This is
a graduation thesis
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METHODS of playing / of writing

...Instead of accomplishing something scientifically or creating something artistically, its efforts reflect the leisure of a childlike person who has no qualms about taking his inspiration from what others have done before him. [...]
Luck and play are essential to it. It starts not with Adam and Eve but with what it wants to talk about; it says what occurs to it in that context and stops when it feels finished rather than when there is nothing to say.

T.W. Adorno, The essay as form, 1958

Rather than diving into one very specific subject I am trying to approach and compare different topics, trying to find links to a better understanding.

Children know nothing about the world yet, and because of that they are usually extremely curious and straight-forward. A question is never too obvious or stupid to ask.

Leisure, childlike, and *play* are words that spoke to me, for they gave me motivation to keep on writing and researching in my own way, which is also the only way I know. Sometimes you need to find the strength to not give a shit, to keep on doing what you like. I can find this in the child-like attitude.

The notion of playing, based on the Homo Ludens by Johan Huizinga, is the red thread that I will hold on to, to be guided through the maze of this thinking process.

Sometimes ideas just pop up, apparently out of nowhere. I decided to try to follow these pops to see where they would bring me.

Setting in motion

Questioning why the essay is not considered an art form, like poetry, Adorno, philosopher and social critic, encourages a way of writing that does not necessarily cling to specific theories or writing styles, but which comes from allowing oneself to write what is felt should be written.

He speaks about speculations on specific, culturally pre-formed objects, as a way to (maybe, over-) interpret topics which are supposed to be already explained and unravelled, not necessarily aiming in finding an ultimate or universal theory, but to lead the way for new perspectives. Criticizing the subordination to determined (and specialized) authorities,

he asserts that the fear of the essayist to be considered irrelevant from the men of Academia, is problematic.
Adorno is known for his critical theory on society and polemics about the positivist thought, which determines that knowledge comes from the a priori logic interpretation of sensory experience.
The belief that only logic and rationality can be legitimate forms of knowledge highlighted the dichotomy between art and science. Adorno, instead, advocated for spontaneity and fantasy. He stated that the subject needs to interpret, instead of merely accept, what is enclosed in any given intellectual object. He referred to this as intellectual freedom.

The word essay, from the French essai, means to attempt, require, examine and from the Latin exigere, to try, test. Ex, out + agere, to set in motion.

Stairs of why

In the movie *Is the man who is tall happy?*, Michael Gondry interviews philosopher and linguist Noam Chomsky, illustrating the subjects touched upon during the conversation, through the animation of simple line drawings.
When Chomsky refers to modern science by talking about how certain scientific notions taken for granted for centuries where being questioned, opening up to new views of the world, he stresses the importance of being puzzled. Following one's very own wonderings is also the base of any scientific discovery.

If I interpret literally Gondry's animations, to run up the stairs of WHY is the only way to not be a replica of someone else's mind. The will to be puzzled is necessary to go up these

stairs which, I imagine, could lead to the intellectual freedom mentioned by Adorno. The only problem, I think, is that these stairs, unlike the one in the animation, go in a 1000 directions. How is it possible to not get lost on the stairs of WHY? Sometimes questions get heavy like stone, thrown into failure when things are too difficult to grasp.

1

As in *Is the man who is tall happy?*, addressing complexity through naivety, playing is a practice of making heavy things light again.
Though, it takes large amounts of freedom, to play.
Or rather, large amounts of privilege?

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1 frame from the movie

Random Noise

Our brains are like machines made to detect meaning everywhere around us. When I realized that there was an actual name for seeing a face in any object and stain, called Pareidolia, I got fascinated by the tricks and cognitive illusions happening in our mind.

Pareidolia was thought to be a phenomenon of early states of schizophrenia. However, it's just common to a lot of people, if not rooted in humans themselves.

A child tends to play along with these illusions. It is fun to imagine that things are something else than what they actually are, triggering stories and fantasies.

This behaviour is not unique to children, since adults also seeks for meaning in things that have random connections.

If we think of superstitious behaviours, conspiracy theories, misperceptions in probability, the so-called gambler fallacy... Maybe these are not much diffent than seeing a horse in a cloud.

Only, at some point, one might start believing that the horse is real.

The phenomenon that describes our perception of relations between things has been called Patternicity. Sometimes a relation is detected when none actually exists, or, on the contrary, it might not be detected when there is one.

If a hunter sees a bush moving he might be drawn to think it is moving because of an animal, even if it was only the wind. Though, it might be more handy to believe there is an animal when there is none, than to not detect the tiger, be attacked

and die. These misperceptions might be an ancient form of survival mechanism that we still keeps within us today. We seek for meaning in random noise.
Thus, this whole thesis could very well be an example of patternicity. Yes, I am studying hard to be a human.

Ecce homo

In his book *Homo Ludens* from 1938, Dutch historian Johan Huizinga describes playing as social phenomena, fundamental to the formation of culture.

In the beginning, before men were even walking around on two legs, animals were playing. Thus, a bit like eating and reproduction, playing is older than civilization itself, being quite an essential part of life.
Stating that the essence of what playing actually is can never be explained, Huizinga tried to describe it through observations and links to other subjects.

 It can be agreed upon that playing is useful for a lot of different reasons: it triggers dynamics that prepare for adult life, so it teaches, relaxes, releases super abundant energy. Though, for Huizinga, an essential characteristic of it is freedom, in the sense that play only happens when it is voluntary. Its "purer" forms can be said to be the ones of infants and animals, who, we assume, simply play for fun. Their freedom lies in this.
By giving it a purpose different than itself, means to forget about the essential aesthetic quality of playing. Therefore, to forget about the experience of the player itself.

So what happens when we play? Can we even remember?

Constructing rules for another dimension, playing is a matter of being deeply absorbed into something that is not part of ordinary life. It can lead all of a sudden somewhere we did not plan to go. It has the charm of secrecy, as we might notice in the playing of small children. To create this other dimension they play with masks and costumes, becoming something they are not, a higher self, transforming objects and places. We are not purely rational creatures, playing is an action rooted in the subconscious.
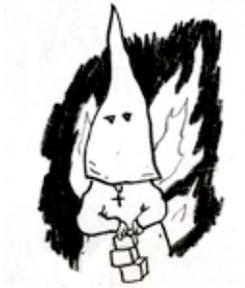
But how is this the fundament of culture?
To Huizinga, playing creates bonds. The non ordinary nature of it can give to a group of individuals the feeling to be apart together, in an exceptional situation. The feeling of sharing something important stays as a treasure in memory, willing to repeat the experience when possible. Here especially, Huizinga links the notion of playing to that of rituals in archaic tribes. Playins is to him a context and a representation: the context for doing what one normally wouldn't do, the representation of a different self and a different reality.

So how did playing lead to rituals?
The first notions of gods reflected cosmic events and natural phenomenon, something so obscure, that men, being in the

infancy of all forms of knowledge and technological advance, started to play.

"Then, what was wordless play assumes poetic form. In the form and function of play, itself an independent entity which is senseless and irrational, man's consciousness that he is embedded in a sacred order of things finds its first, highest, and holiest expression."[2]

If playing is so embedded in humans, then what about the other things we used to do when we were not able yet to even walk on two legs?

In his book, Sociologist Zigmunt Bauman, points to sex as the most social of all human activities. The striving to reach a union with another person is what transcends all the other ways one can be fulfilled on his own. It can be argued that this feeling is not necessarely about sex, though, under this persepctive it is the Homo Sexualis that is able to set the first ground for the formation of culture.
Sexuologist Volkamar Sigush, mentioned by Bauman, introduces the figures of Eros and Anteros as metaphors for the modern perception of sexuality: Eros with his *ars erotica*, the art of erotism, is taken over by his more dominant and destructive brother, Anteros, who promotes a calculated approach for a no-risk-taking action, the *scientia sexuali, the science of sex.*
Eros can be found roaming the streets looking for shelter but he is never standing still for too long.
It is as if the the notion of sex being magic and ecstatic has been gradually replaced with a more logic approach, which does not necessarely include any meaningufulness to the action.

2   Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens, nature and significance of play

According to Bauman, in current times, there is a problematic relation between how people move and deal with territory and the formation of strong relationships.

It might be strange, but the Homo Ludens and the Homo Sexualis might be the same person, after all.

Time travel

I remember quite clearly how I was playing as a kid. I would stay for hours in a world of imagination. Objects become different than what they are, things have personalities; small people might live in traffic lights, construction work machines are prehistoric creatures, my umbrella is a rifle.
If men always played, I want to look back. I will loosely link the notion of toys to that of prehistoric artefacts, therefore linking the infancy of the individual to the infancy of mankind. To play is the power to relate to what is extremely far away. It surpasses the impossibility of communication between different beings, it constructs a ground where realities, distant in space and time, can come closer to each other.

As often toys represent animals or zoomorphic figures I will use the example of the Lion Man6 to embark on a little time travel back to 40.000 years ago. This small ivory figurine, around 30 cm long, found in the South of Germany, is representing a lion, supposedly, with human features. It was made at a time when, so archaeologists suspect, hunting practices were changing, as humans started to empathize with animals, being able, as well, to better predict their movements when hunting.

Researchers state that it took around 400 hours to make this artefact. At a time when life was full of dangers it is remarkable that someone was devoted to the crafting of something not necessarely intended for hunting or survival. 7Probably it means that men at that time were practising shamanism, maybe wearing the fur of big predators for ceremonial practices, and had an idea about life after death. Probably this figurine was used in rituals, passed around from person to person. Remnants of organic liquid were found in its mouth.

I relate this object to a toy because it is used to achieve another state of being. It becomes a symbol, a prop to act in another world, which is constructed on belief, on a narrative that is separated from the concrete and the daily.

However, the debate surrounding the Lion-Man is also concerned with establishing the creature's gender, which would be a clue to understand if people, at that time, were living in a matriarchal or patriarchal society.

Nobody knows for sure how the figurine looks like as the actual artefact is in very bad conditions, only copies are displayed to the public.

When more fragments of the statue were found, it was expected to be able to make up for 20% more of the figurine.

to recreate its genitalia and know its gender. Most of the fragments were measuring around a few square mm.
Though, I couldn't find more information on the Lion-man being maybe a Lion-woman but I started wondering how in the future people will understand found objects from the current time.
What will the methodologies of archaeology be if a lot of our information is digital?
And what will they think about our relation to gender when reassembling a ten thousand year old Hello Kitty puppet?

P+B

I want to mention the work of JeongMee Yoon, who portrays children and all of their belongings in their room. The Blue and Pink Project questions the nature of the opposition between blue=boy and pink=girl. A related article by Jo Barraclough Paoletti looks at the history of this division.

Infants and toddlers used to be considered gender neutral. Being innocent of sex, they had, therefore, no differentiation in treatment or clothing. Gradually, when their body would start changing, in early puberty, they would start wearing the same clothes as adults.

Though, the need to highlight masculinity grew when women started to have more prominent roles in society. As well, childhood increasingly was to be aknowledged as a specific phase of life, fundamental years shaping the adult-to-be. In the early 20th century, a new view on child psychology, stated that masculinity and femininity were not innate but learnt behaviours. Therefore it was considered necessary to act upon the experience of the early years of the boy.

Already in the 18th century the first clothing specifically for young males, the so-called skeleton suit, had appeared, but in order to guide boys all the way to a tougher masculinity, it was needed to strictly separate their identity and behaviour from the one of the girls. Clothing became the first means. Initially, defined by the decoration, or lack of it, different narratives started to take place. Motifs of flowers and butterflies for girls and transportation vehicles, specific animals, sport themes, male figures for boys. Finally, a colour division seemed to be the most effective way to go. Though, it took quite a long time to come to a general standard. Deciding what what colour to assign to which gender was not obvious.

The blue/pink issue was considered differently between each country in Europe and within each state in the U.S. It depended partly on the main religious belief; in catholic countries and regions, blue was associated with the Virgin Mary, thus femininity, while pink, considered a stronger colour, was thought to be more suitable for boys. However, in the 1940's, the division was more or less settled, until the 1980's when it got widely aknowledged.
This is one the first lessons that many of the ones born in those years, and after, have learnt.
Pink = girl, Blue = Boy.

Of course this polarity stops to be as relevant after a certain age and times are changing enough to blur the boundaries between what is considered feminine and what is masculine. At least we believe so. Still, I have a hard time wearing any pink clothing, stubbornly willing to avoid the strictly feminine which I never felt totally represented by.

Besides the dominant colour, the photographs of JeongMee Yoon are striking for the quantity of objects possessed by the portrayed children. Each of them carries a specific narrative, as often toys come with a definite story line. All these narratives become the stories of a generation, contributing, maybe, to a sense of community, creating a mutual cultural ground.

3

3 Website, https://www.jetphotos.com, All Nippon Airlines, Boeing 747-481D,

Junk and ideals

I got interested in investigating the sense of community and togetherness through play and found some hints while looking at the history of the adventure playground.

  During the 30's the empty spaces of bomb sites were appropriated by children playing with the discarded materials left on the site. While observing this, Danish architect C.T. Sorensen, father-to-be of the junk playground, started to rethink his role as an architect: from being the one that has the decisive control of the situation, he wanted to consider himself more of a facilitator.

At the time when Denmark was occupied by Nazis, there was a concern about the impact of war on children, being often separated from their parents, in a situation of confusion and emotional stress, often in overcrowded shelters. Froebel's philosophy, which entailed the understanding of playing as a fundamental part of the child's life, especially of being outside, "to be children of nature", created the ground for a new experiment. Thinking about new methods of playing was a way to react to the extreme right wing movements of the time. The first junk playground was built in Emdrup, Copenhagen in 1943, as part of a social housing project, with the daily visit of around 900 kids.

The idea was to provide them all kinds of materials to build their own playing structures. The play-leader, would help but not interfere by giving rules in a didactic way. It was a figure meant to be more of a friend than a teacher. So with ropes, bricks, wood, sand, discarded cars, children started to build their renewed reality.

The junk playgrounds, spread also in the UK from 1948. Later on known as adventure playgrounds, they became the centre of communal life in overpopulated neighbourhoods.

Often there were play huts, storages and spaces for indoors activities. Problematic youth was increasing, due to the war, but adults and pedagogists started to aknowledge that their anger could not be contained through punishment.
Educator Marie Paneth actually set the ground for the creation of the junk playgrounds. Initally her method was instrumentally lacking rules and punishment in order to let off of the destructive drive of some problematic kids. They were hosted in a special structure, but after they had harassed the workers and damaged the space, Paneth decided to approach them on their own playing area, which was on the former bomb sites. Finally the kids could identify with a space, which reflected them in its abandonment, instead of with figures of authority.

Architect Allen of Hurtwood, who brought the concept of the adventure playground to the UK, asserted that the violence of the youth was a reaction towards the impossibility of creating meaningful experiences and a dull way of being treated.
To get to know the world empirically, by experimenting with different materials could give them a sense of togetherness, therefore of meaning, that otherwise was being lost.

According to Baudelaire, the will to destroy the toy, is for the child the will to find its the soul, get at the core of things.

Communitas & societas
The anger of the kids growing up during WWII, was interpreted by various intellectuals as a demonstration of specific political actions.
Huizinga saw this destroying as an action against capitalist accumulation, philosopher Walter Benjamin as a communist way of living, erasing the capitalist division of work.
Exponents of Marxist groups could see their political views come true in the adventure playground where the formation of human bonds were grounded in autonomy, rather than authority.

From the story of the junk-playground I got interested in the ideal represented by the anarchist thought and decided to find some definitions that would make sense for me. Because of its variety and the specific imagery and slogans used by spaces that support this view, I think that the anarchist thought can be often misunderstood or overlooked.
According to Bauman, the general view on anarchy is still permeated with the rather romantic anti-state thought of the 19th century, a time when this idea of government was still new.
Anarchists criticized it because of its gradual taking over of those parts of communal living that were earlier left to self organization, resolving problems with people from the direct surrounding.
They wished for a world with no central government, trusting the natural ability of men to self organize and care for each other. Bauman sees this as rather cosy and nostalgic.

When talking about moral economy, as the grey area of the market that consists of mutual help between family members, friends, neighbours, acquaintances, he introduces, instead, the concept of *communitas*, developed by anthropologist Victor Turner, who studied rituals as a form of social change.

Bauman takes into consideration two aspects of human aggregation: one being spontaneous and unorganized, *communitas*, and the other one hierarchic and structured, *societas*. Neither of the two is even imaginable without the other. The social voids left by structural organization, can be filled only by creativity. When comfort is denied, to rely on creativity means to rely on the ability to think and the inclination to rebel.[4] It is the ability to live with risk and uncertainty, which creates *communitas* inside of the *societas*. More an ever returning force in history rather than a fixed system of beliefs, Rudolf Rocker considers anarchy as the strive to reach an individual's freedom, which is not an abstract concept but an actual possibility for each person to develop his own capacities.

At least I can walk

Wandering alone in unknown cities can be a way to feel more connected and affected by the surroundings. Most of certainties and routines are left home, somewhere far. A more attentive observation takes place. The wanderer is in the fabric of place, sensing differences in texture, sound, colour. To get lost was considered in ancient tribes as process of growing up, which happened in the forest, the desert, places

4 Bakunin's words are cited in the text of Bauman.

where another state of consciousness would be reached. But how to get lost in a world where you always know where you are? When an ever available blue arrow guides the blue spot which is you, can you still choose to forget about time? Especially when the nomad becomes tourist, the art of wandering transforms into the science of knowing where to go.

What does a Homo Ludens do? Does he-she go for massages? Plays volleyball? Drinks coffee?
Here, I want to consider exploring as a form of playing.
The way one relates to territory, wheter it be the city, the neighbourhood, the house, etc, is also shaping one's sense of identity.
I will introduce you to a story from a very well known book.

In the Genesis, life on Earth starts with the division of the two sexes, Adam and Eve, and continues right after with the division of labour and therefore space with Cain and Abel. The etymology of their names represents the separation between nomadic and sedentary life. Abel, from the Hebrew *hebel*, which means vapour, breath; Cain from the verb *kanah*, to acquire, get, own properties.
Cain is owning land, modifying the landscape for his own purposes, he is devoted to agriculture. Abel is pledged to pastoralism, on the contrary, forming non-material relations with creatures and land.
The dicotomy between sedentary and nomadic life, relies also in the division of time.
While Cain has to actively work on the fields the whole day, Abel brings the flock to the land, which gives him much more free time to wander, explore, therefore, to play. He is the Homo Ludens.

Eventually, accused of trespassing, Abel is killed by Cain, who is then condemned by God to a life of wandering. The settler is forced to be a nomad.

From the beginning, man lived in two opposite ways of experiencing space: in caves, carving into landscape, and in tents, without leaving lasting traces. Space of staying and space of going.

In certain art practices exploring becomes an inspiration and tool for creation, looking for methods to transcend the already-known.

Movements from the historic avant-gards were the first to aknowledge walk as an artistic practice.

In Paris in 1921 members of the Dada movement organized the first anti-walk. At a time when the Futurists wanted to represent motion, Dadaists wanted to realize the practice of motion. The advent of the steam engine made artists reflect and wonder about speed. Dadaists slowed down. Concerned with the problematics of growing tourism and therefore of the identity of the city their walks were a way to react upon this issue. Instead of embracing the glamour of tourism and the enthusiam for new technologies, they celebrated banality. The aftermath of World War I marked, according to them, an age without meaning and their will to rebel towards a world which had allowed such horror to happen, took shape between other forms, with the anti-walk, as a form of anti-art. Walking does not leave any material traces for the art market to hold on, all that is left is some pictures and flyers for the events, but no material work of art in the way it used to be understood at the time.

Artists started to go for trips of a few days or weeks where they would wander and explore areas considerd banal or chosen at random. Exploring became their tool for creation.

The Surrealists, willing to find something behind the nihilism of Dada started to walk in order to achieve dream states. Their Deambulation was referred to as a state of hypnosis, a way to loose control in order to get in touch with the subconscious. Situationists, instead, started to think of the city and its exploration as an actual source of knowledge.

Guy Debord, in 1955, wrote about experimental methods for the observation of certain processes of the random and the predictable in the streets.

The Dérive, through Psychogeography, was the tool of the Situationist International to construct operations based on chance. It implied hitch hiking through the city on strike days to add to the general chaos, going to places chosen at random, finding methods to walk leaving the known routes, being in the same place for a very long time, entering buildings undergoing demolition.

The dreams of the Situationist International were big and based on political unrest, aversion for work and an imminent transformation of time through technological progress.

The Dérive was meant as a practice to protect free time, as unproductive time, from capitalist induced needs.

The city became their territory of unrest through nomadic wandering.

Finding the will to be puzzled, to reconsider what is so normal that it becomes invisible, allows to discover on what kind of ground one's feet are actually standing on.

Don't judge me from my t-shirt

Artist Louise Ashcroft spent a lot of time in shopping malls, where she filmed into stores with a hidden camera, analysing the language and iconography of mass-produced objects and clothing.

Be yourself, everybody else is taken .
Don't judge me from my t-shirt.
Stay fierce.
The great indoors - destination summer.
Somewhere – anywhere.
Immortal.
Why can't all men be like Ken?
Don't overthink.[5]

Seemingling voice the unconscious of the modern consumer, Ashcrofts point to the paradox of playful and ironic slogans willing to express a non-chalance and confidence of being oneself, but printed a hundred of thousand of times alike. Unicorns, present on any kind of gadget and clothing, became not only a symbol of dreamy worlds but also of the increasingly disappearance of many animal species, seemingly predicting a time when only mythological creatures, the ones found in fantasy, will be left.
For an interview published on the blog WeMakeMoneyNotArt, Ashcroft says:
I *think empathising with one another's weaknesses (mine especially) is crucial to making change happen. It's not just for the sake of it either- as artists we have the duty to voice ignored, invisible or repressed truths. Our senses are*

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5 sentences on t-shirts, from onine article, WeMakeMoneyNotArt - http://we-make-money-not-art.com/vegetable-smuggling-grimmy-goods-and-other-retail-sabotages-an-interview-with-louise-ashcroft/ - last modified August, 2017

heightened, we've trained for this – like sniffer dogs it's our job to alert people to unnoticed things and then let them respond to that however they feel.[6]

Her work is about voicing an opinion one can choose to agree with or not, it is about interpretations.
Playing is entering a building with a different purpose in mind, than the one the space it is meant for. The aesthetic experience comes from layering one's reality on top of the existing one, speculating on the meaning of mass-produced objects.

Going Far

The Dark Ecology Journey is a project that took place in 2014-15-16 involving more than 50 artists and curators, going to remote parts of Russia and its surroundings to investigate, sharing lectures, works and performances.
Based on the concept developed by philosopher Timothy Morton, which questions the modern idea of nature and our understanding of ecology, in 2016 the group went to Nikel, a town in the polar circle in West Russia, which used to be a modern industrial area for the extraction, hence the name of the city, of nickel.

6 same source as 5

Now the town is in a condition of semi-abandonment by the central government, which together with the harsh weather conditions and the heavy industrial infrastructures, makes it a quite sad place to go to. The aim of the journey is to deepen the understanding of ecological disaster by visiting specific industrial sites. As Morton explains, to live such a strange experience might feel uncomfortable, but by being there, one is able to laugh and see the normality of it, too. Indeed, in Nikel, even if close to industrial areas there still are houses and playgrounds, people keep living their life. But, *when one is able to laugh, one is able to cry too*, he says. This is how one can anknowledge a trauma can be processed.

Playing with the instruments of Espen Sommer Eide, which spin in the air making vibrations and tones, in a desolated landscape people seemed to reconnect, to know that they have each other. It seems as if attempting to get to a spiritual side, together, maybe reinventing rituals long forgotten, to give sense to things too big to grasp.

Like the problematic youth of the adventure playground, the ones who seek meaningful experiences have a need to touch, build and explore.
But I am still not sure if it is easy to find the line between the art of playing and the science of leisure.

Sometimes I wonder if the exploration of the physical space is not replaced by the exploration of the virtual and if so, would that be bad? The fact that people still need to go to remote parts of the world for their need to experience something, clearly sets the limitations of browsing the web. But clear is also the fact that this virtual territory exists, in the sense that it can be explored, that one can wander in it, can get lost, trapped. One can be sedentary and nomadic at the same time. It can be a territory of unrest. I guess the value of the physical relies in the senses, it might seem obvious, but I think it is being overlooked.

Gamify my life

Huizinga stated that playing permeates every aspect of human life; similarly, the process of gamification can be seen as equally broad. It is hard to make a way through it. Gamification is a design method which applies play to non-playing contexts, through methods which are based on the study of human behaviour (like game theory, brain science and behavioural economics) to increase engagement and productivity, or, making boring tasks enjoyable. This approach results in the creation of videogames meant for learning, scientific and working purposes, as well as in "playful" gadgets and objects.
The term gamification has made its way for some years now, coined in the early 2000, but the concept itself is probably been there forever. When your mum was trying to make you eat vegetables by pretending they were coming by plane and not just in a spoon, you could have had your first gamification experience.

Some enthusiasts believe that this approach has the potential to make a decisive change in the world, finally allowing creativity and play to take over the formerly tedious, increasing the well being of people. Other views are rather critical, questioning how the shifting of work into leisure time and vice versa would affect people, and, in the end, who will actually benefit from it.

More precisely, the term *playbour*, coined by Julian Kuklich defines how work and play, which are usually perceived as strictly distinct, are merging.

Epic

Yu-Kai Chou is a gamification and behavioural designer who developed Octalysis, a method of displaying the motivation for a specific action by dividing it in 8 categories. This makes it is possible to monitor and quantify each of them, so to be able to work on specific aspects of user engagement when developing a platform or a game. To know which triggers to pull.

I think that the Octalysis categories can easily illustrate where any motivation embodied in an action, whether it be in a video game or life itself, comes from.

They consist of: Development and accomplishment, Empowermet of creativity and Feedback, Ownership and Possession, Social pressure and Envy, Scarcity and Impatience, Unpredictability and curiosity, Loss and avoidance, Epic Meaning and Calling.

For example, this last one, almost a mystic vision, stands for the feeling to be part of a bigger plan, a higher vision, which results in passion and commitement. This can be reached through an engaging narrative (who doesn't like to follow a good story?), a good cause (who doesn't want to contribute to

make the world a better place?), or elitism (who doesn't want to be part of the "good" ones?).

It is remarkable that someone spends so much time on trying to understand how and why people will engage with certain pruducts or games. It seems that being aware of one's own reactions is fundamental in order to keep track of how one is being guided.

One example i got for myself is that of Gabe Zichermann who sees gamification as the tool for a new social and democratic creativity. Making games for learning purposes would mean to increase to amount of people that have access to creative psoftwares, therefore an increase of new ideas. The process of challenge-achievement repeated over and over again stimulates the production of dopamine which is what engages the player with the game. Failure and perseverance are fundamental for learning even if in learning and working institutions it is little accepted to fail. Making the examaples of Eterna and Phylo, video games based on DNA structures which allowed players to solve actual scientific problems, he asserts the importance of video games and postulated that a new creativity would come by embracing this connection with technology in the same way kids do. Zichermann wanders if, instead of diagnosing them with ADHD, it's our times that are just too slow for kids. Highlighting how the ability to multitask actually increases grey matter in the brain, a bit like juggling does, to be able to synchronize different attention points leads to an increase in fluid intelligence, which is the ability to problem-solve.
The way this men spoke, almost convinced me to start playing video games again, which is not a medium I totally despise. Though, I am amazed how the power of words can convince

people to accept facts of which one has no knowledge about. I don't know if video games actually increase grey matter, or how ADHD actually works, though triggered by Epic Meaning and Calling, I found myself positive about how video games could actually change society for the better. We are made for playing, so why not embrace it.

Maybe we need to become smarter and quicker, to solve everything that needs to be fixed in the world.

Dear Google

To think about playing means to think about leisure. To think about leisure one has to think about work. The rather naive expectation that nobody would need to work thanks to the increasingly rapid advancement of technology, which came about in the 50s with the first household electrical appliances, is still relevant now. When automation is widely considered to be progressing until the point it will take over the greater part of the existing jobs and Universal Basic Income is starting in the form of short term experiments in different parts of the world, questions arise concerning the future of work and free time.

When gamification enters the world of work, it can be used for example, by companies as an ice-braking method for social happenings, or as a video game that simplifies certain jobs, but also in ways that are not yet defined.

If playing, in the context of productivity, is wasted time, playbour manages to recycle this waste by transforming play into work. Gamification allows capitalism to get rid of alienation, to expand the exploitation of work time to the field of leisure time. Play is appropriated into the process of production. Especially the web becomes the engine for exploitation as Facebook has workified social interaction for

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1 wikipedia, sabato fascista. source: altratecnica.it, 1930, unknown author
2 website, http://www.lollardstplay.org.uk/history/

the purposes of marketing.

Let's remember that *ideology is embodied in utility*.[7]

The head quarters of Google, in Mountain View, offer an idyllic working space offering on the same area of the office building also caffees, swimming-pools, volleyball fields, free laundry rooms, bikes, access to a public park, a massage service, nap-rooms, buffet at every meal.
In the green areas, statues represent the green robot symbol of the Android systems, like modern monuments of national heroes.
The office as micro-cosmos, where everything needed is available, kindly invites to just stay. The office as a touristic attraction, gives a status to be proud of.

At Google different roles are represented by a batch one has to wear: white for full time workers, red for contractors, green for interns.
A. N. Wilson, was a worker at the Googleplex, fired for reasons related to the shooting of a video, which is still available on Youtube. He started to film some workers which he never noticed before, discovering that they would not have access to any of the google privileges.
It is generally known how the giants of technology are

7 Slavoj Zizek – The Plague of Fantasies

ambiguous in many different ways, the question is: how exactly?

The *societas*, leaves space for the *communitas* in the form of privilege.

When being comforted by the routine of leisure, it is hard and maybe even senseless to get the inclination to rebel.

Despising death

The organization of free time by specific organizations is not a very unique idea.

This is what the religious institution standed for in the past and still today. People need to gather and feel connected to each other through the shared idea-belief which the institution represents.

Here the words of Huizinga: "*Mutually withdrawing from the rest of the world and rejecting the usual norms, retains its magic beyond the duration of the individual game*"

Playing is feeling to be apart together, a bit like going to the Sunday mass or to the club. The Epic Meaning trigger can be pulled by creating dynamics of togetherness and a system of shared beliefs.

During Fascism, in Italy, free time of workers was organised by entities like the OND, Opera Nazionale del Dopolavoro (National After-work Institution). The Fascist Saturday27, established in 1935, would start after work, at 13 o'clock, with paramilitary exercises and regularly organized sport competitions and excursions. One Sunday in a month would be kept free. The whole of society from toddlers to adults, was then already categorized by age and gender.

Established in 1926, the Opera Nazionale Balilla was a youth

organization for kids from 8 to 18 years old, divided again for males into Balilla and Avanguardisti, and Piccole Italiane and Giovani Italiane, for girls.
In 1927 all the non-fascist youth organizations were dismantled.

In dictatorial regimes there is certainly more attention paid to free time, which is needed to shape a society that gives consent. At least this society looks more united.
Growing up in Italy a common argument in favour of the twenty years of Fascist regime is that "*also good things were being done.*"
 The easiness of certain assertions always left me quite confused.
"Si stava meglio quando si stava peggio",or, "we were doing better when it was going bad", is a saying that refers to the 20 years of regime.
During that time, as well, many slogans were used to boost self-confidence and sense of membership.

Me ne frego - I don't give a damn.
Siam fatti così! - This is the way we are!
Meglio lottare insieme che morire da soli - it's better to fight together than to die alone.
Beffo la morte e grigno - I get the better of death and I sneer.[8]

Like the sentences on mass-produced fashion, these mottos are effective and try to represent a non-chalance and lightness of being, who everybody can identify with and aim for.

Systems of beliefs which refuse the fear of death, could be

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8 Website, http://www.ilduce.net/motti.htm, accessed January 9, 2018

Systems of beliefs which refuse the fear of death, could be

said to be systems that celebrate playing and joy of life.

I am not sure though, if I can trust any Homo Ludens.

BUT IN THE END

"The play impulse does not aim at playing 'with' something; rather it is the play of life itself, beyond want and external compulsion - the manifestation of an existence without fear and anxiety, and thus the manifestation of freedom itself." [9]

To play is to have the courage of approaching things that are not understandable yet, or uncomfortable.
Players are also dreamers, indeed sometimes they loose at the game of reality.
Playing could be the manifestation of freedom but I am afraid things are more complicated than this.

An existence without fear of death can also mean to go straight into violence and war. Homo Ludens can be madmen, too.
Instead, I would like to mention Ditto, the Pokémon who is able to change his appearance into whatever it wants. Like this pink blob, one needs to be constantly in transition and transformation, being shaped to whatever is the subject or situation laying in front.
Observing it.

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9 Online article, Herbert Marcuse is quoted in Cyborgology, https://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2012/10/15/gamification-playbor-exploitation-2/

Not really transforming into it, but taking it in.
To sharpen one's sensitivity.

"*The intuitions, not the tissue of logic connecting them, are what tend to survive in the field of experience.* "[10]

9 - Online article, New World Encyclopedia, quoting Victor Turner, http://www.new-worldencyclopedia.org/entry/Victor_Turner

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