Hybrid Ludic Engagement: A Manifesto[1]

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> *A manifesto is partial, not balanced. A manifesto is normative, not analytic. A manifesto moves in declarations, not arguments. A manifesto wants to affect change here and now, not describe eternal truths. A manifesto is as much a formal performance of its own program as a description thereof. A manifesto, in short, is a rhetorical intervention that expresses an aesthetic/political vision through form and content in order to shape the present*. (Caws 2001)

Instructions for readers

As the motto implies, the piece you are about to read does not represent an academic analysis of the *youth–public–political* interplay based on a scrupulously balanced argumentation. Neither it is an exhaustive review of the state of the art. Some of you may find its rather eclectic prelude confusing, some of you disturbing or, reversely, inspiring. Either way, you should feel something. That is where the form meets the content and shapes your reading experience towards the author's vision. If you *feel* confused, disturbed, you read the manifesto in a right way, for contemporary urban space is an eclectic, confused and multivocal mash-up. Reading the text in the form of manifesto, the reader is being led towards the immersive, authentic experience. *In this sense reading the text is like walking the streets*.

This manifesto is indeed a rhetorical intervention, partial and normative declaration. It is the performative confession of author's deepest fears and beliefs emerging from her prior long-time, exhaustive and balanced analytical endeavour. The purpose of this manifesto is to intervene, provoke, inspire, and resonate. It outlines the view of an urban space as a hybrid interface, where the youth, the public and the political can meet, interact and thrive.

It is not a manual. It is not a scientific analysis. It is a sketch.

The city is dead…

Youth is a turbulent period of human life. Youngsters are restless – always searching, seeking, and exploring the boundaries of their selves and of others. Leaving their homes, which used to stand as their primary place, they rush into space to contest it and embody it with their own peculiar presence in the hope of facing the future – their own independent future. Home

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is the past whereas the streets, squares, and parks of the city are the future. Home and school are the symbols of order they need to oppose in the search for their own identity. In this sense, public space becomes a vital and essential value to youngsters simply because they have nowhere else to go for their daily escape from institutionalised, routinised, adultified and restricted everyday life.[2] Consequentially, the quality of public space necessarily shapes the everyday experiences of young people as they learn from the city, use the city as a stage, and aspire to take over and change the city.[3]

An important aspect of learning from the city and experiencing freedom in the city is anonymity, to live among strangers and, at the same time, be able to get to know them through short encounters.[4] This serves as a crucial social function as it teaches teenagers to identify and categorise strangers, which is essential for knowing how to meet and engage with others. Public space is predominantly an urban space. Contemporary urban issues are, therefore, above all public space issues. Hannah Arendt (1958) defined public space as a place where people act to create a *communal world full of differences* while Sennett (1977) considered the stranger to be an essential element of urban life. However, *what is the strongest feeling triggered while contemplating the cities of our contemporary world?* We see a new spectre haunting the world – the spectre of fear, fear of terror, crime, chaos, difference, the unknown and poverty, the fear of *demonised* and *generalised others*.

Urban space is filled with fear. The fear factor has increased considerably over the last decade and can be measured by the number of security doors, security systems, the popularity of gated communities, the number of legally held weapons, public space monitoring systems, the flood of catastrophic media reports and the rise in the popularity of extremist populist parties.[5]

Contemporary urban public space is under siege. It has become a *battlefield*[6] and as such, a military-like approach rather than a civil one is being deployed when dealing with what were

2 See Malone (2002).

3 See Lieberg (1995).

4 See e.g. Lofland (1973); Lieberg (1995).

5 See Ellin (2003).

6 Contemporary wars can be described not as antagonistic exchange between subjects but as mere technical realisation and are, according to Nordin and Öberg (2015: 406), not examples of wars as fighting, but "an enactment of a pre-planned script," which leads not to a military exchange on the battlefield, but to an "administrative model". This model is being sufficiently used to administer the civil space of our everyday. Graham (2011: 16) describes this military/civil blurring as follows: "Warfare, like everything else, is being urbanized. The great geopolitical contests – of cultural change, ethnic conflict and diasporic social mixing; of economic re-regulation and liberalization; of militarization, informatization and resource exploitation; of ecological change – are, to a growing extent, boiling down to violent conflicts in the key strategic sites of our age: contemporary cities. The world's geopolitical struggles increasingly articulate around violent conflicts over urban strategic sites, and in many societies, the violence surrounding such civil and civic warfare strongly shapes quotidian urban life."

once solely urban issues.[7] Civil and military affairs have blurred into a state of indistinction.[8] Our everyday is being militarised, which means that acts of war are, to a certain extent, now part of our lives, our language, an everyday routine. Instead of being an arena where different actors meet and express themselves through various actions, it becomes an exclusive, controlled place, bound by rules, homogenised and purified under the dictate of fear.[9]

Security is the omnipresent characteristic of our daily concern. It occupies both the private and the public space. The need for security has replaced the need for money as the primary need that occupies our mind every day. The intense feeling that danger is lurking everywhere and violence can explode anywhere and at any time, makes us feel vulnerable and willing to exchange our freedom for security.[10] Today, fear is not only the primary emotion inherent in all living beings, an emergency button for the moments of threat but rather a permanent, ubiquitous situation determining the contemporary human condition, the sole criterion of political legitimisation, the basic principle of state activity.[11] In Bauman's liquid times, fear also becomes liquid. As in the Middle Ages, people and states turn to *surveillance* as a way to secure their safety. But whereas medieval cities were patrolled by guards, contemporary cities conduct permanent, ubiquitous digital surveillance over their citizens' movements and behaviour (establishing anticipatory surveillance systems to detect malign behaviour before it actually occurs).[12] Rather than a guarantee of safety, in such an atmosphere surveillance becomes another cause of fear. Security and the formula "for security reasons" function today in any domain, from everyday life to international conflicts, as a *code word*, in order to impose measures that people have no reason to accept.

Exceptions thus become the norm. War rhetoric is being deployed to legitimise a seemingly endless series of states of exception.[13] Yet, the state of exception, which was originally defined as space and time where normal jurisdiction is suspended, and where living beings used to be protected by the law, has now been abandoned.[14] The state of exception, which usually refers to such exceptional situations as civil war, insurrection, and resistance, has become a permanent paradigm of government in our contemporary politics. Fear has been used to justify exceptional legal procedures and political, economic, and cultural authorities

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7 The militarisation of urban space, the urbanisation of military doctrine and an obsession with security issues merge into the concept of *new military urbanism* (NMU), which Graham (2011) introduced as a prevailing socio-spatial form (see also Reid 2002).

8 The borders and links once demarcating the distinctive areas and categories, based on which the law and policies were founded, blur into zones of indifference (Agamben 2016) or zones of indistinction (Diken and Laustsen 2005). In these zones, hyper military ideologies of pre-emptive war, permanent mobilisation, and anticipatory risk-management are being employed, which render everything a military problem requiring, a priori, a military solution. See also Feldman (2007) and De Goede (2007).

9 See Shields (1989).

10 See Simpson, Viebeke and Rubing (2017).

11 See Agamben (2002).

12 See e.g. Bauman (2005); Lyon (1994); Graham (2011).

13 See Agamben (2005).

14 See Schmitt (2005).

have used it as a central component of their strategies to gain a consensus.[15] An example is the increasing use of the state of exception when addressing urban issues.[16]

The ontology of exception presupposes the presence of normality as a background against which the exception can prove itself to be an exception.[17] However, our contemporary society appears to be one without such a background.[18] When everything exceptional is normalised, the norm disappears and when a norm disappears, so does the exception. As noted by Baudrillard (1990: 7), "Transparency is a flattening process characterised by the exacerbation of indifference and the indefinite mutation of social domains". Simply put, when everything becomes political, politics disappear; when everything becomes sexual, sex disappears; and so on. This is exactly what is happening today in our everyday urban space: when control is everywhere, it disappears; when the state of exception becomes the norm, we cease to perceive obstruction as an obstruction and it disappears. In this way, we are becoming oblivious to militarisation and surveillance.

If security is our primary concern and a basic principle of state activity, then *surveillance is a key mode of organisation and ordering in contemporary societies.*[19] To anticipate and pre-manage risk, then safety, control, and security require a truly massive deployment of technology, which becomes not only permanent and pervasive but above all, *transparent*, and invisible. This means that the miniaturisation of computer technology makes it disappear from our sight, which leads to a situation where computer technology can turn up anywhere.[20] Unaware of the presence of technology, people no longer perceive their environment as technologically mediated, as a technological construct. People overlook the implications of their technological enchantment and voluntarily delegate the role of the observer, the decision-maker and the identifier of potentially dangerous individuals or groups to others, or more precisely to technology. So who decides which category I will be included in then? While this power used to be delegated to the *sovereign*, software has recently assumed this

15 See Agamben (2016).

16 For example, France 2015–2017, following the terrorist attacks in Paris; Brazil, state of Alagoas, 2017, after dozens of cities in the region experienced water shortages; Wisconsin County, U.S., 2018, following an oil refinery explosion; Charlottesville, Virginia, U.S., 2018, ahead of the first anniversary of the white supremacist rally that turned deadly; Italy, Genoa, 2018, after part of the Morandi Bridge collapsed. See also a commentary by John Dalhuisen entitled Warning: Europe is entering a permanent state of emergency (available at https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jan/17/europe-state-of-emergency-threat-terrorism).

17 See Foucault (1991) and Schmitt (2005).

18 See Diken and Laustsen (2005).

19 See Lyon (1994, 2001, 2007). David Lyon originally coined the term *surveillance society*.

20 As Murakami Wood et al. (2006) states, the globalisation of surveillance has been accompanied by the domestication of security, which has led to the emergence of a new and "ideal-type state of the twenty-first century" – a risk-surveillance society. Kluitenberg (2006) also addresses the problem of invisibility, which he conceives as the apparent disappearance of computer technology from our sight to be miniaturisation.

role.[21] Stephen Graham needed just one simple sentence to summarise the role of technology in contemporary society when he stated that "[t]he sovereign power to kill is already being delegated to computer code" (2011: 177).[22]

Today, security is everything and everything is possible for security reasons. In such a landscape, public space struggles to be actually articulated. Public space has been defined as an open space, a social space, as a space that all people have legal access to. In this sense, public space can be primarily defined by what it is not: private space.[23] The end of public space is then its privatisation and to prevent the end of public space means to understand privatisation as a threat. On the contrary, privatisation has been perceived as a security measure, a tool that sustains a *purified community*.[24] We can no longer define public space as an open space and a social space while at the same time restricting entrance only to some. Urban space, along with public space, has been systematically regulated against dangerous *generalised others* – marginal adults or youth.[25] Urban planners and designers of public spaces and municipalities along with urban activists and local communities are preoccupied with *how* public space should look and pay little attention to the meaning of this space.

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21 Thrift and French (2002: 311) refer to the automatic production of space, which has important consequences for what we regard as the world's phenomenality. In their opinion, "Spaces like cities – where most software is gathered and has its effects – are being run by mechanical writing, are being beckoned into existence by code." For Thrift and French (ibid: 312), software is a new kind of phenomenality, a part of the technological unconscious and, therefore, "as software gains this unconscious presence, spaces like cities will bear its mark, bugged by new kinds of pleasures, obsessions, anxieties, and phobias, which exist in an insistent elsewhere." Software literally conditions our existence, very often "outside of the phenomenal field of subjectivity" (Hansen 2000: 17).

22 See also Manovich (2013). In relation to this, Der Derian (2009) mentions a new type of power, which has no trouble seeing us, but we have great difficulties seeing it. He calls it the power of surveillance and states that it is a continuation of both war and peace by other technical means. One policy implication of this new surveillance regime "is that the superpowers have created a cybernetic system that displays the classic symptoms of advanced paranoia: hyper-vigilance, intense distrust, rigid and judgmental thought processes, and the projection of one's own repressed beliefs and hostile impulses onto another. The very nature of the surveillance/cybernetic system contributes to this condition: we see and hear the other, but imperfectly and partially – below our rising expectations. This can induce paranoid behaviour, that is, reasoning correctly from incorrect premises" (ibid: 53). The incorrect evaluation of information under the influence of overwhelming paranoia can lead states to make decisions that cannot be corrected. This is why Agamben (2016) states that since 9/11, biometric data and surveillance have reduced the individuality of the human to biological and biometric features without regard to any political or ethical character. He points out that one should never forget that the levelling of social identity on body identity began with the attempt to identify recidivist criminals. "We should not be astonished if today the normal relationship between the state and its citizens is defined by suspicion, police filing, and control. The unspoken principle which rules our society can be stated like this: every citizen is a potential terrorist" (ibid: 26).

23 See Sorkin (1992).

24 See Sennet (1971).

25 See Graham (2011) and Driskell et al. (2008).

Who is it built for? *Who* has the right to the public space? As a result, space originally conceived as an open space where people can meet, communicate, integrate, express, and develop has become an exclusive space for control and repression, a purified space. Public space tends to be cleaned and sanitised. Along with surveillance, spatial purification becomes a key feature in the organisation of social space.[26]

The so-called contact points, where strangers of a city meet, characterised by complexity and multiplicity, used to play a key role in city life. At present, these contact points[27] do not function anymore and have been replaced by control points. Public space is not primarily designed for a pause in movement, nor is it designed for pointless hanging and roaming around. Streets considered dangerous are being continuously freed from almost all activities except movement and even those are being forced out in favour of cars or regulated in favour of greater control.[28]

In a healthy city, people can benefit from some communication anarchy among strangers, instead of voluntarily separating and enclosing themselves behind the bars of their gated communities.[29] A liveable and living city cannot look like a fortress; it must also be a marketplace. In their pure forms, these two metaphors refer to two incompatible principles: on the one hand, there is the need for the free movement of people and goods while on the other hand, there is the need to regulate, control and restrict those flows – in the interest of safety. The city was always a mix of both tendencies – order and chaos. This sense of freedom and simultaneous security is an unknown feeling that children and adolescents on the streets today rarely experience.

Public spaces in cities become defined as "adult" spaces and young people begin to occupy the fringes of the neighbourhood.[30] "Hanging out" in urban and suburban shopping malls has replaced outdoor street play. Apart from securitisation, purification and privatization, we are now witnessing the institutionalised exclusion of youth by the *adultification* of space.[31] Parks are made for children, families and the elderly and are perceived as a "family space", which renders youth discrepant and threatening when there. So they "hang out" in shopping malls or at fast food outlets.

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26 See Sibley (1995) and De Certeau (1985).

27 Term coined by Sennett (1994).

28 A British study showed "that the radius within which children roam freely around their homes has shrunk by almost 90 % since the 1970s" (James 2007: 36). Abbott-Chapman and Robertson (2009) cite a writer describing his childhood of the 1940s and 1950s in Britain: "The thing I remember with most gratitude was being able to do things alone. It was perfectly safe to do so then and we took it for granted – roaming around the village and the common."

29 See Bauman (2005: 1).

30 See Malone (1999). Malone distinguishes *open space* in which diversity is accepted and in which young people can feel comfortable and *enclosed space* in which conformity is regulated in ways that may make young people feel out of place. Using her words, we could describe the contemporary quality of public space as being in the process of transitioning from an open space to an enclosed space.

31 See Driskell et al. (2008).

However, the suspicion faced by youths in urban spaces is being continuously enhanced and encouraged by the widespread use in city centres of surveillance cameras designed to deter, detect and anticipate potential criminal activity. This leads to the further displacement of youth from public or semi-public sites, thus even shopping malls can no longer be considered to be a safe haven for them. A shopping mall introduces an unheard of degree of surveillance, with almost Orwellian overtones, into daily life.[32] In this controlled environment, teenagers who have few other places in which to congregate are one of the principal groups targeted by security guards.[33] Their very presence necessarily constitutes deviance.[34] Exclusions in social space are becoming unnoticed features of urban life and a major aspect of this problem is that they take place routinely and without most people noticing.

At this point, we encounter *transparency*, *securitisation* and *state of exception* in the everyday. What was once the norm – youngsters hanging out, doing nothing, joking, talking, arguing – has become an exception and vice versa. Although the problematisation of youth mainly concerns groups or "gangs" of adolescents, and it may appear that such stigmatisation does not concern these young individuals, we must bear in mind that grouping is one of the key characteristics of this developmental stage. Adolescents identify with groups to develop a sense of identity and a positive self-concept along with an increased sense of personal autonomy from their parents.[35] Parents naturally stay outside the teenage public realm and simply belong to another world, another context. Peer relationships influence the growth in the problematic behaviour of youth.[36] One way that youths become deviant is through unrestricted interaction with deviant peers.[37] Ironically, many of the common measures taken to avoid the problematic behaviour of young people (displacement, exclusion, surveillance), in fact, places them in settings that aggregate them with the real deviant youth.

For youth, movement in public space has become more and more a matter of restriction, obedience and submission rather than an act of freedom and spontaneity. Our routes through

32 See Shields (1989).

33 Another group that has been pushed out of public or semi-public spaces are non-consumers. As Sibley (1995) points out, the boundaries between the consuming and non-consuming public are strengthening, with non-consumption being constructed as a form of deviance at the same time as spaces for consumption eliminate public spaces in city centres. Pavel Pospěch (2015) arrives at a similar conclusion in his research focused on the regulation of shopping centre space, which is conducted using CCTV cameras, local legislation (decrees and shopping centre codes), and via the architectural design of indoor and outdoor spaces. What is important to note is that these tools distinguish shopping centres from the traditional public space in the city centre because they exclude all those who do not meet the idea of the ideal consumer: homeless and teenagers who threaten the regulated space of the shopping centre with a potential violation of the code. Potentiality is enough to prove a person guilty (which reminds us of *Minority Report*). The strategy for the expulsion of homeless people from public areas and their displacement to the city outskirts is further addressed by Hejnal (2013a, 2013b, 2014) and Vašát, Gibas and Poláková (2017).

34 See Mitchell and Elwood (2012); Tonnelat (2007) and Terzi and Tonnelat (2016).

35 See Brown and Lohr (1987).

36 See Thornberry and Krohn (1997).

37 See Dishion, McCord and Poulin (1999).

the city are planned as we go out for specific purposes and to specific destinations. Urban planners are preoccupied with synchronic strategies, synchronising people, and usage for effective production, turning the material world into a predictable, frictionless, scheduled environment. Zoning regulations assign different functions to different districts of the city, which results in a homogenised, predictable and synchronised space in which every activity has a special place.[38] Vitality, unpredictability, spontaneity, and creativity are disappearing from urban space. Flâneur and dérive wandering the city unpredictably and spontaneously can scarcely be met in contemporary urban territory. Unexpected experiences and encounters are exactly what we do not want. Gone is Lefebvre's idea of rhythms of city space as a symphony[39] – one simple melody sounds on the streets, squares and the parks of a contemporary city according to their function. Furthermore, as a consequence of commercialisation and the homogenisation of large parts of the city centre, activities that used to be ambient and sowed the seeds for change in city life such as street art, graffiti-art, festivals, conceptual art and events are on their way out of the territory.

Such quality of public space leaves teenagers with no other option but to subvert and hack its rules, which they cannot simply fit into. Even though it is one of their innate tactics, it is not their only intended goal. However, the fringes – backyards, stairwells, basements, and parking lots – seem to be their only option with no alternative. The processes and tendencies described above indicate the unsustainability of the form of public space as experienced by contemporary urban youth. If we consider public space as a space open to everyone, a space for action, emotion and interaction, a heterogeneous, polyrhythmic space calling for unpredicted encounters, space where youth can learn, integrate, express themselves and grow among both strangers and friends, then we must admit that public space of this kind is more and more becoming just a chimera.

In spite of the centuries-long critique of the way urban life has developed (Marx, Jacobs, Sennett, Lefebvre, Ellin etc.), attempts to change this remain more or less only on a theoretical, academic level. In terms of the actual urban planning, the concrete physicality of our cities tends towards reactive, pre-emptive actions, which, unfortunately, usually steer urban residents and policymakers into a blind alley of securitisation, restriction and exclusion. Instead, a proactive, participatory approach to the maladies of contemporary urban space should be adopted. Participation plays an important role in creating community, redirecting behaviour and positively reinforcing and sustaining the heterogeneity of the city.[40] Instead of segregation and exclusion, the integration and inclusion of youth would help to de-stigmatise this group and halt the vicious circle of fear stemming from ignorance.[41]

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38 See Kärrholm (2012).

39 See Lefebvre (2004).

40 In contrast to the architecture of fear, Nan Ellin (2006) proposes a proactive approach to urban space, which she refers to as *integral urbanism*.

41 Regarding pervasive games see e.g. Montola, Stenros and Waern (2009). Concepts of a playable, playful city have been introduced in this way in recent years in an attempt to revive urban community life, to remember the forgotten or dilapidated places, to fill in the derelict city districts. The notion of the "playable city" is a counterpoint to the narrative of smart cities and emphasises

Those seeking change (whether artists, activists, social workers, academics, urban planners or designers), face numerous obstacles along the way. They struggle with our tendency to stick with the tried, which renders even beneficial change difficult. Thus, their attempts usually reach only a handful of aware people, while failing to reach the wider public. Due to dysfunctional public space, these attempts at change cannot connect in a wider political coalition capable of fundamental changes. Activities and projects seeking to revive falling public space need to have a structure that would target *more* young people *deeper* in their *everyday* practice. We cannot expect urbanites to come to us with a request for change or that they will actively offer to help. The majority of those truly excluded do not have the time, nor the knowledge and information to be interested in something as abstract and remote as public space, despite the fact they experience obstacles in their own skin every day. Their daily bread is dealing with what the day brings, trying to survive through to the next day. In order to promote a truly fundamental, wide-scale change that would either positively affect the lives of youth or encourage them to actively engage in public issues, it is necessary to simultaneously: 1. introduce a proper narrative design/tactic; 2. facilitate a proper communication channel (and common language/vocabulary); and 3. choose a proper space where these actions can take place. If one of these components in our project fails, the outcome could be worthless.

Young people are not really living in public space, just surviving. However, an alternative exists – *hybrid ludic engagement*. Its strength lies in the very technology that helps to sustain the oppressive and bleak status quo. It undermines and exploits it at the same time. Digital technology, surveillance technology, remote control technology – we need to turn its purpose upside down!

Beat the strategy at its own game!

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serendipity, hospitality, and openness instead of efficiency while offering permission to the public to play (Watershed 2014, playablecity.com). As Fischer and Hornecker (2017) state, the hope behind the idea is that playful public activities foster identification with one's city, support creative appropriation, community, and active participation. Such activities can take the form of a pervasive game, an interactive document (for a number of examples and explanations of how interactive documents are not only representations of reality but also a way of creating and experiencing (see Gaudenzi 2013; Šimůnek 2014), street art, interactive installations of smart entertainment technology in public spaces, playful urban design interventions or playful hacking of the city and using the smart city's data and digital technology in a way that was never intended by its designers and owners (Nijholt 2017). To allow this, we need to employ the digital smartness already embedded in the smart city environment (sensors, actuators, CCTV cameras etc.) or tune additional digital technology to a particular game. An example of such an "appropriation" or creative misuse is the urban game called Treasure Hunt developed in the UK in 2009. As Nijholt (ibid.) describes, participants in this game have to scout a city area and photograph as many CCTV cameras as possible. The photographs then have to be uploaded to create a map that shows the city's surveillance systems. The aim of creating awareness of being "spied on" is further enhanced by providing gamers with a mask to protect their anonymity while detecting these cameras. A more recent version of this game called Camover took place in Berlin in 2013 and aimed to track and trash as many CCTV cameras as possible.

…Long live the city!

> Try to see what is not easily visible. Rethink invisibility;
> rethink as overt the covert realms of power that are not being named.
> (Eisenstein 2002)

In terms of De Certeau's[42] strategic-tactical divide of the practices of everyday life, the concept of *hybrid ludic engagement* (HLE) sees the *city* as a *strategy*. *Play* then is a *tactic* – De Certeau's instance of incursion into strategy – mobile technology represents a communication channel adopting a common language, and the urban space is a playground, a space for change/action/engagement. Together, these three elements blend in hybrid ludic engagement, where the goal is to make Lefebvre's dream come true – to create liminal social spaces of possibility, where those once marginalised and transparent might take the initiative, claim their right to the city, present new, innovative perspectives and become visible. The strength of this concept lies primarily in its flexibility and efficiency. It is not solely an instrument of resistance or subversion. It is an instrument of dialogue, convergence and reconciliation. It can be invoked by both sides of the agora – (young) citizens and city representatives – and exploited jointly as a communication platform. HLE is a mechanism to restore equilibrium, a tool of balance.

HLE employs generalised, common characteristics of contemporary *mobile youth culture*[43] – that of ubiquitous and permanent connectivity via mobile media and playfulness as a tactic of the everyday – for their active engagement in the public realm. It attempts to direct the interest of scholars, urban planners, municipalities, social workers, politicians, stakeholders, the gaming industry and others in the potentials of playfulness as an approach towards public issues and digital technology as a communication interface in the re-articulation, re-construction and revival of (urban) public space.

Hybrid…
Nomads of hybrid space

Despite the fact that category of *youth* is arbitrary and culturally, geographically dependent, there is at least one feature that connects today's youth globally – they represent a new generation of "mobile natives" and consistent and cross-cultural evidence for typically adolescent mobile media use practices and meanings emerge. Today's youth constitutes a mobile youth culture (MYC).[44] As Castells et al. mentioned earlier, contemporary youth culture "finds in mobile communication an adequate form of expression and reinforcement."[45] When reaching out for young people's attention, we need to get used to the fact that current youth is mobile, not just in terms of mobile media *usage*, but also in terms of *mobility*. They

42 See De Certeau (1984).
43 See Ling (2010) and Middaugh et al. (2017).
44 See Vanden Abeele (2016).
45 Castells et al. (2007: 127).

are growing up in the *new mobilities paradigm*[46] – they chat, share, stream, play *and* move, or *while* on the move. Their inherent nature is, in any case, nomadic. In nomadic networks, paths are the principle and points are mere consequences of their trajectories: "The life of the nomad is the intermezzo."[47] They are nomads of hybrid space.

Young people are deeply immersed in hybrid space. It is their everyday space, a space where one can always reach them, 24/7. As the most enthusiastic adopters of innovations, they experience physical space via digital technologies. Their everyday is deeply/strongly technologically mediated. Mobile internet and digital technologies hidden in miniaturised mobile devices transformed these into microprocessors, social interfaces connecting their users with their virtual selves and others while on the move, anytime, anywhere. The need for perpetual, ubiquitous contact with their peers is an essential characteristic of this period in human life. Hybrid space emerged from the blurring of the digital and physical space and is a tailor-made space for our youngsters. It keeps them in touch with others and the world anytime, anywhere, all the time, everywhere.

Hybrid presence implicates being simultaneously online *and* offline, thus abolishing this very duality. For young people, the sense of completeness requires both an online and offline presence. With multiple spaces simultaneously inhabited, we are witnessing the multiplication of the contexts of our behaviour. Geographically or socially distant events affect us, we take part in them – they are remote but no less intense. And vice versa, belonging to the geographically distant social community can make us actually distant from the immediate one.[48] Presence (and authenticity) and proximity become more and more a matter of technology than of traditional time-space relations.

In contrast to the previously separated virtual space, location matters in hybrid space.[49] In hybrid space, the internet is detached from *place*, i. e. the desktop computer statically connected to a socket and escapes into physical *space.* Urban spaces are increasingly being populated by system or user-generated spatial annotations and information (the geoweb), transposed onto physical urban spaces in the form of layers of geo-coded data.[50] Thus, the online experience assumes dimensions that are directly dependent on geographical parameters. To get in touch with the digital, we do not need to stay inside, in one place.[51]

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46 See Sheller and Urry (2006).

47 Deleuze and Guattari (2003: 380).

48 In this context, Diamantaki (2014: 265) mentions "hyperconnectivity" and draws attention to the fact that "ego-centered subjectivised connections might lead not to more 'presence' but instead to a 'new absence', the absence of direct contact with others in the flesh, and concomitantly the absence of the communal" while Katz (2007: 390) refers to a "psychological emptying out of public space: bodies remain, but personalities are engaged elsewhere".

49 See De Souza e Silva and Sutko (2008).

50 As Diamantaki (2014: 260) explains: "In this way, what was previously digital-only is now merged with the physical, as locative technologies capture data from the physical environment and add them to the digital network."

51 The original definition of hybrid space was introduced by Adriana de Souza e Silva (2006: 264): "Without the traditional distinction between physical and digital spaces, a hybrid space occurs when one no longer needs to go out of their physical space to get in touch with digital environments.

It has happened just as Manovich predicted. While the 1990s were about virtual, the first decade of the 2020s is about physical.[52] Locative media[53] allows us to rediscover physical space. Hybrid space is, in some way, liberating man from the immobility proclaimed by techno-pessimists as the ultimate consequence of our need *to live* online.[54] Due to GPS, we can discover previously undiscovered corners of urban space and move outdoors while online.[55] Due to proximity marketing tools, we can receive digital information associated with a particular place or particular digital content can be targeted at specific groups, e. g. youngsters, within a given location. These tools are being extensively used by marketing companies for advertising. Hybrid ludic engagement calls for the potentials of these technologies and hybrid space, in general, to be exploited to the full in order to catch the attention of young people, to communicate with them and make them embedded in public space.

Mobile technologies are a communication channel of MYC. Hybrid space is their homeland. *Face-to-face* communication is accompanied by *interface-to-interface* communication, which is of no less importance to the social life of youth. Since it is mobile and digital, it is also effective and affective. Feedback is fast, transcends both physical and social borders and transmits both information and emotions. Hybrid space is the *affect space*.[56] It is a dense environment filled with messages, images, data and impulses apt for dissemination. New forms of activities that have never been seen before are blossoming on the streets and squares of our cities and turning them into media channels and platforms in real-time. People gather

Therefore, the borders between digital and physical spaces, which were apparently clear with the fixed Internet, have become blurred and no longer clearly distinguishable."

52 See Manovich (2002). And so it happened. "The world of bits did not do away with the need for physical mobility; instead, smartphones show that the spaces we move through and the digital information we interact with have merged" (Frith 2012: 132).

53 Also referred to as location-awareness, location-based, GPS-based services.

54 These consequences were often described as isolation leading to social disconnection, communication disabilities, immobilisation and detachment from the "real", physical world (Turkle 2012).

55 See Galloway (2009); Gazzard (2011); Frith (2012, 2013).

56 Coined by Kluitenberg (2017), affect space defines the emergent techno-sensuous spatial order, which is characterised by three elements: 1. the massive presence of self-produced media forms, 2. the context of (occupied) urban public spaces, and 3. the deep permeation of affective intensity in these media forms. The constitutive pattern of affect space is, according to Kluitenberg, simultaneous mobilisation in the media and physical space. "The use of mobile and wireless media changes the nature of public space dramatically. Ever-tighter feedback loops of the physical and the mediated are generated. (…) As wireless networks speed up, the speed of these feedback loops is only intensified (Wi-fi, 3G, 4G, etc.). The physical and mediated feedback loop precipitates affect-related forms of communication and exchange. In these dense environments, messages, images and impulses with the strongest affective effect (...) are the most apt for dissemination" (Kluitenberg 2017: 2–3).

via mobile technologies; meetings, demonstrations and rallies are being organised through social media.[57]

Public space also becomes hybrid. The affective component of mobile technologies is crucial for understanding its new properties; both the potential as well as the threats. We carry the internet in our pockets while moving on the streets of our cities along with all the good and bad it entails. We put emotions into our pockets, we walk with them on the streets, we literally *wear* them and as mobile technologies are transformed into so-called wearables, so are war, fear, catastrophes, paranoia and anxiety. When communicating in hybrid space, we must bear in mind that the reaction to any digital content, whether it is news, advertisements or a political appeal, is to be immediate and gain momentum like a snowball rolling down a mountain. Young hybriders are especially eager to consume anything, eating up any word that matches their personalised preferences. Time and space are compressed in hybrid space. Contexts which seem to be far from us can be felt as very close. Thus, primary attention should be focused on the (unintended) consequences of any communication. The hybrid consumer is susceptible to hoaxes, fads, shared paranoia, as well as to playful liminal experiences with unpredictable outcomes.

Being aware of the affective character of hybrid space, those who seek to change the status of contemporary youth in a city can hail it as salvation. Hybrid space and its tools when used properly can transgress obstacles set in physical space.[58] Exclusion faced by youth in an urban environment can be overcome and due to the playful nature of digital technologies, can even be fun!

…Ludic…
Play as tactic

As shown by Huizinga, *play* is not a matter of a specific developmental stage in human life, and neither is play only exclusive to children.[59] This is why Huizinga categorised mankind as a playful creature, "homo ludens". Play is not just physical interaction, it is an inherent part of our everyday activities such as gathering together in relaxed situations, engaging in social interactions, but also interacting with playful thoughts. Playfulness as a state of mind represents a way to escape, at least for a moment, from the pressure, tensions, and conflicts of everyday reality. Play is simply a narrative familiar to all human beings. Huizinga and others who followed him defined play as separate from everyday life, an exceptional activity that takes place in the "magic circle". On the contrary, the concept of *hybrid ludic*

57 Virtual communities, participatory media, smart mobs (Rheingold 2003; Castells 2015), flash mobs (Molnár 2014) etc. are testing the limits of free assembly in public spaces and increasing the civic and political engagement of youth (Middaugh et al. 2017). Participation in interest-driven communication thus reinforces Jensen's (2009) argument that such communication can function as civic associations.

58 See Frith (2012, 2013).

59 See Huizinga (1968); Caillois (1961); Fink (1960); Sicart (2014); Walz and Deterding (2015).

engagement points out that instances of play can occur within the everyday.[60] *Play* is a tactic which can transgress, subvert, disrupt and hack established norms and the order of things.[61] Play is thus not only about playing games, it inherently involves *playfulness*, which is an attitude, an approach, a life philosophy.[62] We do not have to *play* games, yet we can be *playful*.

Play is a natural way of experiencing the world by children and young people and can also be considered to be a way of expression in a political sense. The very act of being playful, of subverting and changing pre-given authoritarian or even dogmatic "rules" (in a tactical way) is essentially enacting childlike subjectivities.[63] Play and playfulness thus might 1. help to de-demonise youth as a category and might halt its spatial and social marginalisation within public spaces; 2. be understood as youth's way of political and civic engagement; and 3. create a childlike approach to the world, cheeky, creative, curious and corporeal that can be inspirational and effective in altering the strategy of the city. In such a broad sense, youth and their playful approach to the world, are an intrinsic aspect of hybrid ludic engagement, as it is primarily a concept aimed at de-normalising an exception established as a norm and the re-appropriation of public space.

Hybrid space is playful by its very nature. One of its major features is blurring a particular binary opposition – ordinary/fantasy. As with many other binaries, this one is also being disrupted by real/virtual fusion. In hybrid space, nothing stays untouched by gamification: shopping, mobility, energy consumption, spatial representation, work, politics etc. The competitive and game aspects of hybrid space are part of a broader socio-technological development towards the gamification of everyday life.[64] In other words, the practices of our everyday hybrid lives are already becoming more and more influenced and shaped by so-called ludic technologies that attack our natural desire to play at random. Despite

60 The ontology of play was mainly dealt with in the 1960s by Eugen Fink (1960) whose concept of the *ontology of play* is crucial for understanding and anchoring HRGs. Fink's game phenomenology defines play as a key component of human life (the fundamental phenomenon of existence) and refuses to distinguish between serious life and play.

61 For Sicart (2014: 11) play is carnivalesque. He appropriates the term from Bakhtin's study of medieval carnival stating that "Play temporarily inverts the norms of society, which results in the body releasing fearful inhibitions in laughter, all the while revealing the workings of the social reality we live in. Good play integrates creation and destruction into this form of carnival."

62 Like others (Bateson and Martin 2013; Walz and Deterding 2014; de Jong 2015; Stenros 2015), Sicart (2014: 22) distinguishes play from playfulness. Play is an activity, while playfulness is an attitude. "An activity is a coherent and finite set of actions performed for certain purposes, while an attitude is a stance toward an activity – a psychological, physical, and emotional perspective we take on."

63 See Mould (2017).

64 See Walz and Deterding (2015); Hamari, Huotari and Tolvanen (2015); Van den Akker (2015); Zichermann and Cunningham (2011); Fuchs, Fizek, Ruffino and Schrape (2014).

the ambiquity of gamification, it is time to take advantage of its potential and embed it into public space, into everyday politics — especially when the aim is the integration of youth.[65]

Youth are indeed a liminal category.[66] They want to be taken seriously, yet they refuse to be serious. Ordinary life is a burden since the sky is their limit. Compromises are signs of weakness in their win-or-lose world. Young people are politically incorrect, yet their nature is political. Their activities are political in a spatial sense. Their primary claim is to a particular space, territory, where they can move and act freely, thus their most frequent political act is the re-appropriation of the *lived* space. De Certeau linked everyday life practices with the political and for him, ordinary practices such as walking, talking and moving about are tactical by their nature.[67] This perspective leads to an understanding of play, especially while on the move, as linked to the political. Particularly inspiring in this sense is youth's ability to resist marginalisation. Resistance exacerbates their political activism, embodied by the desire to continue using the site and develop the creativity

65 Games can, of course, also serve for commercial purposes, data surveillance, data mining, and predicting algorithms for manipulating user behaviour. Blurring as general characteristics of hybrid space thus makes it often hard to distinguish between play and advertising or entertainment and marketing. Being aware of this "dark side" of gamification, HLE aims to sensitise perception, make people vigilant via play and draw their attention to the pervasive blurring of boundaries. Visualise transparency, uncover what is being hidden, thus enable a better understanding of the related consequences.

66 In this sense, *liminality* as being "in-between" describes an intermediate state of being where individuals have the potential to leave behind their usual identity and stand on the verge of a personal or social transformation (Adekunle 2016). As such, liminality does not possess any explicit negative connotations. It can thus be viewed as a borderland, where young people can try out new identities, experiment, interact with strangers, connect, create social ties, experience community belonging as well as exclusion, which might result in new forms of agency and social inclusion (Bosco 2010). Living on the edge as a way of making a difference, transgressing borders, and being seen and heard. As we will see further, this understanding of youth liminality as a vital and indispensable experience for their prospective adult integrity is a rather theoretical approach and rarely used in practice. In any case, it is acknowledged as a necessary and fruitful approach, which might be helpful in any attempts to re-integrate youth into public space and the public sphere. Turner (1969: 14) recognises agency as a key dimension of liminality. He explains that the concept of liminality "served not only to identify the importance of in-between periods, but also to understand the human reactions to liminal experiences: the way liminality shaped personality, the sudden foregrounding of agency, and the sometimes dramatic tying together of thought and experience." As such, liminality provides the potential to consider the complex states of inbetweenness and to read these as spaces of political possibility and hybrid identities for young people in "borderlands" (Wood 2017). However, based on the results of the field research, studies focusing on children's geographies describe youth's liminality more pessimistically in connection to exclusion. This is no surprise since it is recognised as the most intense and acute experience of young people in contemporary urban spaces. Liminality may promise potential as creative, activist, provocative, reflexive, innovative, humorous, and lively state. Howsoever, it ceases to come to life with the fact that young people are not envisaged as an integral part of the public space.

67 See De Certeau (1984).

of their actions. For example, the practice of parkour, especially the ability of traceurs to re-appropriate the space they occupy and to realise a new function of that space, might be understood as an innately political act.[68] Appropriation of space and technology as provocation, subversion of ordinary routines and underlying narratives is, in this sense, the creative misuse and creative destruction – a key element of playful (childlike) tactics, a political act *par excellence*.[69]

To avoid an impasse in disputes over the space between adults and youth, HLE emphasises *play*: 1. as a narrative, as a language common to all human beings; 2. as a tactic not too serious (for youth), yet serious enough (for adults) to be commonly accepted against the lobotomy of public space; and *playfulness* as a common approach to tackling the ordinary issues of our everyday life in the *city* via gamified ordinary practices.

…Engagement
Counter-geographies as politics

Hybrid space is genuinely subversive as it blurs and dissolves the so far accepted dichotomies, cornerstones of social norms and power geographies. Pervasive and ubiquitous access to mobile internet and the permanent connection of its inhabitants/users via mobile devices lead to the blurring of the physical and digital boundaries as well the blurring of traditional binary oppositions, dichotomies and rites of passage (day/night, private/public, inside/outside, work/leisure, game/serious life, friend/stranger etc.). In this sense, all hybrid activities potentially transgress given rules and can be comprehended as counter-geographies.[70]

The power of *counter-geographies* as a form of resistance lies primarily in the fact that they delineate Lefebvre's *liminal social spaces of possibility,* where "something

68 Atkinson (2009: 174) calls this, a "soft" activism that is not reactionary, rather one that "deliberately call[s] attention to the late modern city's spatial organisation and its environmentally sterile, commercial policing" via re-appropriation.

69 See Farman (2014) and Schumpeter (1994).

70 Stephen Graham (2011) suggests that NMU must be attacked and questioned in the public sphere, that the independence of NMU is seriously questionable, and that the public space needs to be "rediscovered". The public finds its new living space in virtual communities, social networks, and online activism. Graham offers six strategies as a solution to the current lobotomised state of public space and social engagement: 1. exposure; 2. juxtaposition; 3. appropriation; 4. jamming; 5. satire; 6. collaboration. According to Graham, these counter-geographies prove that the new military urbanism can be resisted, undermined, and debunked. Graham puts forward the new anti-military urbanism, whose tools are counter-geographies and which has, according to him, the main purpose of presenting new concepts of "security". According to Graham, it is necessary to insist that real people live in the wild, dangerous zones; the people who are more likely to benefit from political action and the belief that peace can only be achieved by peaceful means rather than the proliferation of war as the basic social relationship of the present. Only then we will be able to dream with David Harvey (2012: XVI) that the time will come again when "those who build and sustain urban life have a primary claim to that which they have produced, and that one of their claims is to the unalienated right to make a city more after their own heart's desire."

different" is not only *possible* but *foundational* for defining revolutionary trajectories.[71] This "something different" does not necessarily arise out of a conscious plan, but more simply out of what people do, feel, sense, and come to articulate as they seek meaning in their daily lives.[72] Such practices create heterotopic spaces everywhere, although these spaces are not created by the grand revolution. In this sense, *play* can give rise to such a "revolutionary moment" as it is indeed a spontaneous coming together, a collective action which can create something radically different.

Although it seeks to ignite a revolutionary moment, hybrid ludic engagement as a playful political activity is far from being aggressive. In a militarised, securitised and controlled urban space, the revolutionary moment (as something different) must be the opposite – creative, mischievous and arousing while resisting, juxtaposing, undermining and debunking the *city* as a strategy. Instead of a malign concept of the city as a battlefield, HLE offers a new perspective, a new counter-geography: the city as a playground.

HLE in practice: the city as a playground

Urban space is constructed and as such can be changed through the interactions and social practices that take place within it. A vibrant city is constituted by both its morphological properties and the movement of people. The playful hybrid approach to public space can help people to rediscover and redesign their surroundings simply by changing perspective. Hybrid space presents a new frame of reference. The four-dimensional coordinate system accepted so far, in which physical events take place (in relation to the space-time continuum it involves three dimensions of space and one dimension of time), is in hybrid space enriched by a new dimension. The digital or virtual realm is thus now a new layer which overlaps our physical reality. Our perceived and *lived* space is no longer four-dimensional. The fifth (digital) dimension constitutes hybrid space and changes our everyday experience in hitherto unimaginable ways.

From now on, hacking, subverting and jamming, participating and socialising, experiencing and commuting in an urban space can take place, apart from the old one, in a new dimension for which different laws of time-space logic applies – time-space compression is almost absolute as the time (feedback) is instantaneous, *now*, and space is borderless and shrinks into *here*.[73]

The cities of our world are hybrid spaces. As such, urban space is filled by the geoweb, which overlaps locations with *layers of geo-coded data*. When speaking about the city

71 See Lefebvre (2003).

72 See Harvey (2012).

73 This approach is called "participatory design" and has been used by designers of urban environments to give a role to citizens inhabiting the environment that is under discussion. What is new here is the employment of digital technology in the actual realisation. This employment of digital technology can take the form of games being played on digitally enhanced boards or in urban environments. These games are called pervasive games (see Benford, Magerkurth and Ljungstrand 2005; de Souza e Silva and Sutko 2008, 2009; de Souza e Silva and Sheller 2014; Hjorth 2011).

as a playground or a gameboard, hybrid ludic engagement refers to so-called hybrid reality games (HRGs) or location-based games since these games exploit all the achievements of hybrid space (i.e. digital, mobile, and locative technologies) for playful and gamified movement in the physical space. Instead of placing players in a simulated environment imitating the real world or playing in the urban space offline, HRGs use the physical space of the city as an *interactive gameboard.* Players actually move through the city for a particular purpose, according to the game design and narrative, while watching and interacting with each other (fully aware that they themselves are being watched).[74] This is surveillance, indeed. However, it is a playful, voluntary one – surveillance turned upside-down, creative misuse as resistance.

By using urban space as a playground (*playfulness*) or a gameboard (*play*), people can interact not merely with interactive installations or buildings, but primarily with each other. Play as a collaborative endeavour dissolves boundaries among people and does so without the players realising. This moment is crucial since the fear of others and the vanishing of contact points has been acknowledged as a powerful obstacle to a functioning public space. Thus, playfulness can be one strategy for creating so-called *shared encounters*, which are the cornerstones of the community as well as of public life.[75] Exclusion (be it voluntary or involuntary) does not provide security but deviance. By transforming the urban space into a gaming space – or by transferring the game from a computer screen – the familiar space of the city changes into a new and unknown environment where people, who otherwise would not meet, can get to know each other via mobile technologies. The game narrative can also lead players towards the unknown or forgotten places in the city, places – once filled with the swarm of living souls – which are now left behind. This unpredictability, which play brings into our lives, is not only an uplifting and enriching experience (highly sought after by youth) but also a socialising form. In hybrid space, both interface-to-interface and face-to-face communication take place. People can be online while on the move. The players are thus not deprived of their "humanity"; on the contrary, a new dimension of their space-time presence is enriching – via play they can experience their city in a completely new way.

The concept of HLE aspires to utilise this playful aspect of hybrid space and calls for the massive involvement of urbanites (especially young ones) in the creation of their own urban environment and setting the rules "of the game": governance via playful hybrid participation and re-making and sustaining the city (strategy) via play (tactics). HRGs and other locative media can both normalise and provide modes of resistance to certain malign power relationships.

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74 HRGs, according to de Souza e Silva and Hjorth (2009), create a unique way of connecting players to each other and the players with the space, defining a new logic of game space, which poses new questions about urban perception, daytime mobility across the city, and the relationship between serious and playful spaces.

75 See Fischer and Hornecker (2017). The term builds on Goffman's (1966) observations of "Behaviour in Public Places". Willis et al. (2010) defined these as "[t]he interaction between two people or within a group where a sense of performative co-presence is experienced by mutual recognition of spatial or social proximity".

Hybrid space and its playful, gamified nature thus present *emergency exit* sui generis. On their escape from the ordinary, young people facing hardship and exclusion in their daily life seek something uncommon, something different to know that they are still living. Play and playfulness can bring them back and show them that the ordinary, the quality of the everyday, matters and that they can contribute to change. Hybrid ludic engagement thus pushes the idea of a playable city from mere playfulness towards serious civic engagement. In this vein, HRGs present the best tactical tool (for now) against the *grand strategy*. Their social (they often change into the social media)[76] and affective character make HRGs a very effective communication channel for any idea, action or project in the public realm.[77] Municipalities, as well as NGOs, often struggle with ignorance and the "no-time" answer of the public. When people have no time for their private issues (apart from that they usually have time for play), how can we expect them to have time for public issues? The merit of HRGs also lies in the fact that they can be played anytime, in the liminal urban spaces, at Augé's non-places, that is *during* other, "more serious" activities, such as the journey to work, waiting for a bus, walking down the street etc.[78] It is at this point that HRGs crash the hitherto concept of a gameboard or playground as a liminal space, inside the magic circle, out of the ordinary. In hybrid space, play as a tactic changes into a permanent, ubiquitous and interactive option. What a challenge for participatory governance!

Goodbye municipal websites and information boards!
Who reads them anyway?
Let's inform, convene, gather and discuss via gameboards!

Of course, not all cities are smart and neither are their municipalities. Not all people are radical, playful, and spontaneous in public and many do not like being exposed to the sight of others. Pervasiveness is sometimes over the edge for the majority of "good" or "serious" citizens.[79] However, HRGs offer a more intimate, more personalised, and corporeal experience

76 As is the case with Foursquare. Van den Akker (2015) notes that Foursquare users cease to see this primarily as a location-based mobile game and instead use it as a locative mobile social network – a geosocial network.

77 What hybrid ludic engagement calls for is a deeper and broader deployment of the civic and activist potential of HRGs whose development has so far focused on their entertaining, playful capacity, as it does with the Wander Wonder Wilderness (Turano 2014 – ongoing) hybrid project or Ingress or Pokemon Go games. It is time to reassert their purposes and abilities in light of the possibilities outlined above. Being aware of the power of networked social movements, as Rheingold (2000, 2003), Castells (2015) and Molnár (2014) showed, it is clear that the change might as well start locally and spread by contagion.

78 See Augé (1995).

79 Montola et al. (2009) mention the role of bystanders who may not view the event in a ludic context and instead perceive the events as suspicious and frightening. Moreover, playfulness might seem silly and pointless. However, we must not forget the blasé attitude (Simmel 1997: 178) as a reaction of the urban dweller to the persistent over-stimulation by an urban environment: "An incapacity thus emerges to react to new situations with the appropriate energy. This constitutes the blasé

of the urban space for both those who seek self-expression, publicity and audience, and those who find comfort in their *blasé attitude*. HRGs can be developed so that any interaction with other gamers is mediated through a mobile phone rather than through physical interaction with others or the environment. Finding a balance between the two and a familiar narrative that interferes, explains, and convinces are the key challenges and tasks for the creators and developers of these projects.

It is apparent though, that apart from social workers, project managers, urban planners and public officials, game designers and developers are needed for the teams managing the playable and playful city.[80] In the "hybrid reality game unit", young people can take part since they are not only voices of the city but also native gamers, digital cowboys; not serious enough yet struggling with serious obstacles in their everyday.[81]

In hybrid space, games are not mere commodities we can purchase. In nomadic terms, they are not the endpoints but rather the paths. Play is the internal logic of the hybrid system. To be entertained, amused, excited, and thrilled, even during day-to-day activities, are the common expectations of hybrid consumers, users, voters, students, employees, and citizens. These playful needs are especially prioritised by young people at the expense of passion for serious public issues. HRGs can redirect their attention towards everyday politics, playfulness as an attitude can attract and make public issues become attractive. Play is an immersive experience. It requires absolute concentration. Via play, the absolute absence (manifested as a lack of interest) of our youngsters can be replaced by their absolute presence (active participation). The playable potential of mobile media is a helpful tool enabling not only young people to transgress social, geographical and gender borders, to overcome exclusion, to actively contribute in change by hacking the *strategy* – to create by destruction.

Let the youth raise their words instead of their voices!
Let them play; do not let them be played!
Let's become young again![82]

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attitude which, in fact, every metropolitan child shows when compared with children of quieter and less changeable milieus." It is difficult to involve and make blasé passers-by engaged while they are hiding behind their headphones.

80 See McGonigal (2011).

81 See Skelton (2010).

82 One final comment: Unlike traditional geographic space, hybrid space is dependent on digital technologies, respectively electricity and network/Internet connection availability. Without access to these, it simply disappears. Dependence on mobile networks, signals, and mobile devices makes it, in a sense, an exclusive and unstable entity. Simply put, being a part of and experiencing hybrid space implies having access to certain technologies and this can be both a matter of technical support and a question of power relations. In this sense, hybrid spaces may constitute new spaces of exclusion and the refusal of access to a hybrid space might be interpreted or experienced as a very ontological problem. In the past, being in the world only meant our body had to be present. Today, in addition, technology must also be present, otherwise, we mainly experience marginalisation, exclusion and inequality. The right to be connected or disconnected (as with access to the Internet) should thus be included in discussions about human rights and freedoms.

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