

Tactical Performance, Serious Play, and Social Movements: Exploring the Power of Simulation and Role-Playing for Social Change

Social movements have long recognized the power of performance to raise awareness, inspire collective action, and challenge social norms. In recent years, tactical performance and serious play have emerged as innovative approaches that harness the power of simulation and role-playing games to facilitate social change.

This article explores the theoretical underpinnings and practical applications of tactical performance and serious play in social movements. We will examine how these strategies can foster empathy, raise awareness, and mobilize individuals to work towards a common goal.

Tactical performance is a form of artistic intervention that combines elements of theater, dance, music, and visual art to disrupt daily life and provoke thought about social issues. Unlike traditional protest marches or rallies, tactical performances often take place in unexpected locations and employ unconventional tactics to engage the public.



Tactical Performance: Serious Play and Social

Movements by M.C. Bishop

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One notable example of tactical performance is the "die-in" protest, where participants simulate death in public spaces to draw attention to issues such as police brutality or climate change. Another example is the "flash mob," where a group of people perform a coordinated dance or mime in public, often using humor or absurdity to convey a social message.

Tactical performance is effective because it uses art as a catalyst for social change. By interrupting the everyday routine and engaging the public in a novel and thought-provoking way, these performances create opportunities for critical reflection and dialogue.

Serious play is a term used to describe games that are designed for educational, therapeutic, or social purposes. These games often simulate real-world scenarios and require players to assume the roles of different characters. By engaging in serious play, participants can develop empathy, learn new skills, and collaborate with others towards a common goal.

In the context of social movements, serious play can be a powerful tool for raising awareness, fostering dialogue, and mobilizing collective action. For example, the game "Occupy Wall Street Monopoly" was designed to simulate the financial crisis and the Occupy Wall Street protest movement. By playing the game, participants could learn about the complexities of the

financial system and the challenges faced by protesters fighting for economic justice.

Numerous social movements have successfully employed tactical performance and serious play to advance their causes. Here are a few notable examples:

- **The Yes Men:** A group of activists who use pranks and hoaxes to expose the absurdity and hypocrisy of corporate and political power.
- **Theater of the Oppressed:** A method developed by Brazilian theater director Augusto Boal that uses interactive plays to explore social issues and empower marginalized communities.
- **Jane's Walk:** A series of neighborhood walks organized to celebrate city planning and community building.
- **The Blue Dot Game:** A multiplayer online game that teaches players about environmental issues and the importance of collective action.

Tactical performance and serious play offer powerful tools for social movements seeking to foster empathy, raise awareness, and mobilize collective action. By using art, simulation, and role-playing games, these strategies disrupt the everyday routine, create opportunities for critical reflection, and empower participants to work towards a common goal.

As social movements continue to evolve, we can expect to see even more innovative and effective uses of tactical performance and serious play. By harnessing the power of these strategies, social movements can engage the public, challenge the status quo, and create a more just and equitable society.



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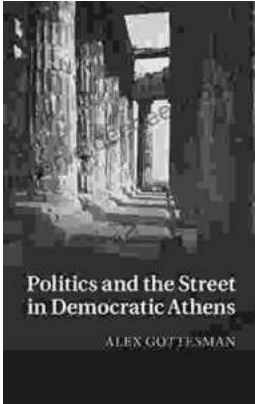
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