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GAMIFICATION OF POLITICS: START A NEW GAME!

Abstract. *The following text presents a digital tool called gamification and its possible use(s) in the field of politics. Gamification is used in order to increase participation: we argue that it could be the cure for political alienation. In the context of participatory and ludified culture, we approach crowdsourcing, blurred boundaries between work and leisure and practical usage of digital games, which in fact teach collaboration. Text rejects Arendt's rejection of technology and calls towards a reconfiguration and dislocation of the public sphere. Despite an utopistic undertone, text draws parallels between Foucault's Panopticon-Utopia and a gamified public sphere.*
Keywords: *gamification, participatory culture, gamified politics, political alienation, ludification of culture*
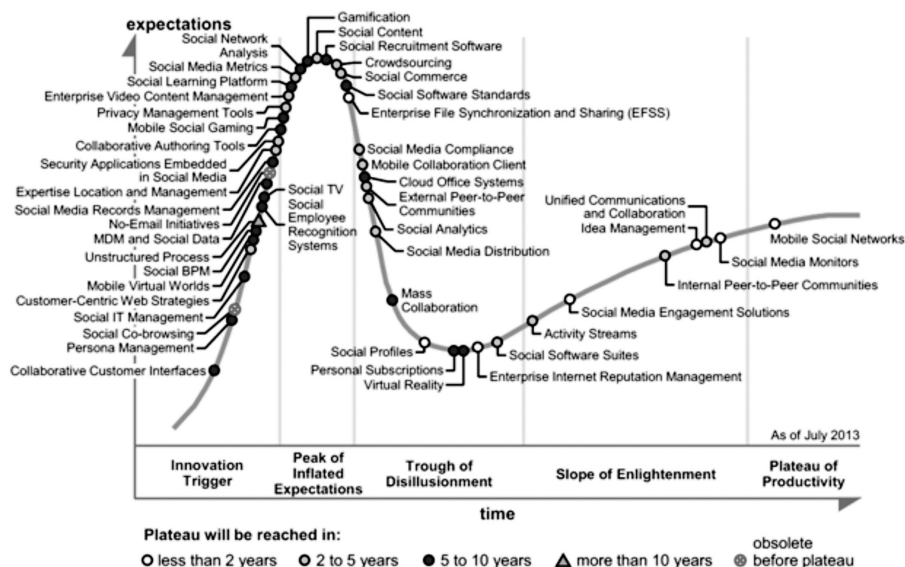
Gamification is a practice or a tool deriving from digital media industry. The most widely accepted definition of gamification, proposed by user experience designer and researcher Sebastian Deterding (2011) and his colleagues, is: "the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" (Deterding et.al., 2011: 1).[1] Ever since its advent, gamification has sparked controversy between game designers, user experience designers, game theorists and other researchers, who occupy themselves with human-computer interaction. According to a 2013 graph, published at Gartner's *Hype cycle for social software*, gamification is right at the top of the curve of expectations among social innovations. The hype cycle represents maturity and adoption of technologies and applications, as well as how they are relevant to solving real business problems and harnessing new opportunities.

Even though the cycle explores gamification's applicability in business, our further exploration will focus on its applicability to augment civic actions, as "gamification may possibly provide a sustainable tool through which society is motivated to do social good" (Chiang Fu, 2011: 29) and improve political participation.

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[1] *First documented use of the term dates back in 2008, but it was widely adopted in the second half of 2010 (Deterding et.al., 2011: 1).*

Graph 1: GARTNER HYPE CYCLE FOR SOCIAL SOFTWARE

There have been numerous and varied theoretical insights, some conflicting, into the concept, however, the most popular definition of gamification is the one cited at the beginning, by Sebastian Deterding and his colleagues (2011). This definition identifies gamification as using elements of game design in non-game contexts (Deterding et.al., 2011: 1). Some game designers argue that "games exist all around us, whether we define them as such" (Salen and Zimmerman in Anderson, 2011: 154) or not, whereas others emphasize the very blurriness of the boundary between games and artefacts with game elements (Deterding et.al., 2011: 2). Game design elements are being applied in order to motivate users, increase their activity and prolong retention (ibid.: 1). Deterding's definition, however, reserved the term gamification "for the use of game *design* [my emphasis] elements" (ibid.: 3), excluding game-based technologies.

How does it operate? The uses and abuses of gamification

The process of gamification is characterized by adding game mechanics (points, badges, virtual currencies, levels, and progress bars) to webpages and applications, in order to improve their user experience. Game mechanics are "tools /.../ [which] add a structure that complements and enhances the content of a video game" (Chorney, 2012: 2). Game elements, as a surface application, are relatively easy to add.[2] However, a more complex use

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[2]   *There are companies, such as Badgeville or Bunchball, that supply 'plug-and-play' solutions of that sort.*

of gamification provides an in-depth revisit of an application or webpage. That means a rebuild, which implements storytelling, flow or progression systems into core design (Koorevaar, 2012: 11). In order to replace the term 'gamification' and "portray the villainous reign of abuse" (Bogost in Deterding et.al., 2011: 1) it carries, game theorist and designer Ian Bogost (2011) coined the term "exploitationware" (ibid.). He thinks of it as "a Viagra for engagement dysfunction", "pursued to capitalize on a cultural moment" (Bogost, 2011).

The goal of gamification is to make a certain product, application, operation, or a cause more appealing, in order to motivate the user and inspire them to return. Jane McGonigal (2011), in her book *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better and How They Can Change the World*, whilst advocating the use of games for social change, does not use the word 'gamification'. She addresses the role of gaming, its widespread adoption and possible uses, such as application of its lessons "to the design of our everyday lives" (McGonigal, 2011: 115). McGonigal recommends creating 'alternate realities' which could broaden one's horizons using 'gameful'[3] "ways of interacting with the real world" (McGonigal, 2011: 115). Games are usually perceived as escapist: alternate realities/games are, on the contrary, "anti-escapist games" (ibid.: 125). They stimulate users to juxtapose their 'real life' with an alternative (played) one, which in part they also help creating (Bogost et.al., 2010: 136). Video games and gamified applications are McGonigal's (and other proponents' of gamification) mode of 'gluing together broken realities'. As questioned by Jane McGonigal (2011): "Gamers want to know: where, in the real world, is that gamer sense of being fully alive, focused, and engaged in every moment? Where is the gamer feeling of power, heroic purpose, and community?" (McGonigal, 2011: 3). Gamers themselves propose using games or gamification not to rebuild traditional ways of connecting, but, rather, to reinvent them (ibid.: 93). However, for now, predominant uses of gamification are still mostly corporate-oriented (Koorevaar, 2012: 11).

The success or failure of gamification is strongly connected with motivation theory. In the area of digital gaming, definitions of motivation often distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation (Sánchez-Franco, 2009; Ryan in Deci et.al., 2009: 292). In gamification, the problem is that motivation is primarily reward-based and therefore extrinsic. Users get rewards such as points, badges and other elements of game mechanics. Reward-based elements tend to produce extrinsic motivation, which does not encourage the user to return (ibid.). On the other hand, users moved by an intrinsic motive, "feel pleasure and enjoyment from the activity itself" (Bloch et.al. in

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Sánchez-Franco, 2009). In such cases, users do not get involved for utilitarian (to get rewards), but, rather, for emotional responses. User experience is thus "related to playfulness, exploratory behaviour and positive affects" (Sánchez-Franco, 2009: 2005) and motivates users to return.

Jane McGonigal (2011), on the other hand, distinguishes between intrinsic rewards and lucrative compensations. She suggests a more sustainable engagement economy, one that motivates and rewards users with intrinsic rewards (McGonigal, 2011: 243). In her opinion, successful game developers understand that the most important reward is the emotional experience itself (ibid.). Nevertheless, some elements of game mechanics, such as progress bars, are successful because users simply enjoy "the thought of improving their perceived situations" (Kirk et.al. in Chiang Fu, 2011: 16). However, in order for users to answer to the cause, there should be something within the gamified system, designed for the users to do or solve. That element should not be too difficult nor too easy (ibid.: 233). Ludoliteracy, a segment of media literacy, is also required of people in order to function in media culture, which is increasingly marked by playfulness (Raessens, 2010: 22).

User or producer? Our participatory 'bastard' culture

In the context of 'participatory culture' or 'bastard culture' (Schäfer, 2011) that we live in, users have undertaken new roles in cultural production (ibid.: 10). Users' and producers' roles have got intertwined and the Web 2.0 optimism suggests that the power is now in hands of users (Nieborg and Van Dijck in Raessens, 2010: 21). A good example of the advent of participatory culture is *Time Magazine*'s choice of person of the year 2007 when the winner was: "You. Yes you. You control the information age. Welcome to your world." (Raessens, 2010: 21). Participatory culture signifies new ways, tools, and techniques of individual and collective empowerment. However, some authors suggest a deconstruction of that optimism (Nieborg and Van Dijck in Raessens, 2010: 21). One of them is Tiziana Terranova (2004), who blames the digital economy of the Internet for "the provision of free labour" (Terranova, 2004: 77). Productive activities of the participatory culture described above are "pleasurably embraced and at the same time often shamelessly exploited" (ibid.: 78). Some theorists, however, perceive the consumers-producers as the new cultural elite, whereas others see them as the 'digital proletarians' (ibid.: 81).

It should be noted, however, that participation is an integral part of the positivist discourse that favours technological development as the best means for progress. This discourse "is related to the struggle against exclusion from political decision-making processes, as well as exclusion from

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ownership of the means of production and the creation of media content" (Daniels et.al. in Schäfer, 2011: 10).[4] Nevertheless, we tend to resign from traditional ways of political action and instead seek new free spaces and opportunities for revolt. The Internet and personal telecommunications could provide the cure for political alienation and become a new means for social and political organization.

Crowdsourcing: *modus operandi* for an egalitarian society

Usually, gamers individually strive towards a common goal. Crowdsourcing,[5] on the other hand, uses all that human power to tackle one specific issue. Different groups of people "organize themselves and perform practical, concrete tasks toward a shared end" (Noveck, 2010: 59). Crowdsourcing quite literally stands for 'outsourcing a job to the crowd'. It is strongly connected to the idea of "collective intelligence" or "the hive mind" (Bogost et.al., 2010: 132). Individual small contributions can lead to outcomes, which are "greater than the sum of their parts" (ibid.). The most illustrious example of that kind of collective labour is of course *Wikipedia.* The latter is a prime example of using crowd labour in order to produce valuable content on the Internet. "Tasks can be chunked out into bite-size pieces that individuals can contribute in small increments" (Tapscott and Williams, 2006: 70). Work is done faster, cheaper and, as argued by some, better.[6]

Another good example is the "first massively multiplayer investigative journalism project" (Bogost et.al., 2010: 132), *Investigate Your MP's Expenses*, by *Guardian*. It used crowds to review 458.832 online documents (scanned forms and expenses) and to examine incriminating details about British MP's (McGonigal, 2011: 220). The project has proved successful because of the emotional rewards it features, which consequently provide an effective involvement. The success is a result of people "having a clear sense of purpose, making an obvious impact, making continuous progress, enjoying a good chance of success, and experiencing plenty of *fiero*[7] moments" (ibid.: 222). Apart from being intrinsically satisfied, users achieve real political results, such as MP's resignations, criminal proceedings, new expense

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[4] *New hopes and promises for reconfiguration of power are, however, characteristics of each media revolution (Daniels et.al. in Schäfer, 2011: 10).*

[5] *The term 'crowdsourcing' first appeared in 2006, and was coined by technology journalist Jeff Howe.*

[6] *However, "Wikipedia itself has become a political battleground, as supporters of candidates, causes, groups, movements, and even regimes, engage in incessant microscopic 'edit wars' over entries." (Chadwick, 2009: 21).*

[7] *Fiero signifies a primal emotion "that inspires human beings to strive to do great things" (Niman, 2013: 29).*

codes etc. (ibid.: 224). Citizens do not just clamour for change: instead, they directly participate in a political reform. In crowd sourced political projects, civil society and the private sector can both propose solutions to their own problems. These solutions "may produce greater legitimacy than government currently enjoys" (Noveck, 2010: 59). Complex economic and social issues can be dealt with faster and more efficiently (ibid.).

We tend to resign from traditional ways of political action and instead seek new free spaces and opportunities for revolt. Crowdsourcing has big potential: if users voluntarily spend a substantial amount of their free time working on/for them, "we should be able to complete one hundred Wikipedia-size projects every single day" (McGonigal, 2011: 225). One of the benefits is that people voluntarily choose tasks they feel uniquely qualified for (Tapscott and Williams, 2006: 69). In a politically oriented project, this is what "makes collaborative democracy egalitarian" (Noveck, 2010: 67). However, most crowd projects fail. What the successful ones have in common is that they are structured like multiplayer games (McGonigal, 2011: 228).

Crowdsourcing and other tools offered by personal telecommunications could, however, provide the cure for political alienation and become a new means for social and political organization. It appears as if clever gamification (and other) techniques can in fact immerse people into working for a 'higher good' and make more crowd projects succeed.

Gamified politics: a sketch

In order to move away from abstractions in the field of gamification, we will conceptualize possible designs and prerequisites for gamified applications. An application designed for the purpose of increasing political participation would reward users' contributions by awarding them with points. Successful contributions would give them more points or badges, resulting in their (avatar's) appearance on the leader board. An application like this would rely on meritocratic principles, where "the most skilled and experienced members of the community provide leadership and help integrate contributions from the community" (Tapscott and Williams, 2006: 67). Those users' voice would have greater importance in defining community's future directions. That type of political organization, possibly called 'liquid democracy', could strengthen alternative visions on civic issues and (if covering human rights) the voice of youth, elderly or other marginalised.

Every application or game has to base its functioning on certain rules, or in case of political participation, aspirations or rights. Those could be, for example, aspirations written in the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. As already indicated above, games can, through rules, values and practices, teach various mindsets and ways of approaching problems

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(Bogost et.al., 2010: 108). Another potential benefit of gamified applications is that they could, with strict adherence to (game) rules, keep track of violations of rights and (un)achievements of actors, citizens or representatives. For example, drawing from Jorgen Rasmussen's (1959) comparative political analysis: the United States Constitution is effective, not formal or nominal. It is designed as an "enforceable set of obligations and limits upon the government's power" (Rasmussen, 1959/2007: 31). On the other hand, Latin American constitutions are regarded as "statements of aspirations; they list goals to be attained in the future, rather than rights to be enjoyed in the present" (Lloyd Mechan in Rasmussen, 1959/2007). Following design propositions above, it seems wiser to gamify Latin American constitutions (whose elements are goals and aspirations) than to gamify obligations and limits (from the US Constitution).

However, we quickly find ourselves on slippery terrain here. 'Noble causes', encouraged by gamification proponents, can covertly aim towards maintenance of the *status quo*, especially when in hands of a community, which is democratic only by name. In that case, games or gamified applications for social change would be designed as "ideological spaces, as worlds that aim to convince players of certain ideas" (Raessens, 2010: 16). For instance: some already designed games present the West as the "helping parent" (ibid.), supporting the idea that only external forces (like the United Nations) can define or solve conflicts and give humanitarian aid in places, struck by local wars and other conflicts.

Further reasons for deploying gamified systems are nepotism and corruption. Slovenia is, unfortunately, regarded as a great example of those political issues. It is known for its political culture of a transitional system, where citizens' connections precede their abilities and qualifications for certain functions. That is obvious in politics, where for example in Slovenian Parliament, one can find names of retired professional athletes etc. Politics in transitional systems are therefore "influenced by irrelevant-non-political-factors. Social and personal relations and preferences determine political behavior" (Rasmussen, 1959/2007: 35). The system is "based on loyalty to a prominent personality or stand for a total way of life" (ibid.).[8] Gamification could, with its gameful (playful) character and its focus on concrete themes or goals, transcend the left/right schism, which is still vital in Slovenian political culture, or any similar political culture. A (transitional) system could become more effective by widening its scope of possible political solutions.

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[8] *Interestingly, an analysis of Slovenian online politics showed that even political online representations, such as online campaigns, changed from informational into a more individualised form (Črnič and Ošljak, 2013: 39).*

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By using gamified applications or websites, citizens could control and monitor their representatives. Their dissatisfaction with performance of political parties could be solved by strict control of representatives' actions and decisions. It would not be possible for a political party to win an election and then decide on every issue for the full term of office. Leader boards would show real effects of political actors by showing points, gained for a certain successful action.

An example of a webpage, where citizens monitor their representatives, is *They Work For You*[9]. The webpage launched in the United Kingdom and is keeping track of representatives' attendance at debates and their voting records. Even though it is not gamified, it still offers important public information. Similar work is done by the civil initiative and recently founded Institute Danes je nov dan: Inštitut za druga vprašanja (Today Is a New Day: Institute For Other Questions)[10]. The initiative emerged from Slovenian protest movement in November 2012 and has always aimed towards new social consensus for a better society. The institute's activities include maintaining an open-source web platform for citizens' proposals or their 'random acts of kindness', and organizing round tables, working groups, protests, and other public interventions. The initiative is based on six fundamental (human) rights, which it enforces in its every field of activity: The right to good life and solidarity, The right to common good, The right to good political authority/power, The right to/of nature, The right to human-friendly economy, The right to inclusion.

Homo ludens: can playing save us?

Play is an important element of people's lives.[11] Its impact does not cover leisure activities only: play has become a vital part of once-opposing activities of education, politics and warfare.[12] This evolution, in the words of new media scholar Joost Raessens (2010), is called 'ludification of culture' (Raessens, 2010: 6) The term derives from the Latin word *ludus*, meaning "play, sport, pastime"[13] and was popularized in the 1960s, denoting "playful behavior and fun objects" (Raessens, 2010: 6).

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[9] *Available on http://www.theyworkforyou.com/*

[10] *Available on http://danesjenovdan.si/*

[11] *Economist Jeremy Rifkin (2010) believes it is becoming as important for cultural economy as work has been for industrial economy (Rifkin in Raessens, 2010: 6).*

[12] *Video game America's Army, for example, is used as a tool for recruiting new soldiers. The game is a representation of army life. It teaches ideology, embedded in the "logic of duty, honor, and singular global political truth" (Bogost, 2007: 79).*

[13] *Available on http://www.latin-dictionary.org/ludus*

One of the most prolific theoretical explorations of play is Johan Huizinga (1944)'s book *Homo Ludens*, subtitled *A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*. In the book, Huizinga demonstrated that culture emerges and evolves in and as play (Huizinga, 1944/1949: 173) which is an important factor for social groupings formation (Raessens, 2010: 10). He refers to modern individuals as homo ludens or 'playful men', but notices a demise of play in everyday life, as our civilization becomes more complex and serious (Huizinga, 1944/1949: 75). Nevertheless, new, playful identities are being constructed precisely because of digital technologies and computer games (Raessens, 2006: 52). Roger Caillois (1958), Huizinga's successor in conceptualizing the issue, offers reasons for incorporating more play[14] (and games) into citizens' everyday life. He argues that humanity needs "a recommitment to the principles of the playground" (Henricks, 2010: 165). A similar point is raised by Christopher Lasch's (1979) seminal work *The Culture of Narcissism*. He argues that most jobs are reduced to routine and that rationalized activities and industry aim towards control and elimination of risks (Lasch, 1979: 102). As Huizinga showed in his seminal study of play *Homo Ludens*: "The history of culture /.../ appears from one perspective to consist of the gradual eradication of the play elements of all cultural forms – from religion, from the law, from warfare, above all from productive labor" (ibid.). Difficulties and demands, once found in working environments, are nowadays present in the field of play (ibid.: 101) or people's leisure time. It appears that the current working conditions and demands leave people passivized. People therefore seek "diversion and sensation" (ibid.: 123) in playing games. Their surplus potential should be used in gamified environments, in order to influence political decisions and help in creating a happier society.

However, Lasch (1979) directly dismissed any practical value of games (ibid.: 100), claiming that they "quickly lose their charm when forced into the service of education, character development, or social improvement" (ibid.). Apart from rejecting their usefulness, Lasch emphasized that games and play represent community's values. They give objective expressions to shared traditions and offer a commentary on reality (ibid.). Nevertheless, it is the conception of games as escapist that takes away or denies their 'communitarian element' (ibid.: 123).[15]

Jane McGonigal (2011), in her book *Reality is Broken: Why Games Make Us Better And How They Can Change the World*, supports the idea of incorporating (more) games into people's lives by referring to Herodotus' *Histories*. Herodotus' story describes eighteen years long famine among

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[14] *Caillois' definition of play also incorporates the element of money (Henricks, 2010: 165). Money represents an extrinsic motivation, which is useless for long-term political commitment.*

[15] *Interestingly, the conception of 'escapist' games historically coincides with identifying "leisure as an extension of commodity production" (Lasch, 1979: 123).*

Lydians, survived through distracting gameplay. McGonigal controversially establishes an analogy between Lydians' famine and modern hunger "for more satisfying work, for a stronger sense of community, and for a more engaging and meaningful life" (McGonigal, 2011: 6). She perceives games as a thoughtful escape and a distraction that can help us to reinvent reality.

Gamified politics: the cure for political alienation?

Political alienation has been identified as a typical trait of contemporary societies, and is primarily associated with young people. Thus, in order to solve the problem of alienation successfully, it should be tackled in a way that appeals to younger generations of future voters and/or policy makers. In a culture, increasingly dependent on communication technologies, perhaps the most sensible way of encouraging young people to political participation is to adopt the very context in which they feel most comfortable, i. e. to address them digitally.

"We've learned that young people are spending more and more time playing computer and video games–on average, ten thousand hours by the time they turn twenty-one. And we've learned that these ten thousand hours are just enough time to become extraordinary at the one thing all games make us good at: cooperating, coordinating, and creating something new together" (McGonigal, 2011: 348)*.*

Traditional political elites (are beginning to) recognize youth's most powerful weapon: their skilful use of new technologies. Able to scrutinize everything and everyone, the youth are "more sceptical of authority as they sift through information at the speed of light" (Tapscott and Williams, 2006: 47). They disapprove of party structures, formality of communication, and style of debate (Macintosh et.al, 2003: 44). Reluctance to digitalize democratic processes can thus be interpreted as one of the political elites' techniques, used to maintain privileges and prolong political alienation of the youth.[16] Those in power are characterized by a lack of technical knowledge and they focus on outmoded theory of participatory democracy, which remains the *modus operandi* of governmental institutions (Noveck, 2010: 60).

Furthermore, there is an interesting correlation between one's behaviour in the context of 'gaming' and their 'real' conduct. Firstly, play is essential for engaging people into a certain community (Raessens, 2010: 11). If games (or gamified applications) are designed in a way that promotes collaboration in

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[16] *For example, the Slovenian political situation shows that "the web was relatively overlooked as a space for public action before 2008" (Črnič and Ošljak, 2013: 46).*

general, this behaviour results in people's tendency towards helping others: "The more we learn to enjoy serving epic causes in game worlds, the more we may find ourselves contributing to epic efforts in the real world" (McGonigal, 2011: 113). Gamers somewhat 'instinctively' understand the possibilities offered by big crowd projects (ibid.: 233).[17]

A new paradigm for contemporary world: towards a utopia

In his book *A new paradigm for understanding today's world*, Alain Touraine (2005/2007) imagines a society withdrawn from institutions and (political) collective actors. His encouraging "dreams that reveal the reality of our lived experience better than the discourses constructed by the authorities" (Touraine, 2005/2007: 108) pave the way towards new forms of action. His vision of political participation and education interestingly resembles principles, favoured by proponents of gamification.

> *"Political decisions would be taken at the end of an unusual contest between characters that were more symbolic than real. Schools would no longer have buildings or syllabuses; and their teachers would no longer form a particular social body. Extremely varied techniques – in particular, encouragement of the imaginary and reasoning – would be put in service of each individual."* (ibid.).

In order to move towards an utopia like his own, Touraine underlines the importance of cultural movements. Nevertheless, he criticizes their "ideology and forms of action inherited from the working-class movement" (ibid.: 153).[18] It seems that Touraine's vision favours movements which use and abuse forms of action, specific for information societies. The Internet and video games, despite the accusations of being escapist and reducing active political participation, may be the possible sites of a potential forthcoming revolution. Apart from the Internet, gamification as such may very well be the form of action Touraine seeks in the new cultural movements.

In the first theoretical explorations of e-democracy, the situation looked brighter. If surveillance technologies worked in favour of citizens (users) instead of storing information for those, who are in the position of power, democracy would need thorough redefinition. Orwell's vision of Big Brother could therefore transform itself into its opposition. However,

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[17] *Even though the example above focused on youth, Zygmunt Bauman (1995) claims that childhood is not the only period, marked by playfulness. Instead, playfulness has become a lifelong attitude (Bauman in Raessens, 2010: 6).*

[18] *For instance, anarchist movements stress the importance of direct action and people's assemblies. Their forms of action are therefore inherited from 'old' and/or 'leftist' working-class movement.*

"unprotected public communications across networks and proposed intrusions /.../ have made individuals feel more generally visible and hence vulnerable to threats from a Big Brother–like form of state surveillance (Saco, 2002: 181). As previously envisioned by Grossman (1996), "the twenty-first century's defining image is more likely to have ordinary citizens using their personal telecommunication devices to keep Big Brother under continuing surveillance" (Grossman, 1996: 12) than the other way around. Democracy that serves its people instead of attending to power, capital, etc., might follow the principle that "the rulers are subject to control by the ruled" (ibid.: 33). Actors with access to positions of power, however, consider such techniques illegal. Accessibility and freedom of information (on the Internet) are sensitive topics, revealing the boundaries of citizen' revolutions. As have repeatedly claimed the cypherpunks:[19] "We now have increased communication versus increased surveillance." (Assange, 2012: 21).

Hannah Arendt as a proponent of bodiless public sphere: a rejection of Arendt's rejection of technology

Some post-war theorists, such as Horkheimer, Adorno, Heidegger or Arendt, approached technology and its effects on modern societies with scepticism and reluctance. Adorno and Horkheimer argued that those on strongest economic positions are the ones who own the technological means and are consequently "gaining power over society" (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1987/2002: 95). Martin Heidegger was a source of inspiration for many post-war theorists. Specifically, they appropriated his notions of technology and its effects on individuals. Heidegger conceptualizes technology as "a mode of revealing" (Heidegger, 1977: 13) the truth. He attempts to find a middle path between the notions of technology as something that does not need further (critical) scrutiny and that of technology as something that should be eliminated (ibid.: 26). Technology is therefore seen as dangerous. Danger lies in the fact that the revealing of 'truth' that technology can bring us, could be taken away from individuals (ibid.: 28). Nevertheless, it is for the saving power that technology shows its potential: "the closer we come to the danger, the more brightly do the ways into the saving power begin to shine" (ibid.: 35).

In her book *Cybering Democracy: Public Space and the Internet*, Diana Saco (2002) rethinks spatiality in order to conceptualize an electronic agora, a new social space grounded in a "cyber space and in digital bodies" (Saco,

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[19] *Cypherpunks are advocates of the "use of cryptography and similar methods as ways to achieve societal and political change" (Assange et.al., 2012). Their prominent representative is Julian Assange, whereas Edward Snowden and Bradley Manning also share a similar stance.*

2002: xv). In doing so, she draws heavily from Arendt's work, which blames technological changes for "degeneration of public, political spaces" (Saco, 2002: 37). However, despite her rejection of technology, she provides "the basis for a richer understanding of the bodiless seductions of cyberspace" (ibid.). Moreover, her conception of politics as performance art (Arendt in Lorey 2011, 81) engages with our exertions to promote gamified politics or other practices of digital democracy.

Arendt's notion of public visibility, of public, prefers plurality rather than commonality (Saco, 2002: 56). That plurality is made visible through speech and action, through "word and deed [that] have not parted company" (Arendt, 1958/1998, 200). The public realm, in Arendt's thought, "relies on the simultaneous presence of innumerable perspectives and aspects in which the common world presents itself" (ibid.: 57).

Conceiving the public realm, Arendt consistently aims towards excluding the body. Consequently, her democratic ideal does not involve the physical body: she argues that the poor, driven by their bodily needs of survival (Arendt in Saco, 2002: 48), close the space of politics by emphasizing 'the social question' (ibid.). Arendt emphasizes that "the bodily part of our human existence" (Arendt, 1958/1998: 72) has to be hidden and remain in privacy. According to Arendt, people's presence is not perceived through their bodily needs or other attributes (ibid.: 200). In terms of discrimination, based on gender, skin colour, etc., such conception appears of great importance (Saco, 2002: 72). Arendt draws attention to the fact that women and the working classes, the ones characterized by their body necessities, were emancipated at nearly the same historical time. Stressing the bodily specifics was a characteristic of an age that did no longer believe that "bodily functions and material concerns should be hidden" (Arendt 1958/1998, 73). That era is (or: should be) gone: unfortunately, bodies are known mostly by their discriminatory characteristics. What is needed nowadays is a belief that a body is useless for political action and as indicated above, that people's deeds should prove more important than their external signs.

Arendt's ideal of democracy is conceptualized similarly to the classical, democratic Athenian utopia (ibid.: 47) and is "at once embodied and bodiless space of appearance" (ibid.: 46). A 'communistic fiction', a complete victory of society is, according to Arendt, always "ruled by an invisible hand, namely, by nobody" (Arendt, 1958/1998: 44).

Ending in concern: Big Brother and a perfect Panopticon

Ludification of culture is not necessarily a constructive development. Jesse Schell (2010) warns about a potential gamified future where governments and their corporate sponsors dictate our lives the way they prefer,

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whereas Joost Raessens (2010) claims that "freedom goes hand in hand with coercion, fun with annoyance" (Raessens, 2010: 14). In a (future) gamified environment, it would be the ones with access to power that set the rules and distribute the 'points' and 'awards' (Schell in Koorevaar, 2012: 16). Power relations would limit participation simply by adhering to such design of the application or webpage that benefited those, who are already privileged (Koorevaar, 2012: 29).

Issues about technological power and deployment of technology can be (conventionally) tackled from liberal (positivist) or Marxist (structuralist) perspectives. The third option is presented by Sunh-Hee Yoon (Yoon, 1996: 171) and is perhaps most suitable for our conceptualization of gamified politics. The liberal/positivist or developmentalist perspective understands technology as a contributor to economic prosperity and political/cultural modernization (ibid.: 172), that progressively organizes society (ibid.). Alvin Toffler (1980), for example, thinks that communication technology contributes to a decentralized society (ibid.: 173). On the other hand, Marxist views on technology emphasize that the (economic) value of communication favours businesses and the ones already in power (ibid.: 174). In opposition to developementalists, Marxists think technological development stirs conflicts and deepens existing inequalities. In their view, computerization increases unemployment rate and robs the middle classes of their (labour class) identity (by forcing them to consume bourgeois culture via the media and mass communication) (ibid.: 175).

Michel Foucault (1979) criticized both views. Drawing from a Foucauldian understanding of techniques of observation, power has become more discreet, which makes it even stronger and more effective (Foucault, 1979: 171). It is performed in form of (Internet) surveillance, which is not primarily intended to protect people, but, rather, to manage them (Saco, 2002: 210). It is a "specific mechanism in the disciplinary power" (Foucault, 1979: 175). In the era of Internet surveillance scandals, pointed out by cypherpunks, one can think of a "prison of global scale" (Yoon, 1996: 177). Foucault described the perfect disciplinary apparatus like this:

> *"it would make it possible for a single gaze to see everything constantly. A central point would be both the source of light illuminating everything, and a locus of convergence for everything that must be known: a perfect eye that nothing would escape and a centre towards which all gazes would be turned".* (Foucault, 1979: 73)

It seems that the Internet, with all of the surveillance systems available, forms the perfect disciplinary apparatus or Panopticon. The ones at the top of the Panopticon store large amounts of data about citizens, who

voluntarily subjugate themselves to positive power.[20] One of the preconditions for Panopticism, according to Bentham, is that the power is visible (Foucault, 1979: 201). Since we know we are spied upon by the state and other organizations, the positive power has become normalized, and Panopticism made possible.

As already indicated above in the context of participatory culture, gamification and other digital practices trigger ethical concerns, such as blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure. Tiziana Terranova (2003) defines digital labour as "not equivalent to waged labour" (Terranova, 2003: 88) and therefore "a source of value in advanced capitalist societies" (ibid.: 73). Despite those criticisms, gamers and other 'netizens' literally enjoy and are immersed into tasks performed in computer environments. According to Yee, computers were made to work for us, but in fact, video games and other applications demand us to work for them instead (Yee in McGonigal, 2011: 55). Jane McGonigal (2011) argues that we are the ones who want more work, and not just any kind of it – "we want to be given more satisfying work" (ibid.), which is to be found in video games and gamified applications (only).

Conclusion: Utopia, the vehicle for social change

Despite initial optimism, gamification is, for some game designers and theorists, seen as a devaluation of video games. Many argue that it is valuable content and not game mechanics which are at the core of video games (Chorney, 2012: 1). Moreover, the principle of gamification, as employed in the aforementioned examples, cannot compete with 'proper' video games in terms of complexity. Its creative application and theorizations, however, should not stop because of emotionally engaged criticisms on the side of long term and 'proper' gamers or because of vigilance over the threat of control by the government.

According to psychologist Martha Wolfenstein (1951): once pleasure becomes an end in itself, it "takes on the qualities of work" (Wolfenstein in Lasch, 1979: 65). Christopher Lasch (1979) argued that the ethics of achievement from the 1950s were replaced with ethics of pleasure. That could actually be an encouragement and an argument for gamification, which aims to seek pleasure in form of intrinsic (or extrinsic) motivation. According to Lasch, the search for pleasure is actually a disguised struggle for power (ibid.: 66). If that struggle for power takes on collaborative characteristics, gaming or using gamified applications will result in real, and rather impressive, political

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[20] *However, the difference between the old, physical Panopticon, and the new, digital one is that the new technologies have given us the ability to communicate with each other.*

results. On the other hand, we should be worried about 'a dark side of civic engagement'. Conceptualized by Fiorina (1999), she thinks this dark side is likely to emerge in a virtual environment, which is a safe haven for destructive behaviours (van Deth in Torcal and Montero, 102). Nevertheless, some theorists (as we pointed out, possibly Arendt) conceive cyberspace as the ideal public space (Saco, 2002). Systematic exclusions from political debates in face-to-face situations, due to bodily signifiers (ibid.: 205), can be eliminated by transmitting the body into the virtual world. As this occurs, certain "prejudicial conduct in our conversations with others" (ibid.) can be removed.

Interestingly, Foucault defines The Panopticon as "utopia, as a particular institution, closed in upon itself" (Foucault, 1979/1995: 205). He thinks it could be applied to any situation (ibid.: 06). Positive power, enclosed in the surveillance system, will not degenerate into tyranny; that would be its conceptual opposite. "The disciplinary mechanism will be democratically controlled, since it will be constantly accessible 'to the great tribunal committee of the world'" (ibid.: 207). It has to be underlined that the last twenty years have been characterized by "massive investments in surveillance because people in power feared that the Internet would affect their way of governance" (Müller-Maguhn in Assange et.al., 2012: 23). However, people did not, until recently, know that all of their networked interactions are being spied upon. The fact that we are now aware that the Panopticon fulfilled its structural neccessity, does not change the situation. The benefits we get from the Internet and computers, seem to obscure our reason and lead us towards utopistic thinking. Nevertheless, we believe gamification could (at least) solve the problem of political alienation. The criticisms and dangers that surround the discourse on gamification should be taken into account and carefully tackled in its applications and uses. However, without utopian images of a better future, nobody would ever even strive to make a change.

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