

Issue 04 (2016)

articles

Post-Digital Games: The Influence of Nostalgia in Indie Games' Graphic Regimes by Mattia Thibault, 1

Religion, Games, and Othering: An Intersectional Approach by Kathrin Trattner, 24

'The poor carpenter': Reinterpretating Christian Mythology in the Assassin's Creed Game Series by Frank G. Bosman, 61

reviews

Dishonored: A "Less Dark Outcome" – The Religious Milieu in Dishonored on the Pacifist Route by Heidi Rautalahti, 88

Agency and Consequence in Life is Strange

by Ylva Grufstedt, 96

To Live or Die in Los Santos: Death and Post Mortality Aspects in *Grand Theft Auto V* by Isabell Gloria Brendel, 101

Analyzing Digital Fiction: A Review by Nina Maskulin, 110



interviews

Interview with Shailesh Prabhu, Indian Game Designer by *gamevironments*, 120

Interview with Ricardo Ruiz from 3Ecologias by *gamevironments*, 127

research reports

Mapping Methods: Visualizing Visual Novels' Cultural Production in Japan by Edmond Ernest Dit Alban, 140

Interview with Ricardo Ruiz from 3Ecologias

by gamevironments

Abstract:

Interview with Ricardo Ruiz bout 3Ecologias and their work on Contos de Ifá.

Keywords: 3Ecologias, Contos de Ifá, religion, culture



Fig. 0: Not very atractive, we know, we are redesigning our logo, just as our website

Q1: Who is 3Ecologias?

3Ecologias (3ecologias.net) is a company that works in the field of ideas, and was created by Ricardo Brazileiro and Ricardo Ruiz. We have been working together for around 15 years with open technologies, addressed to culture, environment and sustainability. But around 2010 we noticed that most of the people who we worked with didn't comprehend technology as we did, so in 2011 we made our association official through 3Ecologias. The name came after the concept of the book Three Ecologies, written by the French philosopher Felix Guatarri, in which he deepens his thoughts on three interconnected networks existing at the scales of mind, society and the environment.

127

So, nowadays we're a team of 15 people who develop solutions on management, information and communication technologies towards education, environment and culture. We work with methodologies, tools and techniques for planning, fund raising and projects administration.

Q2: What is *Contos de Ifá*? When was it created and for what purpose?

Contos de Ifá (contosdeifa.com) is a video game which focuses on breaking the habit of prejudice and discrimination towards Afro-Brazilian religions, using the mythology of Candomblé religion. Its target audience are primarily children and youngsters, and the idea is that through the challenges of each phase they may learn the knowledge that's part of each story.



Fig. 1: The landing page of the game.

new may return while the state of the read with the first test of the state of the

In Candomblé there is a specific order to worship the orishas (orixás) called xirê. And the game respects this narrative, beginning with the challenge of Exú, known as the orisha of the communications. The mythology tells that Exú was worried because people didn't praise the orishas anymore, so he started consulting other orishas on how to persuade people to do so. One of them, Orungã, recommends Exú to collect 16 coconuts of dendêⁱ, so that he could turn the devotion situation. And that's the first challenge the gamer faces.

When succeeding to this test, some monkeys tell Exú to travel around the world and find 16 stories, one for each coconut, each carrying its own meaning, and those would be guidance tools for human beings. That's how the orishas offered humans the art of foretelling the future and in return for this knowledge, they started praising the orishas again.



Fig. 2: Exú travelling around the world, looking for answers for his anguish.

networmlay restants while the set Let spla most needs with a set of the set o

You may ask how did we came to connect Afro-Brazilian religion with a game. We, at 3 Ecologias, are researchers, technologists, devotional of the Candomblé and aware of the prejudice still carried along the centuries amongst Brazilian society. Feels like there's too much mystery behind the religion, but it's all about nature and respect. Contos de Ifá was born after more than 15 years working with media innovation labs at suburban areas.

So, far beyond a game, Contos de Ifá are citizenship innovation labs created to promote the cultural identity of black people and also are methods based on open technologies and agile projects development with the youth that have as a starting point radios and digital games in cultural centers and *terreiros*, ritual grounds of the Candomblé religion. Since the religion is preserved through oral knowledge, and it's not based on holy scriptures, this technology supports manners to express this orality just as it's sustained on the temples of Afro-Brazilian religion in Brazil.



Fig. 3: One of the Contos de Ifá labs, at Centro Cultural Coco de Umbigada.

networman with the first less spanned needs with the printing of the control of t

In 2003 the Brazilian Congress approved a law that included as mandatory disciplines at regular schools the study of History of Africa and Africans, the fight of black people in Brazil, black Brazilian culture and the role of black people in the evolution of national society, causing distinct pedagogies related to African culture in Brazil to emerge. This has regained the contribution of black people in social, economical and political areas on the history of the country. However, many of these enterprises did not attract the youth to the debates, since the methodologies available couldn't handle the cognitive infrastructure that new technologies and networks provide to connected black youth. And Coco de Umbigada Cultural Center - which is also a terreiro, named Ilê Axé Oxum Karé - is actively engaged in building a cultural digital Brazilian literacy while proposing methods which enable the youth to have fun along with learning, on how to break the habit of prejudice and discrimination towards Afro-Brazilian religions, in a process that enriches ludicity as means for cognition. This cultural center is based in Olinda, at the state of Pernambuco, in the northeastern region of Brazil, and we believe that they have what it takes to gather and motivate, in a privileged manner, the transformations into the hegemonic frame.

In 2010 the project started being developed by 3Ecologias in a partnership with Coco de Umbigada Cultural Center. The method used in Contos de Ifá allows the implementation of games into public schools, cultural centers, terreiros and indigenous areas, for example. The media through which we speak to the youngsters makes things easier to involve them, impacting on the empowerment of people based on their cultural identity. Putting together technology, methods, youth and the knowledge of Afro-Brazilian religion and history, we now have four phases of Contos de Ifá available to play, each one dedicated to an orisha: Eshu (Exú), Ogun (Ogún), Oshossí (Odé) and Babalú-Ayé (Obaluaiê). Two phases are currently being developed

et et les parties et le parties et le

(Ossain and Oxumaré) and this is just the beginning out of 256 stories to be produced and shared.

Q3: What is unique in Contos de Ifá, and in what way is it innovative? How is it related to video games and religion/culture?

Contos de Ifá aims to reduce prejudice of color, tradition and religion. Youth is deeply connected to the different kinds of media. Interactive experimentations are highly used by them, daily. But what kind of message are they consuming? Usually games bring with them a heavy narrative loaded with violence, abuse and prejudice. At Contos de Ifá the player will learn ancestral and natural knowledge, since the orishas represent nature. Such as the story on which Yemanjá teaches that if there's not plenty of food for all we need to share, so that everyone has a proper meal.



networmlay realized white of the left of the property of the left of the left of the property of the left of t

Fig. 4: Yemanjá, the orisha that represents salty waters, is worshiped at a beach in Bahiaⁱⁱ.

Another point is that the game is developed with the community. So they learn to program as they learn more about the Candomblé. This impacts positively both on the ones who follow the Afro-Brazilian religion, as they become more confident of their culture, and on the ones who don't, as the conversations break prejudices about the religion.



Fig. 5: Teenagers drawing candomblé stories and elements during a lab.

Between August 2014 and May 2015 Contos de Ifá had more than 33 thousands users at the platform contosdeifa.com. On Facebook it's almost 6.5 thousands users, among schools, telecenters, cultural centers, teachers and governments. In general, the young persons who take part in the labs sense the recovery of their religious and cultural identity. Beyond that, they believe it brings fresh air to their education because of the spontaneous flows of articulation of thoughts through practices with

et etwe night enthant, while et the or Lei s Pla inost nasaowth and a sent in 19 pvi n y p st la in the first in to its lei or to so a content in the sent in the

technologies and communications. Many of them begin the lab thinking they are dealing with a binary method (teacher/student) and leave it as a co-creator of a product that's capable of transforming economy into more social and human. The turn in their attitudes when you face them, afterwards, with other challenges of the lab, is noticeable.

Q4: Why did you choose this name, does it has a specific meaning?

Contos de Ifá means "tales of Ifá". Ifá is the divination system of the yorubá mythology, from West Africa, composed by poems and proverbs that tell the story of the Orishas, representing nature. The system is composed of 16 stories subdivided into 256 situations and circumstances. Since Ifá is the storyteller in the religion - which actually is passed orally from the iyalawoⁱⁱⁱ (mother of divinities) or babalawo (father of divinities) to the others, we thought there couldn't be a name more appropriate than this.



Fig. 6: In a screen of the game, the shells are thrown indicating the start point of a phase. The conches are used at the Ifá, the divination system, to give people some advices.

new ning pathons who was the SPIs most need with the service of th

Q5: What are the objectives, aims or concepts you want to share in gamevironments?

We want to share a perspective of a sustainability model engaging black youth in the market of creative technologies. Beyond capabilities on technical development and ancestral knowledge, the labs fulfill a gap on the creation of new business models that deliver results to communities as well as it implements different roles to the educational spaces put into action in suburban areas.



Fig. 7: Sound track recording for the game. Picture by Jarbas Jácome/Contos de Ifá

network rulay professions while to all get Lei s Pla index noted with the noted profession and the profession of the profession and the profession of the pr

Q6: To date, what have been the most important achievements of Contos de Ifá? How did they come about?

Although Brazil has a fame of being plural on its culture, religious intolerance has been seen especially on the context of Afro-Brazilian religions. According to the former Ministry of Human Rights, now shrunk into a secretary of the Ministry of Justice, in five years of the Dial Direct Complaints service for Human Rights (Disque Denúncia), cases involving racism and religious intolerance have risen 3.700%. And we know there's much more cases out there that are not registered.

So Contos de Ifá has been recognized by local and national prizes and funds, which helped us to develop new labs and phases of the game. We subscribed to most of these prizes, but the most important and recent one was the Bank of Brazil Foundation Award for Social Technologies, which helped us to improve the infrastructure of the lab. It also meant a lot to us, since it's a recognition of our method as model to be replied, which encourages us even more to look forward strategic movements with this project.

Q7: Apart from Contos de Ifá, in which way are video games/gaming related to your work?

Gaming has a lot to do with 3Ecologias. From the gamification methods we use to develop processes and projects to curatorial jobs and installation arts we have implemented. Since the beginning of the company we've worked with labs and installation arts that demand some level of inter-activeness, that usually requires the viewer to play some sort of game in order to pull out a specific result. Lately we have

et 19 neber night fautbatte affice e Air of Lei s Pla inont nacadowth and in 18 pvri e ar night s pvri

been often hired by artists or cultural centers that need an interactive demonstration. As an example, we have just played the curator role to a games exhibition for the Continuum Festival, one of the main festivals of electronic arts of Brazil. This year's theme was privacy, so we have set up a wide display on the games that move in this territory.

Q8: In what way do you decide on new endeavors, f.e. do you follow an established process regarding how you formulate your projects?

There isn't an established process but it's usually followed by an evaluation on economic viability and social environmental counterpart. We develop technologies for education and culture, so this investigation is usually based on more than 15 years working with media innovation labs at suburban areas.

Q9: What is your next project about, and when and where can we look out for it?

We are now searching for international funds and investors, since we aim to scale this project, doing labs in different countries of Latin America, other communities and realities where we may apply our methodology to create new games. The idea is to enlarge the network with which we work and share ideals, as a strategic process to engage more youngsters to experience this model of replicating technology on creative labs.

We are currently engaged in PlayLabito, a transcultural laboratory for youth innovation and artistic creation using new ICT tools and methodologies based on video game creation for enabling international cultural cooperation. This project aims

The country of the co

to explore the context of video games as a creation, experimentation, learning and reflection tool, which is particularly suitable for collaborative, transdisciplinary and transcultural work between young people and their communities. PlayLabito will be an international lab that will take place in four different countries — Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Spain. Its main aim is to enable the creation of citizen collaborative teams that will develop video games and interactive artistic works as a methodology of analysis and reflection on citizenship and related social issues, both on a local and global scope. This project seeks to improve the regional presence of youth in the video game global production through the re-appropriation of the medium. The communication backbone is going to be provided by the website http://playlabito.arsgames.net. For now, you can check out a bit more about our projects on http://3ecologias.net/.

Further Readings:

Parberry, I., Kazemzadeh, M.B.; Roden, T., 2006. *The art and science of game programming*, SIGCSE '06 Proceedings of the 37th SIGCSE technical, New York, 510-514.

Cronk, M., 2012. Using Gamification to Increase Student Engagement and Participation in Class Discussion. In T. Amiel & B. Wilson , eds., *Proceedings of EdMedia: World Conference on Educational Media and Technology 2012,* Waynesville: Association for the Advancement of Computing in Education (AACE)., 311-315.

Apperley, T.; Beavis, C., 2013. *A model for critical games literacy. E-learning and Digital Media* 10, London: SAGE Publications, 1-12.

network night profession while the site of the second profession and second profession profession in the second professio

McGonigal, J., 2012. *Reality is broken: Why games make us better and how they can change the world.* London: Penguin.

Miranda, J. M. M., 2002, e M. de. *Candomblé e Desenvolvimento*. Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional.

Abímbólá, K. Y., 2005. *A Philosophical Account*. Birmingham: Íroko Academic Publishers.

Pandi, R., 2001: Mitologia dos orixás. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.

Martins, A. A., 2012. As mil verdades de Ifá. Rio de Janeiro: Pallas Editora.

139

ⁱ Dendê is a fruit of the African Oil Palm (*Elaeis guineensis*), native to West Africa in the region from Angola to Gambia.

ⁱⁱ Picture by Arisson Marinho/AGECOM This image is under a Creative Commons License CC BY 2.0

iii Iyalawo and babalawo are spiritual titles that denotes the woman or the man are such as a priest, if compared to catholic religion.