From literacy to new literacies: Mexican Fans and Makers' learning and DIY participation

De la alfabetización a los alfabetismos: aprendizaje y participación DIY de Fans y Makers *mexicanos*

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The increase in the participative capacity of the audiences has transformed the out-of-school learning experiences. In this context, an online and offline ethnographic analysis of the participation practices of fan and maker communities is carried out, through the collective strategies they develop for the creation of messages and media content. The findings reveal the emergence of new transmedia literacies based on a Do It Yourself ethos.

KEY WORDS: Transmedia Literacy, Participatory Culture, Learning, Fans, Maker Culture.

El incremento de la capacidad participativa de las audiencias ha transformado las experiencias de aprendizaje extraescolar. En este contexto, se realiza un análisis etnográfico online y offline de las prácticas de participación de comunidades de fans y makers, a través de las estrategias colectivas que desarrollan para la creación de mensajes y contenidos mediáticos. Los hallazgos revelan la emergencia de nuevos alfabetismos transmediales basados en una ética Do It Yourself.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Alfabetismo Transmedia, Cultura Participativa, Aprendizaje, Fans, Cultura Maker.

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INTRODUCTION

Communication and education are two dimensions of the social that are dependent and inseparable from each other. In this document, this connecting link is approached from the communication processes that take place in the culture of convergence (Jenkins, 2008), the participatory culture (Jenkins, 2009) and the learning processes that occur in environments other than the school.

The main objective of this article is to describe the relation that have the participation practices of members of two communities of practice (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002) with the production of information and the generation of meaningful learnings, detonated from collective interests related to media discourses (Maker Movement) and transmedia narratives (Star Wars Fandom).

The general premise from which it starts is that the Fans and Makers communities, through their participatory practices are producing significant experiences by putting into operation learning processes based on experience, leisure, collective assay, curation of information, community collaboration and self-evaluation.

As a result of this work, the use of the concept *new transmedia literacies* is proposed to describe the learning experiences being produced in culture through participation practices, *defined* (usually) in collaboration networks based on shared interests and experiences (which have a local anchoring, but they are the result of global trends). These new literacies are understood as a further alternative to the notion of literacy, by including in their process what happens beyond the instructional logics and the formative planning logics, and they seek to know how mediated culture influences people and vice versa.

While literacy (including media literacy) is understood as a formal and intentional teaching-learning process, new literacies happen unexpectedly as a result of social and cultural practices that may (or may not) trigger meaningful learnings; a reason why this article assumes the need to think about everything that is educative from the cultures of participation, beyond the formal environments of teaching. Considering also that the contemporary communicational condition (Orozco, 2011) has become the environment through which most of the social and

cultural experiences of today cross, and where the technological and cultural convergences are increasingly marking the types of interaction and sociability that dominate the horizon of societies.

PARTICIPATION: A NEW EDUCATIONAL CULTURE

From a sociocultural perspective that recognizes the importance of the communicational aspect in society, it is necessary to think of participation as a way to put into practice the agency of the subjects through the production of contents and meanings. In this sense, participation is a possibility for subjects to produce content and have spaces and procedures to circulate and share them, this as a real alternative to the mass media production logics based on unidirectional and large-scale transmission.

The issue of participation has become relevant from many dimensions. In an effort to make this importance evident, UNESCO (2005) has set the criteria to facilitate and encourage participation from access to new technologies. From this perspective, participation is understood as a democratizing process that would contribute to the construction of knowledge societies, a situation that continues to be an ideal and aspirational scenario.

According to Jenkins (2008), the culture of participation changes the focus from individual action to the involvement of the community in the production of information and shared meanings. This is possible thanks to the transition from a communicative scenario where a few produce and many consume, to one where consumption and production become blurred and it is possible (although it occurs in very specific cases such as the communities investigated here) to assume more active and committed roles to produce and circulate information.

The complexity to investigate the cultures of participation involves analyzing the spaces and daily dynamics where the agency occurs, and consider as a fundamental value the distinction between participating in the media and participating through the media. To not get lost in this difference is essential to recognize the role of popular culture and media discourses to facilitate access points and meetings for participants, either by the will and desire to share toys, download music, play online,

producing costumes and software, watching movies, remembering the past, remixing videos or engaging in altruistic causes, fans and makers participate and constantly expose themselves to a wide variety of expressions, ideas and practices that transcend the initial origin of their interest in grouping .

Moving from consumption to production implies assuming a reconfiguration in the ways in which communication processes are constructed, disseminated and observed. Mass self-communication (Castells, 2010) is a clear example of this reconfiguration where the roles of consumers and producers blur. Bearing this as a frame of reference, there are two fundamental aspects that encourage and allow with greater intensity and diversity the participation of the subjects in the communicative and cultural processes: first, the possibility (based on the digitalization, interactivity, hypertextuality and programmability) that consumers also become producers of their own content; second, digital technologies for networking make it easier for people to group and collaborate in communities to develop a wide variety of activities (Jenkins, 2008).

Community of Fans and Maker Movement

When it comes to cultures of participation, fan communities are ideal research subjects because their actions transcend consumption through the added value they offer to franchises and narratives, by creating remixes, parodies, recaps, reviews, alternative endings, and by disseminating multiple textualities through communication networks (Jenkins, Ford & Green, 2013). The participation of the fans is not a new phenomenon, however, in the environment of transmedial communication their types of involvement have become more complex and perhaps multiplied in sometimes unexpected ways.

The cultural, economic and social implications that fans have had have been widely studied from different paradigms and points of view. The works of Booth (2010), Borda (2011), Hills (2002), Jenkins (1993), Linden and Linden (2017), Proctor (2013), Roig (2011), and Scolari and Establés (2017) are evidence of these looks and of the multiple theoretical and methodological possibilities to investigate them. Analyzing the activities of the fans is an opportunity to continue thinking

about their role (as a kind of active, creative, creating and committed audience) in the light of the culture of participation, where the flow of communicative content crosses different places, and influences in unexpected areas of social life.

On the other hand, the maker movement operates from three general verbs: do, create and change, and directly promotes the DIY (Do It Yourself). Maker is a term popularized by Dougherty in 2005 that designates the ability of people to create or modify things from collaboration and self-learning (Libow & Stager, 2013). It is sought, through the creation and organization of communities of makers, that each individual can have access to the tools and technical possibilities to design, create and manufacture their own products, artifacts and technologies.

The maker's communities promote a philosophy that encourages empowerment through innovation and open knowledge, in such a way that the followers can recreate products and make their ideas and projects come true without resorting to large investments. Participants seek to be innovative and share what, how and why they create or modify. In this sense, this movement reflects one of the trends that are redefining the relationship between society and technology: technological (and, by extension, communicative) innovations are no longer exclusive of manufacturers and multinational companies.

THE CHALLENGE OF CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

The growing use of information technologies and socio-digital networks has placed researchers before the challenge of creating concepts that can explain, synthesize and make accessible the transformations that are taking place in educommunicative matters.

Since the beginning of this century, we've seen entering on the stage of research diverse phenomena like the digital natives (Prensky, 2001), the impulse to an edupunk philosophy (Piscitelli, Gruffat, & Binder, 2012), connectivism (Siemens, 2007), invisible learning (Cobo & Moravec, 2011), mobile learning (Artopoulos, 2011), expanded education (ZEMOS 98, 2012), the pedagogy of interactivity (Aparici & Silva, 2012), diffuse learning (Enguita, 2013), creative learning

(Sefton-Green, Thomson, & Bresler, 2011), post-university (Piscitelli, Adaime, & Binder, 2010), the Knowmad Society (Moravec, 2013) and paragogy (Corneli & Danoff, 2011) among many others.

Each of these concepts, with different results and scope, has tried to make evident some of the many dimensions of the traditional structure of school education, which has been frequently questioned or transformed by new media, networks, communities and digital technologies, placing emphasis on a particular dimension of this change or on some of the potentialities to come.

Regardless of which concept or perspective is chosen to problematize the changes, it is undeniable that the transformations go beyond the technologies and that, -in order to give continuity to the reflections, assuming a critical position- is needed to review what we know and what we want. This constant effort to name, visualize and characterize alternative forms of education is not new.

It is enough to remember the conceptual and theoretical contributions of Freire (1968), Gardner (2005), Illich (1971), Papert (1993), and Vygotsky (1995), who tried in their own way to understand learning and education from a perspective that recognizes the sociocultural. Perspectives that cannot and should not go unnoticed, since they have been fundamental to the recognition of the relevance of a look focused on the cultural processes of education. Some of the most innovative proposals to name the complex current panorama of what is educative take as reference the contributions of these founding fathers, and the proposal of *new transmedia literacies* is not exempt.

What is evident (beyond the way in which changes or their scenarios are named) is the certainty that educational processes, both teaching and learning, cannot be thought only in terms of schooling. In this sense, the work of Martín-Barbero (2009) is a key piece, since it characterizes the educational environment as diffuse –in the sense that it "covers and intermixes multiple knowledge and diverse ways of learning" (p.2)– and decentralized –from "the loss of legitimacy in relation to the exercise of power and transmission of knowledge centered on writing or in the textbook" (p. 2)–. These two current characteristics of what is educative make it necessary to reflect on the school from the gradual transformations between literate culture, oral culture, audiovisual and

digital as a result of the challenge that current communication and popular culture pose to the educational system in its set.

The *diffuse and decentered* condition of the educative, supposes a dimension that has resulted from the technological mediation of knowledge in social production. In this sense, Martín-Barbero (2009) suggests that technology refers not only to the devices within our reach, but especially to new modes of perception and language that result in other sensitivities, writings and readings of the world. These other sensitivities are specified in different ways in the collectives and communities according to their competences, purposes and communicative possibilities and visibilize interests and ways of doing (De Certeau, 2000) that until not long ago were forbidden or were badly seen.

When the school loses its center (of legitimation and functioning), the educational transformation fundamentally breaks through the ways of knowledge circulation and allows a slow but constant recognition of the multiple manifestations and experiences in which meaningful learnings take place. In essence, these diffuse and decentered forms of living educational practices constitute the core of what is changing in the educational experience and its link with communication.

From Literacy to New Literacies

One of the conceptualizations most used to describe the link between communication and education has been, without a doubt, the approach developed by *media literacy*. This approach has been developed over several decades and has achieved some victories, especially in regard to the recognition of a critical stance towards the media, its messages and the predominant discourses.

The conceptualization offered by UNESCO is proof of the foregoing, defining media literacy from two fundamental properties: the first one oriented to the recognition that the media are constituted through diverse textualities, in the form of sound messages, fixed and moving images, or written texts, that circulate through a wide variety of media technologies and that certain competences and abilities are needed to decipher them, understand them and participate in and through them; and second, that this type of literacy allows people to build knowledge

about the means of communication used in their society, on the way they operate, on the ways that certain tools accomplish their function and on their culture, knowledge that would facilitate the use of these media to communicate with others and produce their own critical and socially beneficial messages (UNESCO, 2011).

The concept of media literacy reflects a multifaceted phenomenon that, although it is observable, is difficult to quantify. For this reason it is necessary to build a conceptual configuration that accompanies this term, assuming it as a process that refers to the construction and appropriation of knowledge or skills that produce different experiences according to the culture in which they originate.

This recognition of the multiple modalities of literacy implies a process that is defined by the planning and the explicit will to teach. But this process makes sense only if it is accepted that literacy (to read and write essentially) has been irremediably replaced by other conceptualizations capable of accounting for the current state of the link education-communication-technologies (Gee, 2015). This transformation implies overcoming the idea of literacy as a formalized, planned and institutional process, to give place to a process where social and cultural practices define the types of learnings that are taking place in the extra, supra, and trans-school environments

Authors such as Lankshear and Knobel (2006) have proposed moving from literacy to new literacies; because it is through these that, it is possible to recognize the complexity of cultural practices that promote learnings beyond whether they are planned or verifiable. In this sense, new literacies must be understood as a social practice that does not depend on formal or planned conditions, but on the daily action of subjects (usually collectively integrated) moved by their own interests, desires and possibilities.

Based on the above, it is proposed to move from media literacy (focused on the critical intervention of media content; based on planned education to read and write), to recognize that new transmedia literacies (made possible by the culture of participation; as social practices anchored in culture) make it possible to visualize real alternatives for the construction of meaningful learning through communicative spaces

and processes characterized by a constant flow of information and a latent possibility to appropriate and resignify this information.

Transition from literacy to new literacies is a form of explicit recognition that seeks to overcome a position centered on the mere criticism of the media and the reproduction of school tasks based on the traditional schemes of education (as traditional media literacy has done), and go towards a model capable of incorporating the learnings that happen per se as a result of the participations and collaboration, which are detonated through transmedia narratives.

Scolari's approach (2016, p. 8) is an obligatory reference, given that it traces indispensable ways to consider the differences between a new media literacy (of the recent past) and a transmedia one (of the present and the future), where six essential characteristics are identified to differentiate literacy from new literacies, this is through the particularization of media support, the semiotics of the medium, the type of interpellation of the subject involved, the purpose of actions, the learning environments and theoretical anchors from which we part.

In this way, it is increasingly clear that new transmedia (relative to the discursive, participatory and collaborative possibilities) literacies (understood as what is learned in culture) must put the focus of its study on the practices that occur in the extracurricular scenarios where significant experiences and practices are privileged, based on a true culture of participation and that are far from the surveillance and control of formal institutions.

EPISTEMOLOGICAL STANCES AND METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

As a result of a constant exercise of reflexivity, the research reported here went from an approach focused on the media and messages, to one focused on participation practices (observed in the actions and discourses) that result from the socialization processes located in a specific historical and cultural context.

Defining the epistemological dimension was fundamental to recognize the tension between the capacity of agency and structure (Giddens, 1984), which results in a process to assume the subject as an agent capable of creating, recreating and giving meaning to the social,

but always as a part of a structure that has effects on their actions and discourses, this stance allowed outlining the practices of fans and makers in relation to their participation dynamics in the circular process of consumption and production. In this sense, it was important to moderate the agency capacity granted to the subjects, especially if they are thought to have capacities related to the construction of learning and knowledge (Lahire, 2006). This nuance allows identifying particularities and observing generalities, but does not admit direct or unequivocal causalities.

The previous reasoning allowed defining this research from a qualitative orientation that sought to understand social phenomena from the perspective of the subjects (Taylor & Bogdan, 1994), which also allowed assuming a phenomenological stance of the meanings, motives and beliefs that are behind the actions (Vasilachis, 2006).

To do a research about the participation practices of two similar but different communities involved the detailed exploration of the ways in which they operate and communicate, performing an analysis located in a temporal dimension linked to the everyday without forgetting the historical and evolutionary condition of their *ways of being/doing* (De Certeau, 2000). From this approach, the collection of information consisted on participant observation (face-to-face and virtual) and access to key informants. In this sense, and given that the object of study of the research carried out is related to the practices that occur in real/face-to-face spaces and in virtual/mediated environments, it was necessary to develop a strategy capable of including them without blurring them.

To give an outlet to the previous ideas, the ethnographic approach was chosen, since it was needed to know the cultural dimension of social reality, which involved developing a constant immersion in that reality of the object of study. Taking this in consideration, it was relevant to assume that: 1) to understand the culture of each community, it was necessary to go to the natural scenarios where it occurs; and 2) to unravel the cultures that define the practices of these communities, it is essential to understand the symbolic world in which people live and act (Atkinson & Hammersley, 2002).

Phases of the research carried out

The construction of the research object reported here was carried out in the manner of a bellows that expands and closes between conceptual documentary research and the observation of empirical referents. This process began with a focused interest on transmedia narratives, visible through communicative environments that encourage forms of participation through the expansion (of the stories) and the audiences' intervention in the creation of fandom (Hills, 2002), to then deepen about the participatory practices of these fans.

In correspondence with the objectives and approaches described above, a choice was made, at first, to focus the observations on a community of *Star Wars* fans. This decision was made given that this fiction is emblematic not only for (the study of) transmedia narratives, but especially for the media culture in general (Guynes & Hassler-Forest, 2017; Jenkins, 1993). The existence of *Star Wars*' fans groups in the city of Guadalajara is vast and diverse (as it is worldwide). The decision to investigate the *Star Wars Fan Club GDL* (SWFCGDL) was made due to the following reasons: a) it is the oldest *Star Wars* fan community in the city;[2] b) it is the one that calls and gathers more members;[3] c) it is the most constant and persistent in its face-to-face and virtual activities;[4] d) it is the one that has produced the most contents and products related to the narrative, such as fanarts, fanfics, costumes, fanvids, podcasts, comics, etcetera; e) it has the most media presence and visibility (in local and national media); and f) it is the one that is

involved more recurrently in altruistic projects in hospitals, schools or civil organizations.

After the first observations within the community of fans, issues and practices emerged that ultimately would be fundamental to redirect

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[2] It was formed in 1999. For more information, go to: https://www.facebook.com/groups/SWFCGDL/

[3] In December of 2017, the total number of members were 4 520 fans in the closed group of Facebook.

[4] Among its recurring activities, monthly face-to-face meetings and virtual daily conversations are organized.

the research. Several of the most active members of the community often expressed their interest in the creation and intervention of objects associated with the narrative, such as: lightsabers, spaceships, costumes/clothing, weapons/pistols, and robots. These interests found an outlet through their involvement and collaboration with communities dedicated to the intervention, modification and creation of technology and material objects. This is how the *MakersGDL*[5] community appeared on the radar, and also the way the fans associated with the makers' practices. This empirical relationship was a bridge to connect the practices of both communities and propose a comparative scenario capable of letting each group show itself, identifying their meeting points and their differences. Some of which were transcendental to outline an ideal type of participation, which fosters collective learning scenarios

MakersGDL is a community that seeks to alter, modify, reconstruct and develop different objects, processes or contents. The activities developed within this community made it possible to visualize participation practices that emerge not only from fictional media content and stories, but also, in terms of creative doing related to technology (which integrates interests as diverse as startups, aeromodelling, app development, 3D printing, drones, carpentry, digital activism, etcetera) that also occur in a mediatized environment and convey multiple interests and a complex core of interactions that have an effect on the construction of information and collaborative learning dynamics.

The participant observation phase carried out within the two communities had to combine tools capable of following the activities and conversations through both the Internet's virtual mediation and in physical presence in spaces and habitual places for their meetings and exchanges; these two variations of the observation resulted in two different, but complementary types of records. Virtual records through the observation of the interactions of communities in virtual spaces such as: Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Slack and Trello; and the records of the face-to-face observation (in the *Makerspace*,[6] and in the fans'

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[5] Founded in 2014. See: https://makersgdl.com/

[6] This kind of spaces are characterized by offering the possibility of ex-

meeting sites) that were organized on notes and photographic and sound records in the field.

This phase of the investigation made it possible to identify the gradual changes that both communities have undergone over time, especially in relation to the itinerant members and the places in which they have met periodically. In addition, it implied a constant and deep approach to the interactions mediated by digital and interactive technologies and to the processes of community formation as part of the collective agency of each group.

The participant observation worked in both modalities was very important for three fundamental reasons: it allowed gaining trust and the indispensable *rapport*, it made possible the identification of the key informants for the in-depth interviews and it led to the identification of topics for develop through the interviewees.

During the final phase of the fieldwork, in-depth interviews were conducted with 14 subjects, 7 per community, 12 of them based in the city of Guadalajara and 2 in the cities of Monterrey and Veracruz (in both cases the interviews were virtual).

The analysis of participation practices

For the research developed, the work of De Certeau (2000) was fundamental, because it allowed to understand the practices from the everyday and the popular as two perspectives that converge and reconfigure the actions of the subjects according to the strategies and tactics used to appropriate of a place of agency, either as an own place/space or an alien one (belonging to others) that allows trajectories to be followed in the manner of traces of acts (Maronna & Sánchez, 2006).

For Schaztki (1996) "the practices are a spatio-temporal deployment and a web of *doings* and *sayings*" (p. 60), where it is fundamental to recognize the spatio-temporal lack of definition to make visible the web of relationships that give meaning to what the subjects say and do.

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perimenting, manufacturing and learning through the shared use of digital and (especially) analog tools. More information on the website: https://makersgdl.com/makerspace/

The practices, understood as an analytical construction, allowed entering not only the individual actions located in space-time, but also the relationships that make these actions socially meaningful and framed in a culture (Estalella, 2011). To wonder about participation, practices led to an understanding of the subjects as individualized entities, but also as members of a community collective, with its own specificity and logic. According to the proposed ethnographic methodological approach and with an analysis oriented towards the construction of theoretical conceptualizations through empirical data, a general conceptual scheme was developed to systematize the production of data and have a conceptual structure that would function as a heuristic guide (Strauss & Corbin, 2002).

TABLE 1

ANALYTICAL SCHEME OF THE PARTICIPATION PRACTICES

Concept	Dimension	Components	Observables
Participation Practices	Historic	Mediatic / technological	Visible practices in the ways of operating interfaces and communication systems over time.
	Structural	Institutional / economic	Practices of consumption, sale, market, appropriation, public-private and hacker-fan ethic.
	Community	Organizational / operative	Collaboration practices, affiliation, networking, negotiation, leadership, rules and punishments.
	Individual	The trajectory / the experiential cognitive	Practices of giving meaning, expression, leisure, training, aspirations, emotions, feelings and enjoyment.

Source: Self made.

This scheme served to understand the participation practices through historical, structural, community and individual dimensions that have components that characterize the varieties and typologies of participation, and that are ultimately observable through speeches and specific actions

The process of systematizing the data involved the generation of codes, categories, relationship between codes and the hierarchy of categories to configure an analytical model of empirical data that combines the ethnographic method in the collection of data and the grounded theory for its systematization and analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 2002).

The coding work carried out allowed organizing and linking a variety of topics recorded in the virtual and in-person observations. This analytical coding process involved the selection, grouping and categorization of the available data, where the code, as the basic unit of analysis, was assumed from its characteristics and relations with the concepts established in the general exploration of information (Strauss & Corbin, 2002). Coding was then understood as a detailed exercise of formulating questions to the data, this through the recognition that the codes have their origin both in the theoretical referents and in the empirical data analyzed. This exercise in organizing the data involved a constant systematic search especially for properties and relationships.

The use of a systematization strategy based on coding as an analytical process in which theoretical (relationships arising from concepts) and empirical (originating from the subjects and data construction) relationships are formulated, resulted in the construction of four general analytical categories that integrate as a whole the individual and collective participation practices of the members of the investigated communities. These categories are based on the most frequent relationships between the identified codes[7] and allow

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7   That were systematized from ten integrating axes of the participation prac-
     tices of these communities: 1) *Places*: where the participations take place
     and that allow noticing the disposition and material and virtual spatial dis-
     tribution of the subjects; 2) *Participants*: that identifies the recurring mem-
     bers in meetings; 3) *Dates-times*: that allow knowing the moments in which

organizing the levels of the analytical scheme described in Table 1. Namely, these categories are: Creative Appropriation, Community Collaboration, Leisure Management and Transmedia New Literacies, which are developed hereunder.

Results: Categories for Interpretation

The central argument starts from the analysis of the hypermediatized and transmedial context that encourages emerging possibilities to access information and the production of knowledge, as well as media/digital contents and material objects

Participatory culture is assumed as a fundamental aspect that has brought new educommunicative challenges, especially because this culture promotes that: a) consumers assume a more active and creative role; b) communities that promote an attitude based on Do It Yourself emerge (or consolidate); and c) the economic, technological and cultural conditions are given so that expressions based on the diversity of participation flourish (Jenkins, 2009).

Participation and learning practices transcend the communicative and media dimension of everyday life and converge with other ways of giving meaning to the agency. From the above, the hypothesis of this work is that the communities of fans and makers, through their participation practices, produce significant learnings based on lived
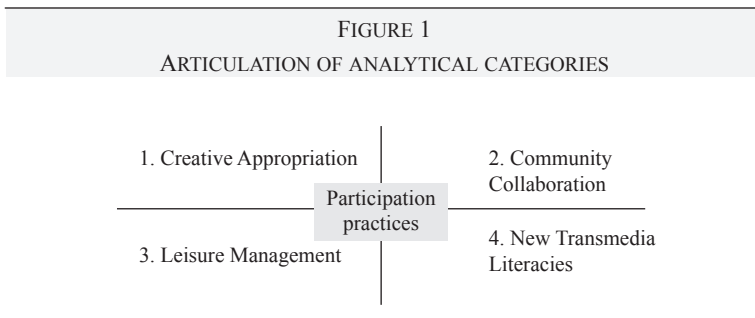
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face-to-face interactions occur more frequently; 4) *Relationships*: inside and outside the communities, meaning, a network map of how members weave their own personal and group bonds with each other; 5) *Encounters*: which are the types of exchanges that are carried out by each community; 6) *Topics*: what is discussed and how they were addressed during the sessions (work, celebration or altruism); 7) *Rules*: which are negotiated between members according to specific situations or with the intention of foreseeing (or resolving) internal or external conflicts; 8) *Expectations*: that are formulated based on the plans or future projects of the community; 9) *Technologies*: which refer to the technical, practical and manual use of devices for creation, modification and intervention: 10) *Media*: understood as interfaces and communication systems that allow access and exchange of messages and content.

experience and daily interactions. Thus, it seeks to account for how the agency of the communities is significant under certain contexts and situations that although not always accessible, sometimes leave traces sufficiently revealing to formulate concepts and explanations.

The use of a systematization strategy based on coding as an analytical process, in which empirical relations are formulated, resulted in the construction of categories of analysis to articulate the complexity of the object of study. The articulation of the four analytical categories is as presented below:

FIGURE 1

ARTICULATION OF ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES

1. Creative Appropriation		2. Community Collaboration
	Participation practices	
3. Leisure Management		4. New Transmedia Literacies

Source: Self made.

As seen in the previous figure, the participation practices are located at the center, this is because it is the key concept that crosses all the dimensions of the analysis, and is through which are interwoven the lived experiences that have implications in the strategies in which communities appropriate and produce, collaborate collectively, manage their leisure-entertainment, and learn in the transmedia communication environment.

Creative Appropriation is a conceptualization that addresses the relationship (in tension) of the acts of consuming-producing and using-resignifying. The consumed and produced can be either information, knowledge, media-digital content or even tangible materials. This conceptualization addresses appropriation strategies associated with creative practices and the capitalization of participation for the personal benefit of members and communities.

The support for the appropriation concept transcends the notion of consumption understood as simple purchase or acquisition and of production considered beyond an exclusive act of large companies or media conglomerates. For this purpose, a typology of the appropriation forms that result from the participation practices in the context of a constant production of meanings, digital-media contents and material objects is proposed.

Some of the fundamental premises that are deployed from the notion of Creative Appropriation is that both makers and fans are creators, although of different products and through different strategies, and that their practices give value: 1) to their communities; 2) to the discourses and narratives from which they start; 3) to other associated communities; and 4) to the local context where they act. In this sense, it is important to give attention to the fact that the consumption-production relationship is one of the fundamental tensions that make visible the participatory culture, and where education (in its broadest sense) continues to have more challenges to solve.

The constant tension between appropriation (as a variant of consumption) and the creative dimension (as a possibility of production) has resulted in the articulation of concepts that integrate these practices in favour of a more systemic understanding that does not reduce the agency of the subjects to simple victims of the market or to emancipators of the system. The stance opts for a discernment of the forms of appropriation and production that are observable and tangible.

Both fans and makers have developed specific strategies to appropriate content, themes and values, from a sense of community based on the commons. In Figure 2 it can be observed a list of materials and content related to *Star Wars* that members of that community produce, share and make available through Facebook.

These practices refer to a strategy characterized by the selection, storage and redistribution of diverse contents and materials. Fans use this provision as a space for accumulation and collection of materials that have been "found" on the Internet (in other communities or sites) or that have produced. Participating in these processes is the result of a decision-making that does not happen automatically due to the mere fact that Facebook allows it, but requires an active will, emotional

FIGURE 2

FANS' COLLABORATIVE VIRTUAL LIBRARY
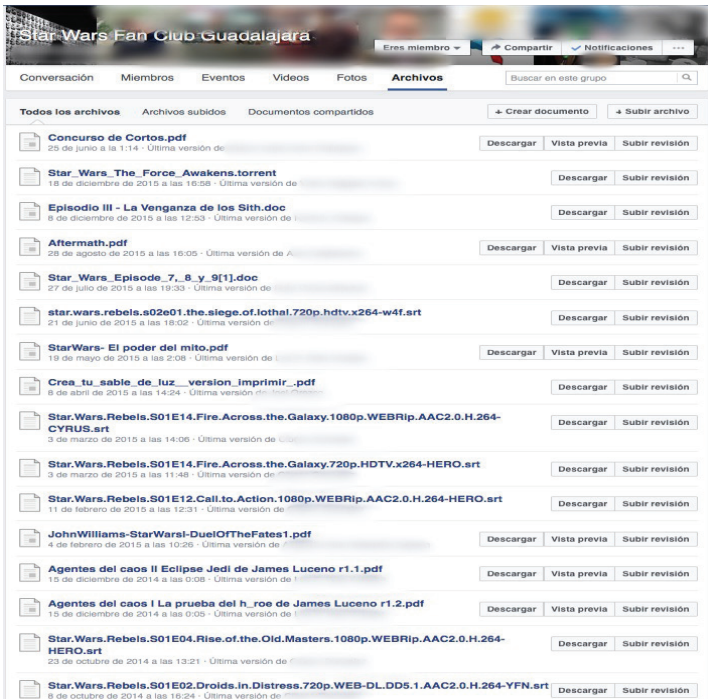
Source: Community Facebook group.

disposition and technical skill to achieve the task, whether sharing or to signify and validate what others have made available.

These strategies make sense because the existence (and availability) of all media and material content on the narrative exceeds the individual capacity of a fan to access their consumption and appropriate them.

However, there are other forms of Creative Appropriation that bring into play much more specific and innovative strategies. For example, in the case of the makers, the community focuses its appropriation strategies on practices based on the domain of affinities and passions and not on technologies and tools. This becomes especially significant

because they are constantly faced with the goal of integrating new members who, while openly recognizing their lack of experience for the manufacture or use of specialized software or hardware, can show themselves as active, willing and open to acknowledge their experience and knowledge limitations so then they have something to learn from others.

Research and experimentation as two strategies of appropriation, complement each other and are integrated into the set of practices that give meaning to collective actions of information's exchange and production. One of those practices is the intervention, modification and writing of code lines (for software use and development), for which the makers use different platforms with material available to be modified or to be created from scratch.

The second analytical category addresses the collective practices of the communities in terms of a *Community Collaboration*, as they pursue shared objectives in favor of their own members, but also for the benefit of the local social environment. This is shown specifically in alternatives for them to exercise altruism, activism and a deep social sense anchored in collaboration, free access and the development of a civic imagination that encourages citizenship alternatives.

These possibilities account for a collective learning based on mobilization related to common causes and interests, where individual action is guided by the fact of *being together*, that is a reflection of passions and affections, but also of professional, political or economic interests of the members. In the makers' case, for example, this happens through a *management of the hopes* of local social problems, which contrary to what one might think, do not lie in the simple use of technology, but in a rebellious attitude that seeks to transform the traditional (or expected) meanings of the software or hardware they have available.

The collective work of the communities finds a renewed sense when it directs a good part of its activities to social causes and concerns that not only transcend the fictional narrative or the media discourses, but also allow to resignify the stories and messages, by giving them cultural properties that have little to do with the values, principles or lessons that the fiction and (certain speeches like the DIY) the media promote.

In the case of the fans, the experience varies according to where their practices are directed and from where their motivation to affiliate to the groups starts. This is what Carla explains: "For many of us, the best thing about *Star Wars* is that it is the perfect excuse to know and help others ... to work with people you could not know in other ways".[8] The opportunity for collaboration opens up as a latent possibility not only to find group identification, but especially as a window to give vent to their personal experiences, as those fans who use the group to put into practice their skills for drawing, sewing, photographic editing, writing, etcetera.

From the *Community Collaboration*, it emerges the idea of a *transmedia mobilization*, which is characterized by the use of narrative elements and the participation of people to expand the fictional meanings and apply them to entities, problems and social causes that provides or encourage a greater understanding of a society's urgent problems (Costanza-Chock, 2010). This form of mobilization has two variants: the first is *hacktivism*, based on the hacker ethic (Himanen, 2011), from where it is wished to influence technologically and culturally on issues related to the defense of digital rights, the neutrality of the Internet, the right to be forgotten, privacy and a free access network; and the second variant calls for a sustained recognition that makes visible the importance of access to production and manufacturing technologies to democratize invention and the creation of value, influencing productive chains.

Leisure Management is a concept that allows the participation practices linked to entertainment to be taken as activities with multiple meanings, uses and effects. It seeks to reconceptualize the idea that entertainment is (above all) unproductive. As it could be observed, it is through the management of leisure times, that the members of the communities are able to organize their future expectations and the construction of collective memory, which allows the development of a shared emotional culture that encourages the development of specific skills to benefit from entertainment and the passions that it arouses.

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[8] Face-to-face interview with a founding member of the fan club in August 2016.

Leisure as an analytical category should not be understood as an opposition to work, but as a symbolic space from which subjects create shared meanings and through which they shared wills, passions and affections that have an effect on the ways to validate and regulate information and the experiences of others. When developing strategies for the administration of leisure time, it is promoted a kind of learning that encourages the responsibility of the subjects through the identification of benefits or needs.

The practices of communities that aspire to leisure as a way to achieve fulfillment (in the classical sense) are political positions that deny or reject the temporal division of lived experience only in work and free time. In this sense, the most committed members of both communities do not devote their free time to the activities that motivate their passion, because they do not have free time (all their time is dedicated to their passion, which generates ways of being busy). For them, there is no such separation between work time and leisure time, their interest and commitment is continuous, without pause and without rest. This is visible because their trades and jobs are built and exercised from a constant search to satisfy their passion of being a fan or a maker.

For example, when the (more committed and consistent) makers and fans members work and have fun at the same time, they manage to make their trades, jobs and ways to earn income depend directly on their passion and interest. This transforms their disposition to assume themselves as fundamental for the community, which generates a deep involvement and leads to acts of creativity (in the sense of creation) to be social constructions capable of affecting (related to affection) others.

Finally, *New Transmedia Literacies* is an analytical category that allows the grouping of participatory skills, collective knowledge and transmedia learning, which redefine the experience of the educative dimension in each community.

Participatory skills refer to the necessary competencies to achieve effective participation, ranging from the importance of issuing messages in different textualities, to the ability to develop empathy and to understand the views of others, or the disposition to collaborate with heterogeneous groups that have interests and education sometimes opposed to their own. The idea of transmedia learning is based on

participation and expansion, understood not only from stories and narratives, but also to other types of discourses and textualities that allow prosumers to generate experiences that are internalized individually and collectively.

The proposition is to understand transmedia learning from: a) the diversity of mediations and communicative textualities to which a subject in the informational society is exposed; b) informational interactions focused on the self-managed appropriation from users and prosumers; and c) the transmediatic context in which occurs the communication that promotes the diversification and creation of relatively new skills and abilities that subjects need every day to be in hypermediatic reality.

New literacies are then understood as an alternative conceptualization (to literacy) to identify the diverse forms, anchored in the culture and in the daily interactions, in which learnings become real. The transmedial dimension of these new literacies refers to the properties of transit, transformation and evolution in which the processes of production of information, experiences and knowledge happen.

The stance supporting new transmedia literacies consists in making visible the need to transform the educative issue through constant recognition of other forms of organization, new pedagogies, disciplinary diversification, production of network experiences, and the generation of more diverse curricula, in order to achieve a dialogue and more fluid, open, honest and meaningful interactions among the members of the society.

The unprecedented about the combination of new literacies and transmedia lies in the approach of six fundamental dimensions in educommunicative matter: 1) access and filtering; 2) reflection and understanding; 3) digital-analogue creation and production; 4) sharing and collaborating; 5) the multimodality of languages and media; and 6) innovation and creativity. Each of these dimensions requires their own strategies to find possible alternatives that help solve the challenges of our time. Therefore, they should not be assumed as aspects that can be applied or adapted to convenience, but should be found as a result of self-managed practices and experiences based on the most genuine interests of the participants.

An example of communication skills and production of media materials happens when the members of *MakersGDL* call for the integration and participation of people who might be interested in the movement. As shown in Figure 3, the sum of diverse profiles is very important, for which they are striving on finding people interested in participating that are diverse (from their point of view) to add value to the shared experience through divergence.

FIGURE 3

CALL TO JOIN THE COMMUNITY

Source: Community Twitter.

The integration of new members is due to a continuous process of strengthening the body of skills available as a community. This implies that the makers are assumed as a group that requires a constant updating of their profiles, so that they can share knowledge and experiences as a result of the projects carried out.

CONCLUSIONS

For an ethic of Do It Yourself participation
The researched practices allow to propose the existence of a DIY ethic and a hacker spirit (which crosses the vast majority of educational

experiences), understood through Williams's (1980) "structures of feeling" and from the fact that participation and Self-managed production is visible in terms of attitudes, feelings, values and logics shared by the members of communities, and that shape not only their collective doing, but also a variety of meanings about their position towards the media, the forces of the capitalist economy, institutionalized education, forms of government and other crucial elements to understand the current moment of society

The research carried out reveals a growing tendency towards a kind of participation focused on the premise that encourages *Doing it yourself*, which does not mean that encourages *Doing it alone*, but rather that the proclamation indirectly invites to action through collaboration and integration to affinity and belonging groups

Assuming participation from the logic of DIY is possible thanks to the integration of a set of values and principles characterized by an attitude and active disposition that is known to be creative and capable of modifying, intervening or remixing. The ethics of DIY participation should be understood as a set of values that emerge as a result of the activities that this kind of community develops and that materialize through expressions and collective creations. This kind of participation is not exclusive to these communities, the aim is to extrapolate their practices to collectives that share the following four fundamental characteristics in their ways of participating: 1) a constant search for creative, artistic and decision-making autonomy; 2) the existence of self-determination in the degrees of involvement and affiliation, which allows people's participation to be genuine (or doesn't happen at all); 3) that everything that is necessary to know to satisfy desires and passions is out there waiting to be learned or constructed; and 4) that consumption without production and participation is incomplete and unsatisfactory.

In order for the values and principles of DIY to spread, it is necessary to recognize that collaboration and collective work are indispensable, and that the contributions that result from these participations are significant for the purposes set by each community or even that they can become social and cultural benefits where they are located.

Thinking about participation from a DIY ethic implies a reformulation of the idea of what is educative in terms of the effects of participation practices that popular culture promotes towards formal education in school, and how this education should include those practices to reformulate their methodologies, organization and purposes.

In this sense, and connecting to the context of the empirical references described here, DIY ethics is better understood when conceived as passion, values, attitude and enthusiasm for manufacturing, creative and manual trades, the ability to invent, reconvert materials, repair objects or produce cultural content. These characteristics would be very similar to the mentality of the craftsman described by Sennett (2008), given that there is a reconfiguration of the work-leisure relationship where borders are increasingly blurred and where production logics aim to *thinking with the hands* (even when it comes to software) where the enjoyment of a practice would lead to the constant repetition of the same and, consequently, to the domain of this activity. In this way, the learning processes are necessarily influenced by the Do-It-Yourself practices, which transform the power relations between the knowledge, the teacher and the subject that learns, not only questioning this articulation, but on many occasions rendering obsolete the link between someone specialized only in teaching and another willing only to learn.

One of the most interesting issues in terms of the attitudes and values of this ethic of participation is the one that addresses the will to find and propose new uses of technology and the contents available in the media. This implies a type of active participation focused on recreation, referencing and intertextuality that takes as inspiration the work and creations of others to create something new. And with this, promote a political and aesthetic position capable of resisting, disobeying, imagining and innovating in the changing transmedial environment.

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