SUMMARY

TRIBES IN PLAY: Perspectives on learning and socialization in context of LAN Parties

This thesis examines the communicative and educational potential of a new type of social and technichal event: the LAN party. It documents since 2001 a surprising report : hundreds of players specify their knowledge of english, of data processing, of computing networks, of the expansion of a tactical and sporting attitude, inducing proximity with team members and even opponents, is due to the practice of video games. Can we consider the practice of network video games as an element of learning and socialization? The LAN party is a competition of network video game based on a local system which can gather hundreds of partners divided in teams, for several days, at the same place. A computing network is connected to local servers and computers provided by all players. The LAN is a tournament into which the players compete through multiplayer games regarding strategy and shooting.

Exploratory and ethnography, at first raised from intuition, this case study has been developped between 2001 and 2009, and takes place in the sphere of influence of the constructivism leaned on the paradigm of complexity and the interactionist effect, including a view to analyze relationships between players. We have selected the inductive appearance of a stabilized method, according to the Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), whose issues are synthesized through a conceptual model: the “Pedagogic LAN”. The longitudinal in-situ analysis of popular Quebecer LAN (from 2003 to 2007), supplies schedules of comparisons, signalizing the representation of questioned teams and players from 15 to 25 years old. By means of social proximity, the LAN reveals an opportunity of passing rite (Goguel d’Allondans, 2002), based on a tribal organization (Maffesoli 2000) in which the competitive circumstances imply preference to socialization, initiation and expansion of new abilities (Brougère, 2005; Gee, 2003), compared to the scouting movement of Baden Powel.

A conceptual interdisciplinary genealogy, based on complexity, entertained from writers which consider the interaction as a stake of relationship, allows to consider socialization as an identitary structure (Piaget, 1937) as well as generalized fellow (Mead, 1934) in which we observe social patterns that became ritual inside an experiment (Goffman 1974); and the whole is perceived as an ecosystem (Bateson, 1980). This enables the joining of the initiation to an experiment inside which motivation operates a fundamental function (Kolb, 1984; Vallerand 1997). Taking inspiration from the theory of activity according to Engeström (1999), a systematic modeling of the LAN reveals that the player identity thrives of an introspective and progressive socialization, through levels (or age of player) in the presential dimension. It is virtually strengthened through the experiment of “Flow” (Csikszentmihalyi), supplied by the practice of multiplayer video games through local network. With a background made of optimized initiation through the typical interactions in LAN, the introspection is favored in virtual mode and the social feedbacks in presencial mode. The conceptual model of the “Pedagogic LAN” is made of single and simultaneous superposition of a human gathering a phenomenon taking place in two worlds at the same time. This work aims at suggesting a new sociotechnic device transposable to other contexts of practice in any computing class, built like a pedagogic scenario of LAN, allowing information about subject matters, while diverting the practice of popular multiplayer video games, able to mobilize those generations whose games represent part of culture and language.