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# Ludification of work or Labourisation of play? On work-play interferences.

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> *[L]abor itself is now play, just as play becomes more and more laborious.*
> (Galloway 2013)

Games and play seem to be determined by their self-sufficiency and closely defined 'magic circle', creating a temporary world within the ordinary one. They remain on the opposite end of self-alienating work and drudgery as long as they are non-serious (Huizinga 1938/1992, 10), unproductive (Caillois 1958/2001, 10), joyous (Scheuerl 1979, 69), and utterly absorbing (Huizinga 1938/1992, 10). So, '… [w]hat becomes of games when the sharp line dividing their ideal rules from the diffuse and insidious laws of daily life is blurred?' (Caillois 1958/2001, 43). In the light of the recent ubiquity of ludification of life, the above question, posed almost six decades ago, seems particularly timely.

In the blurring of lines and opening of the magic circle Caillois sees a negative process of corruption of play, which may transform into destructive activities, such as violence (the corruption of *agon*) or drug addiction (the corruption of *ilinx*) (1958/2001, 53-54). The transgression of boundaries was also brought to attention by Huizinga, who discusses the lost purity of a frivolous playful experience on the example of commercial rivalry, where business turns into play, and play becomes business (1938/1992, 200).

In the digital age this differentiation dissolves even further. Joost Raessens (2014, 6) discussing the ludification of culture, notices that play is not only characteristic of leisure, but also turns up in those domains that once were considered the opposite of play, such as education, politics or warfare. This flooding of life with game elements leads naturally to the presence of play in the domains previously associated with serious endeavors. However, in order to understand this dynamics we need to realize that the process of ludification is not a one-way road. For as much as play enters the allegedly play-free domains of life, seemingly non-ludic practices pervade playgrounds. Such an observation becomes apparent when we think of Wittgensteinian language games ('Sprachspiele'), which form the basis of human communication (Wittgenstein 2003, § 7). Play and games are *per se* ubiquitous phenomena.

 A recent study focusing on this mutual effect introduces the cultivation of ludus, which points to other realms of life impressing their forms onto play (Deterding and Walz 2015, 7). Following a similar logic, we have developed the concept of laborization as a

contrasting term to that of gamification (Deterding et al. 2011) or ludification (Raessens 2006, 2010, 2014; Mäyra 2015). It denotes the process of the permeation of play with work elements. However, the work-play relationship is neither fully embraced by gamification and ludification, nor cultivation or laborization.

In order to encompass the overlay of the work-play relationship, we are proposing the concept of interference, borrowing a term originally used in Physics to denote the superposition of waves. The proposed work/play interference allows us to describe a transformative character of phenomena, and delineates the relation between supposedly non-productive playful activities and productive work-related behaviors. It illustrates the dissolving distinction between the two qualities, and surpasses a strictly dualistic mode of thinking. By doing so it characterizes the complexities and impurities of social praxis more accurately. In this paper we will give numerous examples of such interferences from the world of science, touching upon citizen science games (e.g. EyeWire) and other scientific challenges (e.g. Higgs Boson Machine Learning Challenge) as well as collaborative playful scientific spaces, such as CERN.

It is such interferences, transgressions, crossed boundaries or blurred lines that paint a large part of the most recent post-ludic landscape. And these are possibly taking us into the age in which we are not only saturating the everyday with playful forms of expression, but also immersing the frivolous play in productivity and labor. Or as Sicart also puts it, moving play into the realms of efficiency, seriousness and technical determinism (Sicart 2014, 5). The question remains: are we embracing the transgressing laborious and playful phenomena as empowering and engaging, or observing them with caution, restraint, or even suspicion in Caillois' spirit? Are we ready to create – through a cautious combination of labor and play – a society, which finally would be able to balance its values?

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