed "operating" the monkey. In this process it is highlighted that, in order to make them monkey articulated, they used in the work conception, free hardware and software.

Thus, the construction of the project starts by the choice of a stuffed monkey (the artists could have chosen another toy, such as a bear), but they were certainly oriented by the symbolic set brought by the monkey: it is the closest animal to the man in the evolutionary scale and the imitating act is linked to this animal and it is what directs the learning process. Besides the stuffed monkey, another conscientious choice took place in the software use (Processing) and free hardware (Arduino) to make the work: an open source[8] was used, that is, open and accessible technology. Thus, we can think that, the work elaboration, made in an open mode, can be associated to the aspect proposed by the concept, "do it yourself" [9], an essential point for hacktivism[10].

According to the highlighted technologies websites, the artists hacked Kinect subverting its usage. According to Giuliano Obici (2014 : 34), "[...] Breaking the system is also establishing a more intimate relationship with the machine, to recognize something in its impersonal function, abstract and generic."

This way, we believe that, the artists, by showing how the works was developed (MONKEY, 2014) by using the Kinect, with its usage subverted and open source technology to program the work, and by raising this question: "What is the thing with this monkey?", it proposes that, in front of the monkey, we can question, and it goes beyond the interaction. In the sequence, the rhetorical question "Who manipulates who?" is referred to the way that we sometimes, blinded by the technology, let ourselves to be led by it, without reflecting its potentialities (like the spectator that let him/herself be manipulated by the monkey). That is, by comprehending technology, it is possible to use it for beyond the initial functions of it, without being controlled or submissive to it.

Possible conclusions:

The discourse and mediation made around the event, in several situations, tend to resist the process of artification using the "gamification" once that: 1) the space and

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around of FILE are supposed to attract the audience 2) The media discourse concerning FILE (like seen in this brief analysis) focuses on the fun of the event and the interactivity of the works exhibited; 3) According to the research made with the monitors, people go to FILE looking for entertainment and few of them see the proximity between art and technology.

Like in the example analyzed, the mediation concerning "Monkey Business" is centered on the attractiveness made possible by the cute monkey. It was a work that called the audience's attention, according to the interviews, due to the promised interaction, although the reflection proposed by the artists was supposed to go beyond that. That is, in this case the mediator discourse was centered on the gamification, although the artists have proposed an interesting discussion, suitable for art and technology, like the conscientious use of technology, hacker culture, Do it yourself, etc.

It does not mean that these works cannot have a playful aspect that tends to the entertainment, however, what I intend here is to show that the mediator discourse of FILE tends to be focused on the gamification rather than the artification and, although FILE exhibit works of artists dedicated to discuss their works inside a digital perspective, the discourse of them is lost because of the attractiveness made possible by interactive works.

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INTERVIEW

Interviewed 01, February 2014. Interviewer: Elisiana Frizzoni Candian. Juiz de Fora - Brazil. MP3 file (25'03'')

Interviewed 02, March 2014. Interviewer: Elisiana Frizzoni Candian. Skype interview . (2h16)

Interviewed 04, March 2014. Interviewer: Elisiana Frizzoni Candian. Skype interview. MP3 file (24'08'').

Interviewed 05, March 2014. Interviewer: Elisiana Frizzoni Candian. Skype interview. MP3 file (22'33'').

PICTURE

Sieber, J. and Kistler, R., 2011. *Monkey Business*. [video frame].

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[1] The interviews with the FILE monitors who worked at the 13th and 14th edition of the festival took place between February and March of 2014, and recorded as mp3 file with the interviewed consent. It is important to highlight that on the interviews transcription we look for the maximum respect about the interviewed speaking, however some editions were made to make the text more comprehensible, by changing the colloquial form.

[2] "A finales de los 70 y principios de los 80 del siglo pasado todos os espacios de la vida (ocio, educación, trabajo y militarización) se digitalizaram progressivamente, todos comiezam a compartir de la mediación de la computadora (...)"

[3] According to information obtained on the interviews made, the works did not last for the entire event.

[4] Created at first to teach programming computer basics, the processing has evolved as a developing tool for professionals. Nowadays, students, artists, designers, researchers and enthusiasts, use the program for learning, prototyping and production (<http://www.processing.org>)

[5] Arduino is an electronic prototyping platform, of open code and only board, based on free software and hardware. Made for electronic studies and controller creation, it is widely used to construct interactive projects. (<http://www.arduino.cc>)

[6] Simon Says is a game for three or more people. One of the players is called "Simon" and directs the action so that the others can follow him.

[7] "¿De qué te sirve tu Kinect si no puedes jugar a Simón dice con un mono de peluche? En efecto, para nada. Afortunadamente para Microsoft y para nosotros, el dúo formado por Jan Sieber y Ralph Kistler ha logrado hackear el dispositivo y brindarnos este imprescindible uso."

[8] The definition of Open Source was created by the Open source Initiative from the original text made by Debian Free Software guidelines and it determines the an open source program should guarantee: free dissemination, that the license is not restricted for selling or distribution for no means, the program should include on its source code and should allow its distribution also in complied form, if the program is not distributed with its source code, there should be a mean to obtain it, be it through the Internet or only with reproduction charge, the code should be legible and intelligible by any programmer, should promote derived works, the license should allow modifications and derived works, and should allow their distribution under the same terms of the original license, among other issues.

[9] Do it yourself refers to the practice of crafting or repairing something by its own self instead of paying or buying the product. It is an essential point of hacktivism and it is a modality of immediate construction from the available elements, it is reflected in artistic works.

[10] Hacktivism (hack + activism) it is understood as writing a source code, or even manipulating bits, in order to promote politic idealism.