

# U'Game – a toolkit for urban gaming

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**Abstract.** This paper is about a pervasive game factory based in Palermo. The main issue is to highlight the main features of these productions in generating new interfaces and new access keys to the heritage. The paper describes the point of view of this small society focuses about the connection between real world and world of games using both physical and digital supports. The text focuses on three games produced inside a participatory process arguing the role of urban and pervasive games as a citizenship tool.

**Keywords:** Game Design, Pervasive Games, Participation.

## 1 Introduction, read down to play: Why U'Game exists?

According to the definition of Suits [1], reading this article is a game. Indeed, you are voluntarily deciding to overcome the unnecessary obstacle of this reading. Probably you are intrigued by the title or oppressed by the sense of responsibility that will make you read all the articles in the volume. However, you are a player.

Undoubtedly gaming is assuming a peculiar pervasiveness in the contemporary world. This pervasiveness is due to the concurrence of many factors that are well expressed by Baricco [2] in his recent essay. Here, it is useful to recall at least two of these factors: the first one is technological and concerns the pressure that human beings receive from the mode of operation of the digital world all the extensions of this world are converging towards a common language, a palimpsest. This palimpsest is the game. Consequently, almost all computer products are based on playful mediation, resulting in a metamorphosis. Hence, the metaphor underlying every operating system managing the human-machine interface is one of the most interesting aspects of this metamorphosis. In fact, since the first half of the 80s, human-machine interaction shifted from an interface management system based on commands and strict and univocal syntax (MS-DOS) to a system that represents the metaphor of a real world and based on multiple syntaxes. As a consequence, we have become familiar with the idea that, in addition to the desk on which the computer keyboard lies, there is an additional virtual desk containing folders full of information. In reality, this revolution, conducted largely by Apple, introduced a playful approach into the management of the interface. This approach has been capable to define a behaviour based on experience and training. Therefore, almost every software that inhabits the digital world can be analysed through the 4 categories

identified by Callois [3]: *ilinx*, *agon*, *mimicry*, *alea*. Hence, software can be intended as games. Second, there is another theme which is also important to define the playful pressure we face. Indeed, human civilization makes a constant effort to free itself from work and move closer to play. Thus, progress can be seen as the effort made by humanity to free up time, and time is the fuel of the game: sedentary lifestyle, agriculture, economy, cities, industry are nothing more than tools that enable us to find the time to focus on overcoming the unnecessary obstacles presented by Suits.

The text of Huizinga [4], which is considered the origin of game studies, already acknowledges that the elements characterizing the culture of a civilization arise through processes of ludic elaboration. In fact, if we limit ourselves to considering the game as an action, the entire cultural production can be interpreted as a game: from music to filmic or literary narratives: these elements are games whether we consider them artifacts or experiences. For instance, it is a game both to write a novel and to read it, to compose a song and to listen to it, etc. Accordingly, the fact that the western world is delocalizing most of the material production can be interpreted as we are moving away from us the work while keeping the game of creation. The technological process also proceeds in this direction.

The city is one of the places where this change of context is most clearly perceived. In fact, if we consider the role of cities in history [5], we can understand how the progressive loss of functions related to work occurs. Indeed, cities are losing their importance as places of industrial production, of commerce, of defense. At the same time, they are establishing as places dedicated to the creation, production, and consumption of culture. Furthermore, cities are mechanisms to connect intelligences [6; 7; 8; 9; 10] and produce the narratives that constitute the unnecessary obstacles of games. In this sense, the development of theories and practices to increase the competitiveness of the city with regard to innovation and creativity [11; 12], seems interesting.

It is in this context that U'Game was founded in Palermo in 2015: a company that produces pervasive games. U'Game arises from the need to enrich the urban environment with novel meanings, from the desire to provide new access points to the heritage, and from the awareness of the pervasiveness of gaming in the changing palimpsest of contemporary reality. Since its launch, U'Game has produced more than 20 games which challenged more than 10,000 people to explore different aspects of the city of Palermo.

In this article, we will describe in details the intentions, the context and the outcomes of three games, covering the fields of urban mobility, common goods and interethnic challenges, which were developed through a participatory process promoted by the municipality of Palermo.

## 2 The games and the cities

In this chapter, we will discuss the main productions of U'Game with the aim of clarifying the theoretical and practical approach to the definition of the games. In this way, we can better illustrate the evolution of U'Game's modalities and purposes. First of all, the city is the favourite gaming arena for U'Game, since it is the collective

expression of a people. In fact, the city has no author but is rather the masterpiece emerging from the plurality of citizens, and, in some way, it is alive. This organic view of the city has a long and full-bodied tradition which begins with Geddes [13] and consolidates throughout the course of the 20th century. In this context, the players interpret their particular role and interact both with the stones and with the inhabitants of the city. This happens through a holistic approach that can only be defined in the pleonastic framework of freedom typical of games.

One of the first concept that U'Game "puts into play" is the *genius loci* - the spirit of a place - defined by Norberg-Schulz [14]: accordingly, the *genius loci* is the essence of any existing place and depends heavily on the history of such place. In fact, the spirit of a place is a value that settles over time as a result of continuous and dynamic transformations, and that strongly embodies the identity of the place. This aspect introduces another concept, which concerns the boundaries of places, the limits within which people recognize the identity of a place. To better understand, we can reflect on some concrete examples: where are the boundaries of nightlife in a city? What is the most representative dish of a place? Where is exactly the city center? To the previous questions, there are as many answers as are the citizens of that city. And they are all, in their own way, right. These themes were first introduced by Lynch [15] who, in the book "The image of the city", offers a reading of the city made of landmarks, margins, nodes, neighbourhoods, routes. The intersection between the concept of *genius loci* and the elements of the city proposed by Lynch is the framework within which U'Game designs the games.

Indeed, different issues related to a specific urban identity theme are addressed and developed through the course of the game. An interesting example is U'Game's debut urban game in December 2015 "Artigiani alla Riscossa" which was designed as the end point of Cre.Zi. Food Kit, a project aiming at promoting the artisans of Palermo through storytelling strategies. In the game, U'Game proposed to the players a revisited framework of meaning based on the information gathered during the project. Indeed, while designing "Artigiani alla riscossa", U'Game embraced a twofold approach: on the one hand, it tried to identify which *genius loci* is able to express the artisanal tradition. On the other hand, it questioned the boundaries of these places that embody the identity of craftsmanship in the city of Palermo. Some parts of the game were designed to intercept the spirit of the place, embracing the randomness of interaction as a fundamental element of the experience: for instance, in the "hostage task" the players were supposed to return to the creators some artisanal objects that were previously assigned to them. In this way the participants, guided by chance, were forced to interact with various artisans and with locals while collecting information, exploring unknown parts of the city and pursuing a goal. Other tasks prompted the players to find specific elements in the city. In this case, the interaction was more with the stones than with the people. Finally, some trials pushed the players to convey the contents of the game even outside the circle of participants, interacting directly with the inhabitants.

The second game produced by U'Game has explored a much more popular theme: the street-food. Also, in this case, one of the most interesting challenges was to highlight the relationship between the theme and different places of the city. Indeed, food is a universal content and belongs to everyone's experience: what we eat, how we eat it, when we eat it, where food is produced and consumed, are all aspects that

outline the culture of a place. These elements were the basis on which the game was defined.

Nevertheless, the game that stressed even further the relationship between location and theme was "I predatori dell'Acqua Perduta (Raider of the Lost Water)". This game was organized for the Ecomuseo Urbano Mare Memoria Viva of Palermo and took place in 7 stages along the coastline of the city. Each of the 7 trials gave to the teams the opportunity to collect the water of that specific stretch of coast in a small bottle. At the end of the game, each team was supposed to bring the water from the different "seas" of Palermo back to the ecomuseum. In this way, we pursued two convergent objectives: the players were pushed to reach and touch the sea of Palermo - the relationship between the inhabitants of the city and the sea is a very controversial subject - while reinforcing the role of the ecomuseum as a point of connection and of diffusion of stories related to the sea of Palermo.

The three games presented above, are produced in the form of events. Nevertheless, U'Game has also designed non-episodic games, which do not need an animation. These games are called "adventures" and are conducted by the players independently. In the adventures, the competitive element that pervades the games in the form of events, is rather marginal, for the benefit of a more intimate experience based on narration and storytelling. In this way, it is fundamental for the game to place the players in a coherent framework so that they can play a role.

Based on these principles, U'Game developed several different games that revolve from time to time around specific places and themes. "Le vie del Capo" is a map that offers 10 enigmas that concur to unveil the story of an important dweller of the market. The game is a key to access the knowledge about one of Palermo's historical markets both from an anthropological and social perspective and for what concerns the architectural and urbanistic aspects. Each enigma takes a piece of reality and, through the dynamics of the game, frames it with a different meaning. Moreover, U'Game is developing 5 different games based on the figure of Santa Rosalia, the patron of Palermo. These games will lead to the exploration of several areas related to the story of the Santa. Finally, two other games are about to be released: a game-investigation set at Botanical Garden and a game-map of the city, a sort of recreational guide of Palermo.

### **3 The collapse of reality: World and Hyperworld**

The physical world and the digital world have different rules and generate equally different postures and interactions. Even with many differences from instrument to instrument, the digital world is light, reproducible without loss of information, fast beyond the limits of the imaginable. In many ways, it gets rid of the limitations of the body and proposes a game that takes place in other fields. Indeed, one of the most interesting things in this picture is to observe the effort to create theories around this world, an effort in which the physical world has always tried to pursue the digital world.

In the field of urban planning, these efforts are embodied by Corrado Beguinot who, since 1994, has tried to meet the pace of the digital world and was the animator

of the 1994 Carta di Megaride. To understand the magnitude of the intuition behind the Carta di Megaride, it is important to consider that the web, with its reticular rules, was invented only on December 20, 1990. This means that such a heavy discipline like urban planning, although having to deal by nature with the enormous inertia of the city, had immediately started to question and theorize the mutual influences between the digital world and the real world.

The problem is that the mode of operation of the two worlds is completely different. The alphabets, the grammars, the force of gravity, the possibility of speed, the concept of property are different and this list is endless. The physical world needs a theory to conform to, because it must obey a set of rules that pertain to corporality, like heaviness, slowness, friction. On the contrary, the digital world makes these theories much less useful. Indeed, theories exist to guide the practice, to make fewer mistakes. An example can be useful to understand better: producing an engine is a demanding effort, and the effort to produce two engines is double. So, we need a theory that gives us a reasonable comfort over the construction of the engine.

The digital world does not work like that. There, experience comes first. The digital world is made of tools rather than theories: it starts and ends with the tools. The physical world needs to create theories to bring into its world what is built in the digital world. The lesser need of theories for the digital world and the proliferation of instruments is mainly due to the rules of the physical world. Furthermore, the development of software is soft by definition. Hence, it allows the integration of ingredients with a simplicity and a lightness unknown to the physical world.

The tools through which U'Game proposes a dialogue between the world and the "oltremondo (HyperWorld)" are fetishes: doors that are continuously crossed to switch between the digital world and the physical world. In a sense, U'Game's endpoint is the overturning of the concept of augmented reality, by proposing a path towards augmented virtuality. Thus, the objective of the games is to enrich the digital reality with contents from the physical world.

There is a lot of theory behind all this, which suggests that is not exactly a cutting-edge point of view. However, U'Game is not the only one to go down this path. For instance, Nintendo, with the launch of Nintendo Labo, has taken the same direction, of course with considerably different resources.

The interaction between the physical world and digital information occurs through different levels. The first level is the beginning of the game, the point of engagement. This starting point is assured by structured and distinctive elements in the physical world, common and recognizable objects such as maps and postcards. According to McLuhan, these elements have an important semantic lead: they are media containing only part of the message they carry. Maps orient us in space while postcards take pieces of reality and transfer them to friends and acquaintances as a souvenir. Nonetheless, both instruments have some correspondents in the digital world, which are subject to different rules than physical supports. Finally, when a player starts a game of U'Game he travels in a flash from the analogue world to the digital world. This journey is described with extreme clarity by Baricco [2] in the triad "Calcio Balilla", "Flipper", "Space invader". The physical support is to start the game of rebounds between digital content, physical world, and physical support itself (fetish), which necessarily has a role in the completion of the game.

In conclusion, U'Game designs his games based on three elements - fetish, physical world and digital information - with the objective to provide an experience of interaction between the two universes, which are becoming more and more structured in reality.

## 4 Urban games as a tool for participation

Sustainability needs participation processes: according to the first Aalborg commitment, the governance of innovation processes is strongly connected with the participation of the citizens: indeed, only by raising citizens' awareness it is possible to take the path of sustainability. Furthermore, in more general terms, all the Aalborg commitments state that a sustainable approach can be granted to the development of valuable innovation only through collective and grassroots actions. So participation is a tool for the sustainability.

So every innovation and experimentation in the participatory field can be considered as part of the sustainability debate. One of the most innovative activities carried out by U'Game took place within the Partecip@ttivi project, a participation process, structured through a series of diverse interventions, promoted by the Municipality of Palermo. Within this project, the most innovative activity was the cooperative path, which led to the definition and realization of a number of urban games. While the vagueness of what is put at stake is often an impediment for successful participatory processes, Partecip@ttivi proposed a concrete outcome since the beginning. In fact, with the objective of constructing game scenarios and produce urban games, it was possible to activate an open process for the collection of themes and issues. Therefore, the games produced within Partecip@ttivi bear upon the themes expressed throughout the participation process.

From the experience of the Game Design Laboratories, three important milestones have been achieved: first, it was possible to recognize the values attributed by each participant to the issues dealt with. Second, novel game modes were defined. Third, consequentiality was assured to what discussed in the laboratories through the application to urban games. Furthermore, during the definition of the Partecip@ttivi project, three themes were identified for the game design laboratories:

- Palermo liveable: Improve the liveability of the city
- Increase the participation of citizens in the administrative life of Palermo
- Increase the efficiency of public administration's services to the citizens

Each of the three themes was further explained in order to make it clear to an audience of high school students and to facilitate the translation into game formats. This activity involved the commissioner - the municipality of Palermo - and the entire workforce of Partecip@ttivi.

Sheryl Arnstein [16] formulated a scale that defines different degrees of participation in the relationship between institutions and citizenship. The scale consists of 8 steps that describe a gradually increasing level of participation.

1. Manipulation
2. Therapy

3. Informing
4. Consultation
5. Placation
6. Partnership
7. Delegation
8. Citizens' control

The scale of Arnstein assumes that decision-takers are inadequate to represent the needs of the ones that are called to interact with the consequences of such decisions. This is not always true, and the dimensions that an organization puts into play are crucial for the activation of a participatory process. Nevertheless, it is helpful to consider the Arnstein scale to frame the game design activities within *partecip@ttivi*. Accordingly, the Game Design Laboratories are on the highest steps. This collocation is possible only in the framework of a game: in fact, in the context of Palermo both the public institutions and the citizenship are still not mature enough. Moreover, the three aforesaid objectives for the game design labs belong to different levels of the Arnstein scale: the recognition of values can be intended as a consultation of the participants on the proposed themes and thus it pertains to the fourth step. Then, the second and the third objectives - the elaboration of the game and its concrete implementation - delegate to the citizens the definition of the rules of the game. In this way, it is possible to conduct a serious confrontation and discussion over the theme, identified during *Partecip@ttivi*, in a playful setting. In this sense, the participatory Game Design workshops are collocated on the last two steps of the Arnstein scale, delegation and citizens' control.

As previously stated, such a modality, at present, can only be adequately applied in a framework limited in space and time like a game. There, the participants were expected to elaborate ideas for urban games connected to predetermined themes. Indeed, the objective was not the resolution of a specific problem but rather the promotion of an alternative way for raising citizens' awareness over certain issues. Accordingly, "Palermo vivibile: Improving livability" took upon the theme of sustainable mobility; "Increasing the participation of citizens in the administrative life of Palermo" analysed the theme of cooperation; while "Increasing the efficiency of public administration's services to the citizens" focused on common goods and the related regulation.

Finally, the workshop and every game design actions aimed at overcoming some common participation problems. These tend to be amplified in fragile contexts, for instance, when trust between citizens and public administration is weak.

#### **4.1 It could work! – some methodological issues**

One of the most interesting aspects of Urban Games as a participatory tool is the creation of the games. In this case, we initiated a participatory path with the students of three high schools. Together with the students, we organized three workshops, which involved about 100 young citizens. The structure of the workshops can be described by the following steps:

A frontal communication about what game design is and which interaction mechanisms it triggers;

A frontal communication between students and experts around the specific topics of the workshop;

A series of animated games, prepared in advance by U'Game, to experiment the intersection between the topic of the meeting and game management (this phase took place in groups/teams);

A session in which participants are asked to ideate games based on the examples seen previously (this phase took place in groups/teams);

A plenary session in which each group proposed and discussed the game ideated with the other participants.

Each workshop focused on different themes meaningful for the citizens' community: sustainable mobility in the first workshop, common goods and administration issues in the second one, and cooperation and welcoming city in the third one. At the end of the workshops, 15 games were ideated. Some of them were further employed in the actual design and development of three games which were implemented with the objective of serving the citizens' community: for instance, the mechanisms of the urban game "Bittersweet Mobility", an access game in which the players earn points reaching different locations around the city, were based on one of the games developed by the students during the workshops.

The workshops shared the same three objectives: first, the workshops can be intended as moments of civic education since they raised awareness among the younger generations on the importance of participation. Second, the workshops enabled the exchange of experiences between different audiences: high school students, which are preparing to take part in the administrative life of their community, were accompanied by adults, experts, entrepreneurs and scholars during the entire game design process, which ensured a cross-eyed look over the themes of the workshops. Finally, the workshops were instrumental to the definition of tasks and trials of the game side by side with potential users. Indeed, the games were designed to involve the citizenship on the issues identified in *Partecip@ttivi* and to sensitize the population through the dynamics of the games. In accordance with that, thanks to the students' contribution to the workshops, game designers could base their work on a more multifaceted and pluralist perception over the covered topics.

## **4.2 U'Game Culture in Shipyard – a game on common goods and living culture**

The first game session defined through the Game Design workshops took place from 8 to 11 March on the occasion of "Progetto Palermo laboratorio del Dialogo tra le Culture", as part of Palermo 2018 Capitale Italiana della Cultura. The game was set in the Cantieri Culturali alla Zisa. This location was chosen for the close connection with the two themes of the game, namely "common goods" and "living culture". In fact, for some years now, the Cantieri Culturali gained a central role in the cultural production and fruition of the city. Moreover, the pavilions of the former industrial complex represent a successful case of enhancement of common goods: the complex is an example of public heritage open to the citizens and managed through

partnerships with private non-profit organizations. Through a series of trials based on a scoring system, the participating teams were guided around the several realities that populate the Cantieri Culturali alla Zisa. In the end, the teams with the highest scores received prizes offered by the organizations involved.

The game was an innovative experiment in two aspects: first, it was the result of a co-creation process that involved many of the actors active in the Cantieri Culturali, which realized parts of the game set in their own workspaces. Second, it represented one of the first collaborative experiments between new and old inhabitants of the area. In particular, the organizations involved were: Institut français Palermo, Goethe Institut, Comunità Ellenica Siciliana Trinacria, Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, Centro Internazionale di Fotografia, Spazio Franco, Skenè, Istituto Gramsci Siciliano, Teatro Ditirammu, Verein Düsseldorf Palermo, RESET Comune di Palermo, ARCI Tavola Tonda, Il teatrino, Cre.Zi. PLUS.

During the three days of play, “Cultura in Cantiere” involved 16 teams of players, for a total of 103 participants. In addition, 30 cultural operators - about 2 for each organization involved - managed the various trials during the game. In this sense, about 3000 direct interactions can be counted among players and operators. The purpose of the interactions was to unveil the cultural revolution that the Cantieri Culturali alla Zisa is experiencing in the last years. Furthermore, each organization had the opportunity to show its characteristics, its mood, its services.

In conclusion, the game addressed the theme of “common goods” in relation to the enhancement of an industrial complex, as well as the production of a “living culture”. Furthermore, “Cultura in Cantiere” stood as a model of participation process and as an example to outline a new relationship between administration, citizens and cultural organizations.

### **4.3 U'Game Bittersweet Mobility - a game on urban mobility, Norman Arab heritage, and legality spaces**

The elements of a game in an urban context must be interrelated: they must contribute to telling a story. At the same time, it must be said that the places are the game as much as the games themselves are.

U'Game's mobility game “Mobilità Agrodolce (bittersweet mobility)”, involved dynamics that will be able to explain this statement. Within “Mobilità Agrodolce”, the players had to reach different gates, each one of them provided the participants with a clue: a word referring to places and monuments of Palermo. Thus, the first places - the gates - activate the second level of play. In the second level, the knowledge of the places of the city becomes as important as the ability to access the gates. In this sense, the places become the game.

“Mobilità Agrodolce” was the second game developed through the game design laboratories and took place on March 17 and 18. The game addressed the theme of mobility in relation to the Arab-Norman heritage and the areas of legality and was realized in partnership with the Urbact Interactive Cities project. During the two days of play, the game led the participants to interact with 38 checkpoint locations scattered around the city, including 9 metro stations, 6 points of interest of the Arab-Norman heritage, 4 places representative of legality. The achievement of each

checkpoint gave the right to a score (from 5 to 20 points). The design of the game, the distribution of checkpoints, and the diversification of scores encouraged the use of public transport and soft mobility (walking or cycling). Nevertheless, the game allowed the participants to choose any means of transport to reach the checkpoints. The conclusion of the game implies the discovery of 4 "mysterious places" of the city.

Furthermore, "Mobilità Agrodolce" was an effective tool for collecting data on mobility. In particular, the game revealed the strategic choices of participants in moving around the city: from the analysis of the data, it emerged that the majority of checkpoint entrances are carried out walking (42.4%) or biking (20.9%); the remaining part using the metro (5.8%) or the car (30.9%). The duration of an average journey between two checkpoints were: 12 minutes walking, 13 minutes driving, 15 minutes by bike and 22 minutes by subway. Moreover, through the game, it was possible to verify empirically some critical situations concerning the accessibility of some nodes of the city. In particular, the route between the Cantieri Culturali alla Zisa and the Castello della Zisa was the object of analysis: the two sites are about 440 meters as the crow flies, and, based on that, the theoretical walking time should have been 5 minutes. In contrast, the game showed that the average time was over 8 minutes by bike, 13 minutes walking and 34 minutes by car. This means that, through a game, it was possible to assess the permeability of the road network of Palermo.

#### **4.4 "La Torre di Babele" on the themes of Palermo welcoming city**

U'Game's Tower of Babel was the final phase of the urban game organized in the context of Partecip@ttivi. The game took place on 7 and 8 April and dealt with the theme of "Palermo welcoming city". "La Torre di Babele (The Babel Tower)" used languages as keys to access the several ethnic communities that compose the population of Palermo. Indeed, teams consisting of a minimum of two up to a maximum of four players were challenged with 14 foreign languages. Firstly, a series of video clips were distributed to the participants at the beginning of the game. In these clips, some members of the different ethnic communities of the city recited the verse of a traditional Sicilian song, translated into their mother tongue. Then, the task of the teams was to identify the language, translate every video clip and finally rebuild the traditional song.

In the development of "La Torre di Babele" U'Game was able to count on two actors that knew in detail the realities of migrant communities in the city: the multi-ethnic restaurant and coworking Moltivolti and the social club ARCI Porco Rosso which have been dealing for several years with the integration of migrants into the socio-economic fabric of Palermo. Thus, two trials of the game took place within places managed by the two partners in the historic Albergheria district. The structure of the game proposed an exchange of roles when interacting with migrants: indeed, the players - presumably autochthonous - became the ones who need to seek interaction and help from foreign citizens. Players strolled around the neighborhood trying to intercept citizens of different ethnic groups to ask them to share their culture in order to pass the trials. In conclusion, "La Torre di Babele" pushed the participants to look at foreigners as bearers of new knowledge, which becomes essential in the context of the game.

Finally, during the two days of play, 9 teams participated, for a total of 30 players involved. Each participant interacted at least with 14 foreign citizens and with the members of the team. Therefore, considering that each the team interacted with at least 40 people, the game involved a total of 1200 interactions.

## 5 Game Over, do something useless

The game is finished but there is a last level to play. The three games presented in this brief article describe well three different approaches that can be adopted in the design of urban games: “Cultura in Cantiere” is a storytelling game, which tries to narrate the metamorphosis of an area of great relevance for the city of Palermo, the former industrial complex at the Zisa. Indeed, it is a game mostly based on the location. Then, “Mobilità Agrodolce” is above all a tool to collect data according to the rules and conditions imposed by the game itself. This aspect highlights a fundamental feature of the games: in this context, the players are brought into a "magic circle" where the rules are different from the usual. This means that the data taken from a game are subject to the rules, the frames and the representations generated by the game itself. In many ways, social networks are games and define the rules of the relationship. In return, they obtain data about habits and behaviour of the users. The rules inserted within social networks pervasively mix the physical and digital sphere. In this way, it is possible to obtain an impressive amount of data comparable to an anthropological observation on an enormously vast scale. For this reason, they resemble the concept of psychohistory imagined in Asimov's science fiction. As in anthropological observations, even in social networks, we cannot really cancel the figure of the observer. In fact, even in such data, we cannot exclude the presence of devices and instruments that influence the observation. Furthermore, “Mobilità Agrodolce” had neither the ambition to gather a huge amount of data nor wanted to be an invisible detection tool. On the contrary, the game was intended to build an observation framework in which conditions were valid despite being unattainable outside the frame of play. The game defined the access points upfront but left the players free to reach them by any means according to their chosen strategy. The game freed access from need as it was designed to assess the effectiveness of urban travel and different approaches to city mobility, regardless of the attractiveness of the places concerned. Perhaps, it seems feasible to assess the effectiveness of urban mobility by changing the weights of different points of interest. In other words, this game format could answer the question: what would happen in the city if a great attraction is built, such as a shopping center or a large administrative office? In this case, a higher value could be assigned to the place object of analysis to observe the choices and strategies adopted by the players. Finally, if “La Torre di Babele” were a video game, it would be set in the open world as the GTA series - Grand Theft Auto - or Red Dead Redemption. Indeed, “La Torre di Babele” has no fixed borders, only a mission: to trace the local identity hidden behind the reinterpretation of a traditional song made by the migrants who live in the city.

To conclude, games are valuable tools to affect the behaviour of citizens as much as they are useful to obtain data on their habits in unusual contexts. U’Game

continuously explores these aspects when designing the games and tries to propose behaviors and reflections that can affect the habits and perceptions of citizens.

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