

GAMES AND INSURGENCIES:

TOWARDS AGONISTIC PARTICIPATION
IN THE PRODUCTION OF SPACE

JOGOS E INSURGÊNCIAS:

POR UMA PARTICIPAÇÃO AGONÍSTICA NA PRODUÇÃO DO ESPAÇO

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ABSTRACT: *By relating games and insurgencies, the intention of this article is to establish a conceptual basis for proposing agonistic participatory tools, with the aim of recovering the emancipatory sense of social participation when producing city space. Through post-political theory and post-democratic criticism we will argue that the institutionalization of participatory processes stands in contradiction to emancipatory ideals, which provide support for social participation as a tool for promoting spatial justice. The concept of open game as formulated by Vilén Flusser will be adopted as a critical, theoretical tool so as to envisage participatory processes that accommodate dissent. Within this context, we will present three game experiences, all of which concern spatial issues. Games, understood as agency, enable insurgent imagery for the city to emerge, facilitate translations and coexistence, and encourage the occupation of public spaces as a possibility for recovering the public sphere.*

KEYWORDS: *dissension; social participation; insurgencies; open game; social emancipation; agonistic participation.*

When attempting to relate games and the production of space, what initially appears most striking is the close relationship that exists between games and insurgencies. Reflection on the beginnings of the modern city permits us to observe the effects brought about by consolidating the manner in which leisure space has been produced. The regulation of free time, understood as a necessary condition for the reproduction of the labour force, encounters its spatial equivalent in the production of specialized spaces for recreational sport or tourism, and thus the consequent abandonment of the streets as a terrain for exchanges and games. Attempts to reapproximate games and public spaces, in their various manifestations, take on political overtones, which invariably point to the emergence of another spatial imagery. During the 1960s, the counter culture movements on the one hand, and critical theory on the other, both reported that leisure and imagination had been taken capture by an ideology that aimed to create the need to consume. Artistic contestatory movements, such as the Fluxus movement, simulated critical alternatives to the modes of production, the economic system and the consumer society. The Situationist International regarded the city as open country for playful imagination, an extended playground that summoned the political appropriation

of the street. Despite current thinking regarding the insurgent actions of these movements, the objective of this study is not to analyse such practices in depth. The intention of introducing them as introductory examples is merely to place them at the intersection between games and public space, where imagery emerges and points towards other possibilities of appropriating, using and enjoying city spaces. By linking games and insurgencies, the intention of this article is to establish a conceptual basis for proposing games as agonistic participatory tools. The creation of a public sphere, extended by the use of games, aims to contribute to constructing a sense of emancipation for social participation, in that it proposes a democratic approximation between formal levels of government and popular mobilization.

POPULAR MOBILIZATION AND PARTICIPATION: THE POLITICAL

In recent years we have witnessed an explosion in the number of popular protests within cities and social contexts as distinct and diffuse as the causes and demands behind the insurgent movements. The global scale of this heterogeneous scenario is also reproduced on a local scale where very often, cries for specific demands are amplified by the polyphony of so many other discontented voices from within other contexts. However, it is not our intention herein to provide an inventory of the various agendas and claims that have fuelled recent popular conflicts and uprisings. Nonetheless, the occupation of streets, squares and public spaces may be interpreted as an attempt to reappropriate the public sphere and a growing demand to create spaces in a political manner. In this sense, popular mobilization, whether insurgent or not, may be interpreted as an important forum for political participation as well as a demand for more openness within the channels of institutional participation regarding decisions on issues of commonwealth¹.

Historically, the opening of institutional channels to permit popular participation is understood as an important conquest for social movements. In Brazil, although the City Statute² denoted a significant democratic legal advance regarding regulatory instruments for permitting popular participation, and therefore a more democratic use of space, it has failed to achieve the emancipatory promise that dominated the discourse throughout the struggle that culminated in its preparation.

From an institutional viewpoint, participation is called upon to fulfil a corrective role in the face of social inequalities, in that it presupposes the democratization of urban management as a means to promote spatial justice. However, the argument that we intend to develop, in the light of post-political theory (LACLAU; MOUFFE, 1987; MOUFFE, 2005a; 2005b) and post-democratic criticism (RANCIÈRE, 1996a; 1996b; 2001), is that the institutionalization of participation, associated with the absence of an emancipatory political project, becomes susceptible to being captured by the dispositif of power, and as a result, fuel reproduction of the same dominating structures, which they imagine they are battling against.

Jacques Rancière characterizes post-democracy as a process of depoliticisation, an erosion of democracy and a reduction of the public sphere due to the consensual arrangements that align politics to neoliberal interests. The instrumentalization

¹ With regard to the relationship of antithesis and complementarity between direct action and institutional struggle see Souza (2012).

² The Federal Law that regulates the chapter on urban policies in the 1988 Federal Constitution.

of democratic discourse operates as a manner with which to suppress any dissent in assuming an alleged equality of discussion between parties with unequal representation in the socio-political hierarchy. For Rancière (1996b), dissension should not be understood simply as the appreciation of difference and conflict, dissent, while questioning the established order, represents politics itself, and as such, is directly involved in the constitution of political subjects.

The approximation of politics and dissent in Rancière's thinking is clarified within the distinction between politics and police. He states that with post-democratic consensual political arrangements, politics is reduced to policing (police), i.e. to consensual management of the form of governing. Besides quotidian management, the police are also responsible for regulating the distribution of the sensible, in that they identify what is commonly shared and which parts should remain exclusive. They authorize participation and establish separation. Thus, the police annul true politics by previously establishing what should be shared. Politics, on the other hand, finds its constitutive role in the contingency of dissensus that manifests itself in antagonism and in questioning the existing order. The formative processes of political subjects come about by refusing the distribution, as implemented by the police.

By thus extending the concept of police, I propose to restrict that of politics. I propose to reserve the term politics for all activities that come to disturb police order through registering the presupposition that it is entirely heterogeneous. This presupposes the equality of every speaking being with every other speaking being. (RANCIÈRE, 1996b, p. 372).

The use of the term police, designated as the institutionalized practice of politics, retrieves Foucault's contribution, which associated the police to what today is understood as internal policy. Foucault (2008) refers to the police as a government device that emerged in the seventeenth century, and which brings about changes in the power structures of the sovereign state towards a set of techniques to control the population, characterized as biopower.

Thamy Pogrebinschi (2009) identifies, also in the work of Marx, a difference between 'politics' and 'the political' as two distinct instances of power. For Marx this separation came about through the contradiction between state and society, which is established "from the idea of a modern state that has been definitively separated from civil society since the French Revolution." (POGREBINSCHI, 2009, p. 17, author's translation). Within this understanding, what separates politics from the political is the figure of the state. Therefore, in Marx, 'the political' is a future, an ideal society that should be attained by overcoming the antagonism between state and society, in the ultimate instance, a withering away of the state. For Marx, "While politics describes how things are in the modern state, political prescribes how things should be after its withering away" (POGREBINSCHI, 2009, p. 25, author's translation). With regard to this aspect, Rancière extrapolates Marxian thought by recalling that antagonism, i.e., "Class war is not 'beneath' the political, it is not the reality of division and struggle that will repudiate the false purity of politics. Class war, the controversial statement as an entirety of that which is nothing, is politics itself." (RANCIÈRE, 1996b, p. 371, author's translation).

The distinction between politics and the political is also an important aspect in characterizing post-politics. Very much like Rancière, Chantal Mouffe (2005a)

believes that power is not the external relationship of two previously established identities, but rather a constituent part of them. Within the contingency of pluralistic antagonism, Mouffe identifies the constituent power of the political. In contrast, politics would be characterized by a set of practices and discourses that seek, on an institutional level, to establish a certain order and organize human coexistence (MOUFFE 2005a).

On one hand, what this distinction highlights is that the political is not limited to a particular place within society and is not limited to specific institutions, but is a constitutive dimension of social order itself. It reveals that this order is the product of a relationship of power and is always contingent because it is intersected by antagonisms. (ERREJON; MOUFE, 2015, p. 31, author's translation).

Mouffe focuses on the question of democracy in an attempt to accommodate the conflictual dimension of antagonism in politics. "With the intention of being accepted as legitimate, conflict needs to adopt a form that does not destroy political association" (MOUFFE, 2005b, p. 20). Thus, Mouffe proposes facing the antagonism that exists in social relationships as a form of agonism. For such a change to take place, it is necessary to stop viewing opposition as an enemy, but begin to consider it as an adversary. Recognizing the opponent and knowing their point of view allows room for negotiation, and for the establishment of mutual commitments, even if the potential conflict has not ceased to exist. Therefore, transforming antagonism into agonism is not about overcoming antagonism, as projected by Marx. For Mouffe, it is antagonism that defines and forms political subjectivities. Before anything else, the proposal of an agonistic model of democracy is the effort to convert antagonism, so as to also enable its existence in institutional order.

If for Marx the emancipatory horizon is represented by overcoming the antagonism associated with the idea of overcoming the state, a century and a half after, instead of withering away, what we witnessed in the last quarter of the twentieth century was the dismantling of the welfare state. In a recent interview, Mouffe recalled the context of 1985, when in partnership with Ernesto Laclau, he presented a proposal for the radicalization of democracy, with the publication of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*. "In 1985 we said 'it was necessary to radicalize democracy', now it is up to us to recover democracy first and then radicalize it; the task is much more difficult. There has been a clear setback" (ERREJON; MOUFE, 2015, p. 18, author's translation). Laclau and Mouffe (1987) also updated Marxian literature by proposing to extend the binary concept of social class to the multiplicity of identities represented by social movements (of race, gender, ethnicity, etc.). The idea of a pluralistic radical democracy, which they defended, corresponded to the use of the agonistic model in the formation of collective identities.

Resuming the previous argument that popular mobilization and institutionalized participation are both important participatory instances, it is possible to identify structural differences between them, which instead of uniting them under a common goal, they in fact differ, due to their emancipatory characters. Participatory public policies, as institutional agents fall under the domain of politics (or police, as Rancière would prefer). Social mobilization, either in the form of direct action or insurgent

demonstrations, represents the essence of the political constituent processes emerging from antagonism.

Contributing to the debate on social participation in the production of space, this study intends to expand its discursive context beyond the dichotomy between the two participatory arenas identified above. For a better understanding of this argument, we propose to deploy these two participatory bodies in an analytical classification that divides them into three distinct arenas.

The first arena would be: (1) institutionalized participation, which may be accessed through participatory public policies, which we have identified previously as a practice located in the sphere of politics. The second and third arenas concern the political sphere, the popular mobilization. In this instance we highlight: (2) direct participation in the production of space, and also (3) participation in the public sphere. Examples of direct participation in the production of space are initiatives involving collaborative projects and self-build processes promoted by collective task forces or other types of cooperation. Existing studies on participatory processes in the field of architecture and urban planning alternate between those that discuss instances of direct participation (2), and others regarding institutional participatory policies (1), in this case, the first two items of the triad proposed herein. By including the concept of the public sphere (3) as an analytical category to complement the previous two instances, we not only seek to provide support for the argument that follows, but also to organise the three proposed items dialectically. This is intended to be a rapprochement between the spheres of politics and the political. It is therefore in the middle arena between social mobilization and formal levels of government that we would like to introduce the game as an agonistic participatory tool. Mouffe's conceptual framework for the agonistic model operates at the intersection between the spheres of politics and the political, "while recognizing the inherent social antagonisms and allowing expression in institutional or other forms of organization" (SWYNGEDOUW, 2011, p. 5). The formation of a public sphere of extended discussion through the use of games is intended to contribute to the construction of an emancipatory project for participation, marked by the approximation of formal government instances and popular mobilization.

PARTICIPATION: BLACK BOX OR OPEN GAME?

The philosopher Vilém Flusser developed the concepts of the black box (1985) and open game (n.d.) as conceptual structures with the intention of "contributing towards a philosophical dialogue on the apparatus through which the present moment is living" (FLUSSER, 1985, p. 4, author's translation). The black box concept will be compared to the idea of open game in order to characterize the "apparatus" of the current participatory public policies.

Taking the theme of photography as a pretext, Flusser characterised the black box as an apparatus for which, in order to interact, it is not necessary to know how it works, it is only necessary to know how to trigger it. The nature of the black box may be understood as a coming together of secret knowledge, accessible only to its developers. The apparatus is responsible for taking decisions that have been pre-programmed. Given the black box, free will is an illusion that follows prior

determination. It is only permitted to want what the program³ allows us to want (FLUSSER, 1985).

Understanding social participation, limited only to the instances of formal politics, tends to reduce it to a big black box. The institutionalization of participatory practices takes the responsibility of social mobilization for itself, and thus tends to eliminate the antagonism between state and civil society, present in the protest movements. Thus, the political dimension is eliminated, and it therefore becomes an instrument favouring the reproduction of hegemonic order. For Gramsci, hegemony is a kind of ideological domination in which elites attempt to identify the interests of society, and thus promote consensus around their own interests. Institutional participation, as a black box serving neoliberal interests, reaffirms the distribution practices operated by the police, restricts emergency possibilities of other forms of imagery for the city, and hence limits emancipatory power towards transforming society.

Emancipation in the context of urban planning refers to the ability of the agents to become aware of their role in the reproduction of social practices and mechanisms of empowerment, which enable them to bring about transformations. Therefore, communicative/collaborative planning supports social participation as the main tool for promoting spatial justice. However, opening communicative channels between state and society alone is no guarantee of transformation. It is necessary to question the working structure of the black box in order to identify the mechanisms that limits democratic participation.

Criticism of collaborative communicative planning identifies in the deliberative structure of participatory channels, the main obstacle for achieving democracy. Communicative rationality, based on Jürgen Habermas' theory of communicative action, assumes that in a full democracy, political decisions must be reached through a process of deliberation amongst equal and free citizens. However, if the need for participatory politics responds precisely to a demand for equal conditions, the main paradox of participation is identified in the deliberative structure. Marcelo Lopes de Souza argues that "the very existence of profound inequalities makes the practice of communicative action difficult. Communicative action may contribute to achieving greater autonomy, but at the same time, a certain degree of individual and collective autonomy is a prerequisite for communicative action" (SOUZA, 2013, p. 150, author's translation).

By taking communicative reason as a program, the black box tends to hide the exclusionary aspects of participatory politics, and creates an illusion of consensus that instrumentalizes participation as a way of legitimizing the pre-programmed decision to allow only certain choices, usually those authorized by the state and committed to maintaining hegemonic order. In his own manner, Rancière also condemned the exclusion operated by communicative reason, attributing to this the effect of disqualifying those who are not allowed to participate in the deliberative structure that guides our idea of democracy. "The ones we refuse to take into account in the political community, we first refuse to listen to as a speaking being. We only hear noise in what they say" (RANCIÈRE, 1996b, p. 373, author's translation).

As an antithesis to the black box concept, in the work of Flusser we encounter the concept of open game. Although the idea of open game is apparently opposed to the black box, we do not intend to treat them as opposites within an exclusionary

³ The concept of the programme is a recurring idea in Flusser's philosophy. This may be conferred in (FLUSSER, 1983)

logic, but rather as complementary possibilities. Flusser considers an open game as that in which the repertoire of thoughts can be increased and its structure can be modified. In the open game all possible combinations within the structure of the game never run out. The game may always expand its repertoire. “Open games enable the repertoire to increase or decrease, and structural change [...] repertoires are increased by processing noise into game elements” (FLUSSER, n.d., p. 3).

Given the emancipatory perspective, the open game as a conceptual guideline suggests a participatory model free of normative structures and institutional limits. Participation as an open game enables democratic realization, in that it transforms “noise” into elements of game. A participatory structure open to noise is also a structure open to dissesus. The dissesual character of participation occurs more easily in participatory arenas (2) and (3) of the triad proposed above (direct participation and participation in the public sphere, respectively). However there remains a challenge to encounter the agonistic fissure in the arena of institutional participation (1) that allows participatory models of popular mobilization to approach it. Without ignoring the restrictive limitations of institutional participation, we understand that this can hardly fail to be a black box. The manner with which to deal with the black box more democratically would be to increase the number of programs that operate within it. Dissesus, as a formative process of political subjects enable programmers to operate in the fissure of the black box.

Therefore, by introducing some experiences with games to this reflection, we intend to approximate black box and open game. It is hoped that the games will contribute towards expanding the public sphere, enabling agonistic translations between politics and the political as a project for the democratic expansion of the arenas of social participation.

GAMES AND THEIR AGENCIES

For Huizinga (2000), one of the characteristics of games in general is that they “are not everyday life or real life. Instead, they are an escape from real life into a temporary sphere of activity that has its own orientation” (HUIZINGA, 2000, p. 11). Given the virtual nature of the games, we associate the ‘escape from real life’ mentioned by Huizinga, with the virtualization scheme proposed by Pierre Levy (1996). In this scheme, games can be seen as a displacement from real problems onto a virtual platform. According to Levy, the displacement from the actual (real) to the virtual represents the inventive return of a given solution to its problematization. Therefore, the virtualization of spatial questions through the game causes the displacement of real problems onto a platform where collective problematization and even agonistic socio-spatial questions become possible. Also, according to Levy, the opposite movement, the return from virtual to actual/real “brings out other functions, triggers conflicts, unlocks situations and introduces a new dynamic of collaboration” (LEVY, 1996, p. 6, author’s translation).

Below, we present some examples of games, no longer as Flusserian metaphors, these are empirical experiences of participatory games that operate in arenas of social mobilization. As an analytical framework, in each of the games we seek to identify the participatory arena into which it is inserted, its skills as agency as

well as its dissensual character. As agency, the games fulfil at the same time the role of social mobilizer, facilitate discussion between stakeholders and enable the emergence of other spatial imagery. The games also account for the democratization of spatial knowledge far beyond the limits of communicative rationality due to the fact that in games the exchange of knowledge takes place by means of experience rather than discourse. As a dissensual practice, the act of playing establishes the democratic principle of equality between stakeholders as a condition for dialogue. In games, the political subjects are constituted, to the extent that they question the hegemonic spatial order. Through dissensus, games are transformed into a political act. Another important concept to be identified in the presented games, is related to their metagames. In his reflection on open games, Flusser (n.d., p. 3) introduces the concept of the metagame, in which he establishes that “games occur inside games”, and that “every game opens a competence for its metagame.” The perspective of the metagame extends the action of the game beyond the repertoire and duration of each game. The metagame refers to the strategic and prospective dimensions of each game. The ‘game behind the game’ reveals its previous context, while the competences opened to the metagame indicate possibilities for the future.

INSURGENT IMAGERIES FOR THE CITY: THE ATHENS GAME

The Athens Game was designed to be played between a group of adolescents living in a place called *Aglomerado Santa Lúcia* and a group of students involved in an extended university project based in the same location. *Aglomerado Santa Lúcia* is a complex composed of four *favelas* in the south central region of the city of Belo Horizonte. Currently, this area is undergoing a process of urban restructuring, financed by resources from the federal government’s program known as *PAC* (Accelerated Growth Plan). Interventions brought about by the program have caused a great social impact by generating a sense of insecurity with regards to the near future. Actions have included a series of removals in order to carry out the infrastructure projects, as well as imposing another spatial order.

Within this context of spatial uncertainty, the development and implementation of the game responded to the invitation by an educator who worked in a social services program aimed at the young of *Aglomerado*. The aim of the invitation was to introduce some kind of support for the young people on the program to help them formulate and discuss space issues that families and residents on the *Aglomerado* were experiencing. In this case, the specific aim behind applying the game was not in itself to solve the conflict, especially since the target group came from an age range that was not involved in the negotiations between planners and the community. However, the young people were experiencing along with their families and neighbours, the violent removals and consequent fraying of social relations promoted by the imposition of a new spatial order. The Athens Game was developed in order to provide the young people with some vocabulary concerning questions of space, and to develop their critical awareness so as to question the solutions and ready-made formulas that were being imposed on the community by the restructuring program. Consequently, regarding the participatory aspects listed in the first section of this study, we would situate the experience of the Athens Game in the participation field of the public sphere. The game fulfils the role of expanding the debating arena on

issues concerning the city, including a significant number of citizens who, despite being those most affected by the decisions of urban planning, until that moment had not been considered by the “speaking community”.

The game is part of Le Corbusier’s proposition in *The Athens Charter* (1933), which separated the functions of the city into residential, leisure, work and circulation zones. The argument of the game would be the deconstruction of the ordered separation of the city’s functions, blurring the limits between them and making the use of space more flexible. This game structure sought to reproduce the tension between the formal logic adopted by the *Vila Viva* programme and the informality of the manner with which to occupy and produce space inside the *favela*. Each of the functions (housing, leisure, work, and circulation) was associated with a colour and represented by a team of players. For each of the colours/functions, a group of cards was prepared associated with everyday activities and situations related to the four functions. The game unravelled on top of a large piece of white cardboard that fulfilled the role of a board. During each round, groups selected a card from one of the colours as long as it was not their own colour. Through the use of drawings and collages, groups would represent solutions responding to the combination of the action that had been drawn (on the card) and the corresponding function of their group. For the structure of the game, the actions available on the cards of the other three colours never coincide with an action that traditionally corresponds to the function represented by its group. Thus, some of the possible combinations were, for example: a space in which to play ball in one of the circulation structures (a street to play ball or a basketball hoop at the bus stop); mixed spaces of trade and housing (houses were represented with bars and shops on the front, or houses with signs for manicure/pedicure); a space to study in the park, or a space to rest in the supermarket.

The proposals made possible by the game represented a counterpoint to the lack of imagination from the formal planning, in which certain actions are often justified by arguing that certain housing standards or organizations of public spaces are either the best or even the only possible solutions. Spatial solutions devised by the players presented a much greater level of complexity than those introduced by the *Vila Viva* programme, and make much more sense of the everyday spatial dynamics of the *favela*.

In its role of agency, the Athens Game enabled the emergence of a possible, coherent spatial imagery, that denaturalizes the logic imposed by the technicians of the *Vila Viva* programme. During the process, the players referred to certain areas that they knew from their own experience, and imagined others in the way they would like it to be. Comments frequently were: “At so-and-so’s house it’s like this” or “like it is on my street.” When the combination was very unusual they would exclaim: “Imagine a street like that!” or questioned: “Is there really a square like that?” While they imagined their spaces, they also shared painful experiences linked to the removals, and the affective losses involved in that process. Thus, they named their problems and built a vocabulary to talk about things that until that point had no name. Another aspect that we were able to assess through the metagame, was the way in which the social barriers between players were overcome. In previous meetings, there had been a distinct climate of hostility on the part of the young residents of the *Aglomerado* towards the presence of the university students. On the day of the game, as soon as the day’s activity was announced, resistance began to give way. Teams were quickly formed, each including participants from both groups.

Within minutes they were calling each other by name and supported one another in completing each of the tasks. The event ended with them arranging a date for their next meeting.

As a possibility for dissent, the Athens Game established a democratic principle of equal speech amongst the participants. Unlike a participative meeting, the game does not require the participants to provide beforehand any prior formulation of their desires for the city they inhabit. It is during the game itself that the opportunity arises to formulate their desires. The game also problematizes the spatial organisation implanted by the order of distribution. It is within this spatial questioning process that the dissensual subjectivities are established. Insurgents in their desires for other spaces.

APPROPRIATION OF PUBLIC SPACES, DENATURALIZATION AND OVERCOMING SOCIAL OBSTACLES: THE *BAIXO BAHIA FUTEBOL SOCIAL*:

The *Baixo Bahia Futebol Social* is a woman's football team formed in 2011 in the city of Belo Horizonte. The proposal of the group was to experience and share street space in a proposal that they defined as "practices of not knowing." "We do not know how to play football well, we don't really know how to do this on the street, we don't really know who we will find to play, but we propose to incorporate our bodies into the city with a rolling ball." (CHAVIER; MIGLIANO, 2013, p. 114, author's translation)

From amongst the three participative arenas, the practices of *Baixo Bahia* should be considered in the public sphere. In addition, this example presents the distinction of being the only one of the three that takes place in the real space of the city.

The action of the group consists of playing football, which always takes place in the public space of cities. The opposing teams are usually formed by regulars from the chosen location. Amongst the most common opponents are those living on the streets or those living in reclaimed areas, not coincidentally, portions of the population to which the right to housing has been denied. Thus, in the event, the matches usually reveal (from the moment of forming the opposing team to actually playing the match) the invisibilities that the hegemonic order strives to hide of the symbolic representation of space. As an agency, the practice of *Baixo Bahia* consists of an action of reification, which reinstates the players onto the agenda of the debate on social policies in the field of housing and of rights to the city.

While dissensus, the gesture/invitation behind the challenge for a football match presupposes a condition of equality between the parties where normally only inequality is perceived. A universe of distribution is established from which a dialogue may develop. In the game, the parties share the same knowledge and interest in football, as well as sharing the same public space. This minimum equilibrium of conditions establishes a channel of dialogue between the players and enables, through the dispute, the possibility of agonistic coexistence, in that it exceeds the antagonisms constituted by the differences of social class.

TRANSLATION AND COEXISTENCE: THE MANZO GAME

The Manzo Ngunzu Kaiango Religious Cult Association is a *quilombo* founded in the 1970s, in the neighbourhood of Santa Efigênia in the city of Belo Horizonte. One of its premises was to restore and preserve Brazilian African culture, such as the Angolan religion *Candomblé*, African chants and *capoeira*. The community was made up of nine families residing on the same grounds as the *terreiro*, which is the worship area of *Candomblé*. In 2011 the site was evacuated due to a decree by the civil defence, which regarded it as being a risk area. So that the community could return to their homes, the City Council of Belo Horizonte undertook some works on the site, which caused a significant change in the *terreiro*. The alterations carried out in the name of “supposed improvement” disregarded any symbolic characteristic of the sacred space of the *terreiro*, which prevented a full resumption of religious and cultural activities on the site. The Manzo game was developed by a group of researchers and architecture students in partnership with the NGO – Architects without Borders Belo Horizonte. If we understand this game as a participatory tool, we should note that amongst the examples presented this is the only one that may be inserted into the arena of direct participation. The game was produced as part of the reconstruction process for the *terreiro*. Later in this analysis, we will also examine the metagame, which in the question of participatory arenas, could be assessed as a form of participation in the public sphere.

The Manzo Game was initially thought of as a translation tool, which could help the team of architects who collaborated with the community to recover the sacred setting of the *terreiro*. The dynamics sought to relate the spatial, symbolic configuration of the *Candomblé* area to the mythical sense associated with each of their deities. It consisted of a unit made up of a board, hand cards and table cards. The board represented the *terreiro* where the sacred spaces needed to be organized. The hand cards corresponded to each of the *orishas*, each with information regarding its origin, its role in the sacred structure of *Candomblé* and its association with the ritual space. In addition to the *orishas* some hand cards were jokers and contained questions on cultural aspects of *Candomblé*. These cards could only be discarded when the player managed to answer the question posed by the card. The table cards were circular in shape and represented the respective rooms and spaces to be organized around the board/worship area. The aim of each player was to use up all the hand cards, which could only be laid on the table when they found the equivalent space on the board. Thus, at each round, if the player could not lay a hand card, he had to take a table card and place it in its respective place on the board. Each time a new space (table card) was placed on the board, more allocation possibilities were open to the *orishas* (hand cards). The winner is the first player who manages to allocate all the *orishas* represented by the cards he/she received.

In its role as agency, the Manzo game helped the residents of the community to share the sacred values of *Candomblé* with the technical team, thus promoting a kind of exchange of complicity that encouraged the sharing of responsibility in reconstructing the *terreiro*. Apart from its initial goal of translation, the game introduced several prospective developments that could be discussed in the field of the metagame. After being played for the first time, the community began to identify other possibilities in the game for their potential use. It was suggested that the game should be used as a

teaching tool for educating children in the community. A further indication was to use the game for the spreading and appreciating religions of African origin.

While no dissensual aspects of the Manzo Game were encountered in the game itself, they were encountered in the narrative behind its production. The game was produced to meet an insurgent demand, which questioned the disregard, by public power, of the political and religious subjectivities in the sensitive reordering of that space. In this example, dissensus is the metagame.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to clarify that, with the virtualization process of reality through the game, we would not necessarily expect a solution to the problem or decision making. The pragmatic expectations that aim to achieve results weaken the games while valid tools in the process of forming subjectivities and expanding the public sphere. The games presented in this study were not guided by criteria of efficiency, nor did they seek to eliminate the spatial conflicts identified in their preparation. It is precisely in the lack of these two objectives that we encounter its emancipatory agency. The rationality of the games, as opposed to the communicative reason, allows access to other imageries, operates translations and performs a reifying function to nominate issues that did not exist as a speaking possibility. In this process, the game incorporates dissent in its structure and transforms 'noise' into an element of the game. The idea that 'every game opens a competence for its metagame' allows the game to be imagined as a forum for discussion that informs participation. Thus, the game understood in this manner, appears as an agonistic translation tool between the spheres of politics and the political and points towards a horizon for constructing an emancipatory project of social participation.

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RESUMO: *Ao relacionar jogos e insurgências, pretende-se estabelecer, neste artigo, as bases conceituais para a proposição de ferramentas participativas agonísticas, com o objetivo de recuperar o sentido emancipatório da participação social na produção do espaço das cidades. Por meio da teoria pós-política e da crítica à pós-democracia, argumenta-se que a institucionalização dos processos participativos é contraditória ao ideal emancipatório que sustenta a participação social como ferramenta para a promoção de maior justiça espacial. O conceito de jogo aberto, formulado por Vilém Flusser, será tomado como ferramenta teórico-crítica para se pensar em processos participativos que*

acomodem o dissenso. Nesse contexto, serão apresentadas três experiências de jogos que abordam questões espaciais. Os jogos, entendidos como agência, possibilitam a emergência de um imaginário insurgente para a cidade, facilitam as traduções e a coexistência e incentivam a ocupação do espaço público como possibilidade de retomada da esfera pública.

PALAVRAS - CHAVE: *dissenso; participação social; insurgências; jogo aberto; emancipação social; participação agonística.*