78 - LUDIC SENSES SOCIALIZED BY HANG-GLIDING

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Introduction

Games and plays are part of human nature. When we are children, we imagine and fantasized; we build and transform everything around us. We can be airplane pilots, train machinists, ship commanders, etc. In this phase of spontaneous ludicity, we create our own imaginary territory where everything is possible. Until we unavoidably grow up and, without noticing, we get involved in projects, responsibilities and characteristic undelayable commitments of the society in which we live. Different from the childhood phase, where most of the time was dedicated to ludic activities, in the adult phase these activities are reserved to leisure moments. It is on that moment, characteristic for promoting a detachment of daily obligations, when the ludic spirit shows transforming any object (car, boat, bicycle, canoe, surf board, etc.) in a toy at the ludic person's service.

In hang-gliding, target of our study, it is not different. Expressions such as: "Flight Disneyland", "my favorite toy", "play in a thermal" one or "a play is going on" are common and frequent in the pilots' vocabulary. *Paulão, hang-gliding pilot and editor of the hang-gliding specialized Air Time Adventure magazine when referring to the hand-glider has emphasized that it is an expensive and sophisticated plaything so as the flying dream comes true. According to his opinion, "the greatest difference between men and boys is the price and the size of their toys."* That pleasure rescue attempt allows us to perform the following interpretation: hang-gliding is a sporting practice at the ludic person's service. Nevertheless, we believe that being based only on these aspects to characterize this sport as a ludic one, it would be as much as precipitated.

When trying to define the ludic character of the games, Bousquet (1984) reinforces this idea stating: *nothing is always automatically ludic and, reciprocally, every situation can be approached with ludic spirit*. Therefore, more than revealing the aspects related to the hang-gliding ludic character it is fundamental that it is understood in this study, the senses that the hang-gliding pilots give the those situations, bearers of calculated risk, uncertainty and vertigo.

This work has as its objective to identify the ludicity senses present in the hang-gliding pilots' speeches. We have analyzed the testimonies of an Internet discussion list published in the book Parapente Brasil (2002). Articles and interviews published in Air Magazine, specialized in hang-gliding from no. 01 to 15 have also been analyzed. The study is exploratory descriptive, with qualitative approach in which the speeches have been examined, under the form of contents analysis (Bardin, 2004).

Hang gliding

Sport of Australian origin, created in the second half of last century, along its trajectory hang-gliding suffers modifications that go from the first flights accomplished with the simple objective of challenging the gravity up to the most performable ones of the present time, where challenges, as the one of flying over the highest mountain in the world (Everest) are conquered. Despite they present differences in the gliding ratio, in the conducting manner on the part of the pilot and in the composition of their structures, hand-glider and paraglider, equipment used for the practice of this sport, in common present the fact of depending on the pilot's technical skill and the nature elements (gravity and thermal) so as to maintain them in the air.

Games

Caillois, in his work Games and Men (1990), presents game as possessor of a diversity of senses. It can be understood as: ludic activity, system of rules, material, toy etc. It can also be: free, delimited, uncertain, unproductive, regulated and imaginary activity. The author still states that Game has the characteristic of producing nothing, nor goods, nor works.

For a better understanding of the ludic hang-gliding practice universe, we will use the game classification presented by Caillois. In this classification he proposes four fundamental categories: competition (agôn), luck (alea), simulacrum (mimicry), and vertigo (ilinx). These categories are divided in two antagonistic poles: a more spontaneous one (or primitive) - the paidia - and the other more ruled one - the ludus. The paidia leads to the extempore, expansion, ludicity, amusement, day dream, and spontaneity. Yet the ludus represents a kind of training for the paidia, subordinating the game to rigid rules, the disciplinarity. According to Caillois, the ludus in its cultural form encompasses all of the modalities of radical sports that involve speed, adrenaline and enchantment, as in the sports that involve challenge, survival and vertigo.

Vertigo Games (ilinx)

Podemos afirmar que o vôo livre se situa na categoria dos jogos que buscam a vertigem (ilinx). We can affirm that the hang-gliding locates in the category of games that look for vertigo (ilinx). In the definition presented by Caillois (1990), that vertigo is characterized by an attempt of momentarily destroying the perception fixation of the things, submitting the lucid conscience to a pleasurable panic that allows the reality abrupt escape. According to Costa (2000), sports with emphasis in sliding, immersion, ascension, descent and flight enjoy vertigo in greater or smaller scale. In spite of not being a common word in the vocabulary of the one who flies, the reports of his sensations are frequent. Some testimonies presented by the pilots, regarding their flights, report moments and describe sensations that resemble to the descriptions presented by specialists (psychoanalysts, sociologists, anthropologists etc.) that approach the vertigo theme in their studies. These testimonies point situations such as: the dive in the emptiness and the contact loss with the ground provided by the takeoff, the impact caused by the ascending and descending currents during the entrance or exit of a thermal, the circular movement to maintain in the thermal ascending zone and the final approach for landing. They are also common testimonies of situations, where pilots report tension and anguish moments, followed by a pleasure, characteristic of the vertigo caused by risk sports, as hang-gliding:

"... In Andradas there was a moment in which I was very low, over an area where there were only trees, and I saw a "bubble" (weak thermal) leaving from high voltage lines, then I thought: ah, what fun, a thermal, I'm going over there...

I sometimes had bad dreams after those dangerous flights - I could not have survived it. But now I know that I would never survive if I felt bored as in weak conditions. I like to be sucked by the clouds, I like strong thermals ". (Mark Gibson, Air, p. 10, Air)

According to Quinodoz (1995), the existent vertigo in sports presents characteristics completely different from the others approached by psychoanalysis. According to the authoress, in these sports, the risk situations are faced with the objective

of approximating vertigo to the pleasure pole and to move it away from the anguish pole. That kind of vertigo is not present in all of the moments of the hang-gliding practice and, it is not always that it provides pleasure. Some kinds of equipment (hand glider or paraglider) offer such insecure flight conditions that they compromise any attempt of searching for that pleasure on the part of the pilot. Thus, vertigo may be pleasurable, but it also can provide undesirable reactions, such as anguish and even fear, as observed in the testimony as follows: "*Not all of paragliders assure the hang-gliding pleasures. I have already seen a lot of people stop flying because of bad equipment, others for flying inadequate equipment, which have "stolen" them the flying pleasure [...].*" (CUNHA, in Parapente Brasil, 2002, p. 144)

Competition games (agôn)

Due to the technique improvement on the part of the pilots, the appearance of more sophisticated equipment and the constant concern with safety, hang-gliding has developed, making way for new challenges. Several competition modalities appear where pilots test their limits in the attempt of overcoming themselves and the others. The competition (agôn) as a category of the games presented by Caillois cannot be forgotten in this context. It expresses itself in several ways, in different occasions and it does not depend on the technical level presented by the pilot. Niemayer, one of the best hang gliding pilots in Brazil, in interview for Air (xxxx), specialized magazine in hang gliding, has highlighted the competitive character of this sport with the following statement: *Hang gliding is a highly competitive sport. If we take off together, I have to be higher. If we are going to compete, my hand glider has to yield better. I want to be on top, I want to arrive in advance [...].* This competitive character mentioned by Niemayer can be observed, in disputes of championships, in the attempts of records breaking or in cross country flights. These disputes are usually made between pilots, however, depending on the flight type, the pilot experiences a competition where the dispute is made against nature, challenging their own limits.

Mimicry games (simulacrum)

Hang gliding is a sport that, in a natural way, approximates the man of the flying manner of the birds. As vultures (buzzard, condor etc.) and prey birds (hawk, eagle etc.), the hang-gliding pilots perform long flights using the thermal currents. This similar manner of flying allows that birds and pilots peacefully divide the same space during their flights. That privilege of flying with the birds creates in the pilot's imaginary a sensation that, while he is flying, as mimicry, he belongs to the select group of the winged beings, which makes him different from the common beings that have never taken their feet off the ground.

"[...] I know that my taste is not very popular, before the anesthetized *humanity and my mother, I declare that I like to fly. I like to be up there. I like to surf in the clouds. I like to fill my eyes of blue. I like to gild my beard with the last rays of the sunset."*

"I know that my taste is not very popular in the planet. They think I am crazy. But what imports me if the buzzards love me. Here in the ground I have to confront with billions of people [...] ".

"It is that I have a defect: I don't have wings and I love flying. I could be an unhappy one for being a cripple. But I am not. That's because I piously dedicate my terrestrial hours in the patient waits. I perform the jobs and I sacrifice myself in the routines so that one day, for some minutes or hours, I can be in the air. Then, it is the GLORY. In these small flotation instants my life has sense and it justifies all of the anguishes passed on the hard earth [...] ". (CUNHA, in Parapente Brasil, 2002, p. 21)

According to Caillois (1990), the mimicry can be represented through any situation that supposes the temporary acceptance or of an illusion of a conventional closed universe, and, under some aspects, imaginary, where, above all, one can personify an illusory character adopting his/her respective behavior. In this way, the hang gliding pilot does not allow that his/her takeoff is called jump, in his/her vision, to jump is toad attitude. He who practices this sport takes off as if he were a bird. During the flight the wings are not part of the equipment (hand-glider or paraglider) anymore, they are their own wings. They are the wings that allow him to explore the limits of the sky, place naturally destined to birds. When he returns to the ground, place destined to the ordinary beings, he does not go down or fall at the landing, as those who do not know the language of the winged beings would say, he lands as if he were a bird. That imaginary dimension, according to Bachelard (2001), when we allow us to dream, opens a large amount of choices and potentialities. The dreamed life, for the author, becomes potentiated. It turns out to become the possible ones into impossible ones and vice-versa.

Ludicity and pleasure

Some individuals in spite of not discarding the conventional leisure forms (theater, movies and sports in general) prefer to look for their ludicity moments practicing risk sports, as it is the hang-gliding case. According to Bousquet (1984), any activity can become ludic if it is approached with ludic spirit. Different from activities such as dancing, playing soccer or reading a book, in order to look for the ludicity in a sport as hang-gliding the individual should present a disposition to face risk situations, putting in game his physical integrity or even his own life. Aspects as skill and experience are important in the practice of hang-gliding, mainly in what it refers to issues related to ludicity. Pilots who are used to flying in different places, as the ones who participate in competitions, reach a technical level that, when compared with the others' level, is extremely superior. Besides the trust that high technical level provides, the pilot acquires a larger sensibility during the flight, starting to identify with more easiness the best hour for the takeoff, as well as the places where the best thermals (hot drafts) of the day are formed. In spite of that, there are different ways of obtaining pleasure in the hang-gliding practice. More experienced pilots, for having more advanced technical level and equipment, manage to obtain pleasure participating in championships or flying long distances searching for records. In the case of beginner pilots, the pleasure can come from a calm flight in the afternoon end, the largest altitude reached after the ascent in a thermal or, simply, the fact of having accomplished a perfect landing. So, beginner or expert, independent on the way as the pilot conducts his/her flight, the main objective will always be the pleasure search through the moments of ludicity, as it emphasized in the following testimony:

"One flies searching for pleasures. Some prefer the speed, while others prefer the permanence. Some like shakes, while others like the inertia. Some like to provoke their sails while others prefer to calm them. Some like to head for the unknown, others stay where they have already unveiled mysteries". **(Sivuca, in Parapente Brasil, 2002, p. 239)**

Competition and freedom

We can affirm that the regular practice, the acquisition of theoretical knowledge and the change of experiences among the pilots are fundamental aspects for the safety, the accomplishment of good flights and the maintenance of a ludic existence. This way, pilots that take part in competitions, due to the high demanded technical level, present larger development possibilities of their abilities when compared with the other pilots. Present in several national level championships, the hand glider pilot Konrad, in interview for Air magazine (Revista Air, ano VIII, nº 08, p. 12), considers the championships a school for the improvement of the pilots' technical level. According to him, if the pilot wants to keep updated with technique, equipment and to be updated with hang-gliding, he should take part in championships, it is over there that the things happen. In spite of that speech,

these same competitions that develop the technique are full of rules and seriousness and, in certain moments they can show contrary to the freedom spirit that the flight provides, imposing obligations and decreasing, for some, the ludic possibilities that could exist. In another edition of Air magazine, we have found Pierre Bouilloux's interview, worldwide paraglider champion French pilot, reaffirming the competition importance for the hang-gliding learning development. However, he believes that, if the pilot's idea is to contemplate the flight places, take advantage until the last thermal of the day and fly in the condition that he wishes, the competitive environment is not the most appropriate. He mentions for example, Bivouac Flying, a kind of tourism, where the pilot, as a nomad, travels long distances only using the paraglider and his legs (Reviewed Air, year II, no. 04, p. 30). Follower of this modality, he affirms that it is suitable for the person who looks for moments of pleasure, because, there are no competitive or speed concerns.

Different from the flight for the leisure where the pilot flies in the direction he wishes, in a competition, the direction that the pilots should follow during the proof is decided by the event organizing team, just before the beginning. Several times those decisions are mistaken, in the pilots' vision, making them fly in adverse conditions. Attracted by the risks offered by these flight conditions and the possibility of getting privileged position among the best of their categories, they test their limits with the objective of arriving at the end of the competition. Other pilots, for considering stressful this type of flight, abandon the competition determinations and follow their own destination, preferring freedom in exchange for the imposition and seriousness.

The cross country flight, when carried out as a leisure practice, is a clear example of the importance of the choice freedom for the ludicity moments. a Different from the determinations and rules imposed by the organized competitions, in this modality, the choice of the best hour for takeoff and the direction that it is intended to follow is under the pilot's responsibility. This way, his only concern will be to fly the largest possible distance, using the thermal currents.

Final considerations

Full of adventure and challenges, hang-gliding all the time promotes a direct contact of the pilot with the nature, a momentary disconnection of the daily problems and an encounter with the ludicity in the pleasure, creation, vertigo, competition and freedom senses. The acquired experience through the regular practice and the ability in handling the different types of equipment together with the resources offered by technology allow the facing of more and more unexpected situations. The speeches reveal that the actors choose the road of the ludicity and the aesthetics to provide the beauty idea that allows this flight practice. However, the accomplishment of a flight by itself does not guarantee that the activity is ludic. So that the flight becomes an ludic experience, the pilot should let get involved, take possession of the ludic spirit that the moment provides.

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LUDIC SENSES SOCIALIZED BY HANG-GLIDING

ABSTRACT:

This work has as its objective to identify the ludicity senses present in the hang-gliding pilots' speeches. We have analyzed the testimonies of an Internet discussion list published in the book Parapente Brasil (2002). Articles and interviews published in the Air magazine, a specialized one in hang-gliding, from no. 01 to 15 were also analyzed. The study is descriptive exploratory, with qualitative approach in which the speeches were examined, under the form of content analysis (Bardin, 2004). We have concluded that hang-gliding promotes an encounter with the ludicity in the pleasure, creation, vertigo, competition and freedom senses. The acquired experience through the regular practice and the ability in handling different types of equipment together with the resources offered by technology allow the facing of more and more unexpected situations. The speeches reveal that the actors choose the road of ludicity and aesthetics to provide the beauty idea that allows this flight practice. However, the accomplishment of a flight by itself does not guarantee that the activity is ludic. So that the flight becomes a ludic experience, the pilot should let get involved, take possession of the ludic spirit that the moment provides.

KEY WORDS: hang-gliding, ludicity, pleasure.

SENS LUDIQUES SOCIALISÉS PAR LE VOL LIBRE
RÉSUMÉ:

Ce travail a pour but d'identifier les sens de ludisme présents dans les discours des pratiquants de vol libre. Nous avons analysé les témoignages d'une liste de discussion sur Internet publiés dans le livre Parapente Brésil (2002). Des articles et entretiens publiés dans la revue Air, spécialisée en vol libre, du nº 01 à 15 ont également été analysés. L'étude est un descriptif explorateur, avec abordage qualitatif dans laquelle ont été examinés les discours, sous la forme d'analyse du contenu (Bardin, 2004). Nous en avons conclu que le vol libre permet une rencontre avec le ludique dans les sens du plaisir, de la création, du vertige, de la compétition et de la liberté. L'expérience acquise au travers de la pratique régulière et l'habilité à manipuler les différents types d'équipements unis aux recours offerts par la technologie, permettent d'affronter des situations chaque fois plus imprévisibles. Le discours révèle que les acteurs choisissent la voie du ludisme et de l'esthétique pour se doter de l'idée de beauté qui permet cette pratique de vol. Cependant, la réalisation d'un vol en soi ne garantit pas que l'activité soit ludique. Pour que ce vol devienne une expérience ludique, le pilote doit se laisser enchanter, prendre possession de l'esprit ludique que lui offre le moment.

MOTS-CLES: vol libre, ludicité, plaisir.

SENTIDOS LÚDICOS SOCIALIZADOS POR EL VUELO LIBRE
RESUMEN:

Este trabajo tiene como objetivo identificar los sentidos de ludicidad presentes en los discursos de los practicantes del vuelo libre. Analizamos las declaraciones de una lista de discusión de Internet publicados en el libro Parapente Brasil (2002). Fueron analizados también artículos y entrevistas publicadas en la revista Air, especializada en vuelo libre, del nº 01 al 15. El estudio es descriptivo exploratorio, con abordaje cualitativa en el cual fueron examinados los discursos, sobre la forma de análisis de contenido (Bardin, 2004). Concluimos que el vuelo libre promueve un encuentro con lo lúdico en los sentidos de placer, creación, vértigo, competición y libertad. La experiencia adquirida a través de la práctica regular y la habilidad en manosear los diferentes tipos de equipamientos unidos a los recursos ofrecidos por la tecnología, permiten el enfrentamiento de situaciones cada vez más imprevisibles. Los discursos revelan que los actores escogen la vía de lo lúdico y de la estética para proveerse de la idea de belleza que permite esa práctica de vuelo. Por supuesto, la realización de un vuelo por si solo no garantiza que la actividad sea lúdica. Para que esos vuelos se vuelvan una experiencia lúdica, el piloto debe dejarse envolver, apoderarse del espíritu lúdico que el momento proporciona.

PALABRAS-CLAVES: vuelo libre, ludicidad, placer.

SENTIDOS LÚDICOS SOCIALIZADOS PELO VÔO LIVRE
RESUMO:

Este trabalho tem como objetivo identificar os sentidos de ludicidade presentes nos discursos dos praticantes de vôo livre. Analisamos os depoimentos de uma lista de discussão da Internet publicados no livro Parapente Brasil (2002). Foram analisados também artigos e entrevistas publicadas na revista Air, especializada em vôo livre, do nº 01 ao 15. O estudo é descritivo exploratório, com abordagem qualitativa no qual foram examinados os discursos, sob a forma de análise de conteúdo (Bardin, 2004). Concluímos que o vôo livre promove um encontro com o lúdico nos sentidos de prazer, criação, vertigem, competição e liberdade. A experiência adquirida através da prática regular e a habilidade em manusear os diferentes tipos de equipamentos unidos aos recursos oferecidos pela tecnologia, permitem o enfrentamento de situações cada vez mais imprevisíveis. Os discursos revelam que os atores escolhem a via do lúdico e da estética para prover-se da idéia de beleza que permite essa prática de vôo. No entanto, a realização de um vôo por si só não garante que a atividade seja lúdica. Para que esse vôo se torne uma experiência lúdica, o piloto deve deixar-se envolver, se apoderar do espírito lúdico que o momento proporciona.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: vôo livre, ludicidade, prazer.