Networked Playscapes

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Play has changed with the advent of new technologies. Where streets were the playground and neighbors our playmates, now we also play mediated, across distance, with people we might never meet. Yet, physicality, materiality and commonality, strengthen our experience of the real in the realms of perception, experience, cultural and social interaction.

Playgrounds, once made by architects, artists and designers, are now almost all plastic kits made with litigation rather than play in mind and mostly used by toddlers rather than by everyone.

Digital games have taken quantum leaps at blending digital and physical play through AR, Wii controllers and motion trackers to name a few; play in the public space remains analog, confined, and mostly designed by others. Augmented reality adds a layer of information to the built environment, usually perceived through a portable device and accessible just to its owner, turning the world into a virtual personal playground.

Instead, Networked Playscapes advocates for the shared experience of networked play happening in a dedicated and designed built physical, public space; fomenting interaction onsite as well as at a distance across populations that would otherwise not interact.

Making play free again.
These days there is no reason play should be segregated from city life or for playgrounds to require real estate; there is also no reason for them to have a similar aesthetic or be mostly concerned with physical-motor activities. Since play happens between people, spaces and objects, our current ability to add largely invisible technological and networking underpinnings onto these widens the spectrum of design possibilities for ludic interaction, redefining and widening what we understand a playground to be and the functions it might serve. Networked Playscapes proposes a new paradigm shift in the conception and design of traditional playgrounds. They address the lack of diversity currently present in playground design and expand their reach as community building spaces by freeing them from the need of dedicated grounds.
Deploying in Mexico

When designing for Mexico City, we focused on creating ludic bridges to connect marginalized zones.

Called home by over 20 million people, Mexico City is deeply divided. City scars mark social exclusion and ethnic segregation hides in plain view.

Networked Playscapes had many homes, many hosts, sisters and brothers. Café Bagdad, Laboratorio para la Ciudad, La Merced, Museo Tamayo, Casa Talavera, UNAM’s Industrial Design Department (CIDI), Archivo Diseño y Arquitectura, Chapultepec and Aragon Forests, Cocolab, Conacyt and MIT’s Media Lab - all played part at making it happen.

Talk about bridges!
Creating ludic bridges to connect marginalized zones
01. Andamio
Andamio takes the ubiquitous scaffold and turns it into a networked, modular, playable structure, defying the need for a designated space for play. Andamio adjusts and adapts to where it is placed, it is built grounds-up (weave is simple enough for any skill level), uses light as a gathering beacon and extends the hours of social communion into the night. Networked, it introduces the “other” as a play variable. Its flexible design taps into imaginative as well as motor play, appealing all generations.
a networked, modular, playable structure
EL TRICICLO EXQUISITO
UN PROYECTO FABULOSO
CREADO ENTREVECINOS

ESPÉRALO EN TU BARRIO ESTE VERANO
PENSIL POLANCO
SAN MIGUEL CHAPULTETEPEC
DANIEL GARZA
ROMA DOCTORES

ECHATE EL CHORO QUE TU VOZ ES ORO

TODOS
PES.ORG
mit medi lab
MUSEOTAM
Triciclo infiltrates divided communities by appropriating the idiosyncratic cargo tricycle and hacking into the ambulantes’ roaming sales network. Rather than selling tamales or gas tanks, it turns this tool of commerce into an artifact to transport and exchange ideas, testimonies, memories and experiences rather than merchandise.

Triciclo endorses co-creation as a way to know thy neighbor.

Triciclo wove Colonia Pensil with Polanco, Colonia Doctores with Roma, and San Miguel Chapultepec with Ampliación Daniel Garza. You could find it outside schools and cantinas, punk venues and plazas, boutique ice cream parlors and penitentiaries, metro stations and hospitals. Lots of love and life advice intermingled with politics and personal credos not without handwritten emojis.
Triciclo endorses co-creation as a way to know thy neighbor.
03. ListenTree

BOSQUE DE CHAPULTEPEC

LISTENTREE

GENTE CONECTANDO BOSQUES

WWW.NETWORKED-PLAYSCAPES.ORG

BOSQUE DE SAN JUAN DE ARAGÓN

LISTENTREE

BOSQUES CONECTANDO GENTE

WWW.NETWORKED-PLAYSCAPES.ORG
Trees connecting people. People connecting forests. Aural landscapes configured through tactile and aural vibrations that invite to an intimate relationship with the environment.

A visitor to the installation notices a faint sound appearing to emerge from a tree (or several), and might feel a slight vibration under their feet as they approach. By resting their head against the tree, they are able to both feel and hear crystal clear sound through bone conduction.
ListenTree was meant to connect Mexico City’s most important forests: Chapultepec and Aragón. The equipment was installed just to be stolen... Still, we built it all over! The second round died at the hands of bureaucracy — a slow death that took two years of meetings and emails, forms and letters, scoutings and changes. Sad, but a lesson learnt!
Networked Playscapes was made possible with contributions by:


www.networked-playscapes.org
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