

# Ludic Autonomy: Breaching Experiments in Public Places

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The ludification of everything from education to media consumption and public life in cities has long taken center stage in the digital transformation of human society. Yet the social-material-psychological barriers to self-governed ludic engagement in public spaces beyond their immediate commodification and computation (or political instrumentalization) remain an understudied domain.

In this workshop, we will use breaching experiments (Crabtree, 2004) and artistic interventions as a heuristic device (i.e., an experiential learning tool) to explore visible and invisible barriers to ludic engagement in public places near the conference venue. Barriers in that context can take many forms. They may be socially constructed, physically shaped, or psychologically motivated. Some barriers may be easier to locate, for example, in the urban design, traffic pattern, pedestrian flow, local weather, vegetation, and climate; others may be hidden or based on individual perceptions, emotions, abilities, language, or tied to the positionality of the participants. The goal of investigating these barriers in real-world spaces is to understand better the criteria for creating public play territories that resist the fracturing of everyday places based on single viewpoints and functions, eliminating the encounter with something or someone new. In that sense, the main workshop goal is to generate insights that inspire ideas for the future (i.e., post-workshop) development of digital games and ludic interfaces that facilitate new and self-governed ways to engage with people, places, and material things.

Our workshop consists of three main activities:

- (1) The performance of the participatory art installation [RED CROSSING](#) (Tobier & Graf, 2020) as an initial breaching experiment for workshop participants to engage with each other and the public in downtown Guadalajara. This workshop activity uses a red walkway (approx. 2.5 x 15m) that can be lifted like a lifesaving net, allowing participants to float a few feet above the ground. The use of *Red Crossing* serves both as a physical metaphor for temporary autonomous ludic engagement zones and a stage for the workshop, claiming the space for participants and their discussion in public.
- (2) Through the use of LUDIC METHOD (Jahrmann, 2021), we guide brainstorming and discussion of further examples provided by the workshop organizers and invite participants to create their own breaching experiments. Each experiment/intervention must (i) be situated in everyday settings, (ii) go against people's presumed expectations in these settings, and (iii) be designed to

facilitate playful encounters with people, places, or material things. The breaches/interventions may build on existing projects/ideas of participants. There will also be consideration of interventions that happened historically, like those of the situationists, Fluxus artists, and others. Any of those interventions involves or involved human actions and/or the use/placement/design of artifacts that alter the environment. The experiments can happen indoors or outdoors in publicly accessible spaces. They should be temporary, non-intrusive, and simple enough to conduct in small groups (e.g., 3-4 people) in less than 1-2 hrs.

- (3) Finally, we share and reflect on the experiences and insights gained from the breaching experiments and collaboratively outline a research agenda for establishing self-governed ludic engagement zones, including new forms of ludic methods for developing digital games and ludic interfaces suggested by the participants.

We anticipate 15-20 conference workshop participants, including the organizers, plus ad hoc participants (e.g., pedestrians or public bystanders) interested in joining some activities such as RED CROSSING or other breaching experiments and discussions during the workshop. There are no selection criteria for participation, but we may ask conference workshop participants to prepare a one-pager with a short paragraph and/or image proposing a breaching experiment idea in the context of their work prior to the workshop to jumpstart the discussion.

Crabtree, A. (2004). Design in the absence of practice: Breaching experiments. *Proceedings of the 5th Conference on Designing Interactive Systems: Processes, Practices, Methods, and Techniques*, 59–68.

Jahrmann, Margarete. "LUDICS: THE ART OF PLAY AND SOCIETAL IMPACT". *Not at Your Service: Manifestos for Design*, edited by Björn Franke and Hansuli Matter, Berlin, Boston: Birkhäuser, 2021, pp. 319-332.  
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Tobier, N., Graf, R., and Low, J. "Cross when Red." In *Vocal-esk: Street Architecture*. London, UK, Toronto, Canada, 2020, pp. 68-73.