

Kumulative Habilitation

**Games und Gamification.  
Kulturhistorische,  
medienwissenschaftliche, politische  
und ästhetische Dimensionen**

Dr. (phil.) Mathias Fuchs

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# 1. Einleitung

Die in dieser Sammlung zusammengetragenen Texte reicht der Autor als kumulative Habilitationsleistung bei der Fakultät Kulturwissenschaften der Leuphana Universität Lüneburg zum Zwecke des Erwerbs der Lehrbefugnis für die Fachrichtung „Medien- und Kulturwissenschaften“ ein.

Alle Texte sind nach der Veröffentlichung meiner Promotionsschrift im Jahr 2010 erschienen und sind bei den Verlagen Springer, Campus, Böhlau, meson press, Routledge, Carnegie Mellon Press und verschiedenen Journalen in deutscher, italienischer oder englischer Sprache herausgegeben worden. Ich füge der Textsammlung ebenfalls das Einleitungskapitel einer Monografie bei, die derzeit im Satz ist und im Sommer 2019 bei Bloomsbury Academic/ New York, herauskommen wird.

Als Einzelveröffentlichungen behandeln sie jeweils unterschiedliche Themen, sind aber alle den Fragestellungen der Game Studies und insbesondere dem Phänomen der Gamification verpflichtet. Seit dem Zeitpunkt der ersten hier zusammengestellten Publikation hat sich das Fachgebiet der Gamification Forschung gewaltig weiterentwickelt. Von verschiedenen Autoren wird das Jahr 2010 als die Geburtsstunde der Gamification Forschung angegeben Yongwen Xu (2011) bezieht sich auf einen Vortrag Jesse Schells aus dem Jahr 2010 auf der *D.I.C.E.*- Konferenz in Las Vegas. Fast zeitgleich erschien Sebastian Deterdings Vortrag „Pawnd. Gamification and its Discontents“ (2010). 2010 gab es weniger als ein Dutzend ernstzunehmende Publikationen zum Thema. Heute (Januar 2019) finden sich allein im akademischen Veröffentlichungsverzeichnis ORCID 1301 Titel.<sup>1</sup> Der Zeitraum von 2010 bis zum gegenwärtigen Zeitpunkt ist daher bedeutsam für das Verständnis digitaler Formen von lediglich ludisch drapierten oder vollständig ins Spiel implementierten Praxen. Ich möchte allerdings mit den hier vorgelegten Schriften die Behauptung ausführen, dass vordigitale Formen von Gamification entscheidend für das Verständnis zeitgenössischer Verschiebungen ins Ludische sind und den kulturwissenschaftlichen Hintergrund dafür auffächern, wie

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<sup>1</sup> Im Mai 2018 waren es erst 791 Veröffentlichungen bei ORCID.

das Gegenwartsphänomen aus seinen kulturhistorischen, medienwissenschaftlichen, politischen und ästhetischen Rahmenbedingungen heraus begriffen werden kann.

Ich hoffe, damit zeigen zu können, dass Gamification Forschung gestützt auf die Untersuchungsstränge der Game Studies eine veritable Fachrichtung ist. So wird in dieser Schrift auch die Behauptung entkräftet, dass Gamification nur ein „Hype“ sei, oder – Verzeihung für das starke Wort – „Bullshit“ wie Ian Bogost, das einmal formulierte (2011). Als wichtiges Resultat der Habilitationsschrift sehe ich es, Perspektiven für Forschung und Lehre an der Leuphana Universität Lüneburg zeichnen zu können, die aus dem Ursprung, dem Gesamtzusammenhang, den Seitenrouten und der kritischen Auseinandersetzung mit Gamification und Ludification (Raessens 2006) als kulturwissenschaftlichem Phänomen entwickelt werden.

Bevor ich auf Themenkomplexe und Untersuchungsfelder zu Gamification detailliert eingehen werde, möchte ich noch kurz mein Verständnis von Kulturwissenschaften darlegen. Die zehnjährige Lehr- und Forschungstätigkeit an der University of Salford in Manchester hat meinen Begriff von Kulturwissenschaften mit den Methoden und dem Forschungsfeld der Cultural Studies in Berührung gebracht und beeinflusst. (Williams 1958; Hogart 1957; Hall 1972) Von verschiedenen Beobachtungsstandpunkten wurde bemerkt, dass deutsche Kulturwissenschaften nicht deckungsgleich mit den britischen Cultural Studies sind (vgl. Marchart 2003; Lindner 2000), ich denke aber, dass die Gemeinsamkeiten ausreichend groß sind, um es zu ermöglichen von beiden Wissenschaftstraditionen zu profitieren, ohne in Inkommensurabilitätsfallen zu stürzen oder theoretische Widersprüche zu generieren.<sup>2</sup>

Man kann von den Texten, die in dieser Schrift versammelt sind, sagen, dass sie im „magischen Dreieck“ von „Kultur, Macht und Identität“ angesiedelt sind. (Marchart 2003: 10) Ganz im Sinne Marcharts möchte ich daher auch die im Untertitel dieser

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<sup>2</sup> Da ich jedoch die Arbeit an einer deutschen Universität abgebe, habe ich einige Texte ausgeklammert, die ich in den UK dazugefügt hätte. Dies sind Texte aus Journalen zur Designtheorie, Beiträge für Kustmagazine und populäre Fachzeitschriften, insgesamt also Publikationsmedien, die Oliver Marchart mit Blick auf die Birmingham School der „Erwachsenenbildung“ zurechnen (Marchart 2003: 8) und für die Cultural Studies als legitime Vermittlungsinstrumente zulassen würde. Da diese Texte formal und vom Sprachduktus nicht den hierzulande gültigen akademischen Kriterien genügen, sind sie auch nicht in die Textsammlung aufgenommen worden.

Arbeit genannten „politischen und ästhetischen Dimensionen“ verstanden wissen. Ohne den Anspruch zu erheben, eine politische Theorie oder eine Ästhetik zu schreiben, verwende ich politische und ästhetische Reflexion als wichtige Referenzdimensionen. Diese Schrift ist keine Ästhetik, keine soziologische Abhandlung, ja nicht einmal eine politologische Expertise. Es geht hier um eine kulturwissenschaftliche Untersuchung, die Ebenen des Sozialen, des Politischen und des Ästhetischen mit Sorgfalt mitbetrachtet, ohne dabei anzustreben, einer Ästhetik des Spieles nahezukommen, oder gar eine soziologische Theorie spielerischen Handelns zu auszuarbeiten.

Das gegenwärtige wie auch das historische Phänomen der Gamification soll im besagten Dreieck von Kultur, Macht und Identität verortet werden, vielleicht sogar im Viereck, dessen vierte Ecke Medialität heißt - oder im Fünfeck, das dann auch noch Ästhetik einschließt. Sicher kann davon ausgegangen werden, dass Grenzverschiebungen zwischen dem Ludischen und dem Nicht-Ludischen ihre Premiere nicht im Jahr 2010 hatten, sondern vielmehr kulturellen Dynamiken geschuldet sind, die sich lange vor unserem Jahrhundert entfalten konnten. So sind Eric Zimmermans Proklamation, dass wir nun dabei sind, ins „ludic century“ einzutreten (Zimmerman 2013) und James Combs epochentheoretische Behauptung, wir befänden uns in „a new phase of history characterized so much by play that we can deem it a play world“ (Combs 2000, 20) nur ein spätes Echo auf eine Behauptung Daniel Bernoullis aus dem 18. Jahrhundert (Bauer 2006). Letzterer stellte bereits 1751 fest, dass „unser Jahrhundert in den Geschichtsbüchern zusammengefasst werden könne als ... das Spielsaeculum.“ Natürlich meinte Bernoulli damit nicht das Gleiche wie Zimmerman. Die Verwandtschaften und Bedeutungsunterschiede herauszuarbeiten, ist eine der Leitfragen der kumulativen Habilitationsschrift. Im Buchkapitel „Predigital Precursors of Gamification“ aus dem Sammelband „Rethinking Gamification“ (Fuchs, Fizek, Ruffino & Schrape 2014) gehe ich ausführlich auf spielerische Neuerungen der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts ein. Spiel war zu Bernoullis Zeiten eine kulturelle Praxis, die jeweils lokal inszeniert wurde, auch wenn die Spielregeln bisweilen international – und das hieß damals europaweit – entwickelt und codiert wurden. (So wurden die Spielregeln für das Kartenspiel *L’Hombre* zwischen Spanien, Frankreich und dem österreichischen Habsburg ausgehandelt und modifiziert. (Fuchs 2014a: 132; Fuchs 2016) Unter den Bedingungen zeitgenössischer Digitalität spielen wir oft weltweit vernetzt, folgen aber Codes, die lokal entwickelt werden (beispielsweise bei SONY in Minato, Tokio) und dann planetenübergreifend hegemonial diktiert werden. Solche

Unterschiede müssen sich offensichtlich auf Identitätsbildung in jedem der beiden genannten Zeitabschnitte auswirken.

Weiter gefasst kann man den Aspekt der Identität so beleuchten und hinterfragen: Wenn es richtig ist, dass Gamification zum Diktat wird, (wie ich das im Buchkapitel „Ludische Mobilmachung“ (2016) nachzuweisen versucht habe,) oder wenn wir gar in einer „Ludictura“ leben, wie dies Flavio Escribano (2012) polemisch behauptet, wie konstituiert sich dann Identität angesichts dieser Verbindlichkeiten? Gamification ist kein frei wählbares Angebot. Gamification widerfährt den Bewohnern der „Infosphere“ (Floridi 2014), ganz gleich ob sie dies wollen oder nicht. So ist beispielsweise die Einrichtung eines Loyalty Accounts bei einer Fluglinie unverzichtbare Vorbedingung dafür, gewisse Warteräume benutzen zu dürfen, Trinkwasser zu erhalten, rasten und sitzen zu dürfen, usw. (vgl. Niklas Schrapes Buchbeitrag zu „Gamified Loyalty“ in Fuchs et al. 2014: 24-28) Der spielerische Wettkampf um Flugmeilen, *silver cards* und den Senator Status wie er von *Star Alliance* und vielen anderen inszeniert wird, ist daher als Spiel deklariertes Tauschhandeln zu verstehen, das sich unter dem Duktus einer „liberal-libertären Bevormundung“ (Thaler & Sunstein 2008) vollzieht. Diktat ist Gamification also nicht im Sinne autoritärer Anweisungen der Kontrollgesellschaft, sondern eher – Spielen macht ja bekanntlich Spaß – selbstverhängte, wenn auch nicht selbstverschuldete Einschränkung. Damit ist man am zweiten Bestimmungspunkt des kulturwissenschaftlichen Dreiecks angekommen: Macht.

Escribanos Begriff der „Ludiktatur“ trifft nicht präzise, wie Macht sich durch Gamification vermittelt, wie sie disseminiert und durch wen sie exekutiert wird. Offenbar gibt es ja keinen Ludiktator, der personell auszumachen wäre. Schwierig ist auch die Frage zu beantworten, ob und wie es einen Ausgang aus der selbstverhängten Unmündigkeit gibt. Exemplarisch habe ich versucht, Subversionsstrategien zu skizzieren, und im Buchkapitel „Subversive Gamification“ (Fuchs 2018) vier Möglichkeiten beschrieben, wie mit oder gegen Gamification auf eine verschiedene Art und Weise Standpunkte bezogen werden können, die zumindest Szenarien des Eigensinnes vorführen.

Wenn wir auch wie Marchart davon ausgehen, dass die kulturwissenschaftliche Forschung untersucht, wie soziale und politische Identität qua Macht kulturell reproduziert wird, so würden wir doch anstatt von „Kultur“ lieber von „Kulturen“ sprechen. Der Plural stützt sich auf eine Vielzahl von Überlegungen, die in der

Forschungslandschaft der Leuphana Universität dazu geführt hat, dass wir von digitalen Kulturen sprechen (insbes. Beyes & Pias 2018: 40<sup>3</sup>) und damit an ein Geflecht von materiellen und immateriellen Rahmungen meinen, die gesellschaftliche Prozesse formieren und transformieren. Medien spielen dabei die Rolle via Bild, Schrift und Zahl Sinnliches zu abstrahieren, zu sortieren und zu inventarisieren. In zunehmendem Masse übernehmen Computerspiele dabei eine Vorreiterrolle und stimmen fragmentierte Teile der Gesellschaft, Subkulturen, die Älteren, Migrant\*innen, Schulkinder usw. darauf ein, Identitätsbrücken zu konstruieren. So werden die Medien und insbesondere die Spiele zu „dominanten Mitteln sozialer Signifikation“ (Hall 1992: 83).

## 2. Stand der Forschung

Als populäres Schlagwort der Gegenwartsdiagnose hat „Gamification“ in Journalismus und Marketing, in Management, Gesundheitswesen und Wissenschaft Hochkonjunktur. Allerdings existiert so gut wie keine Forschung darüber, wie Grenzziehungen zwischen dem Spielerischen und dem Nichtspielerischen vor der angeblichen Stunde Null dieses Konzeptes verhandelt wurden und inwiefern es sich bei „Gamification“ tatsächlich ein neues und originäres Phänomen digitaler Kulturen handelt. Während Gamification Prozesse gewissermaßen auf kultureller Makroebene längerfristig zwischen Spielerischem und Nichtspielerischem verhandeln, ist am *micro level*, d.h. im individuellen Spielakt, ebenfalls eine Grenzüberschreitung nachweisbar. In der ontologischen Ambivalenz von Schein und Sein werden Grenzphänomene und Grenzüberschreitungen ausgelotet, die Thomas Macho in den *Todesmetaphern: Zur Logik der Grenzerfahrungen* (Macho 1987) beschreibt, Gregory Bateson als paradoxe metasprachliche Kulturtechnik (Bateson 1976) und Paul Stenner im Hinblick auf ihre Funktion als „liminal affective technologies“. (Stenner 2018) Während am *micro level* Subjektivität, metasprachliche, psychologische oder affekttechnische Determinanten auf die Erfahrung einwirken, nehmen am *macro level* der Gamification ideologische, kulturhistorische und soziokulturelle Faktoren Einfluss.

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<sup>3</sup> „...we have to speak of digital cultures in the plural if only because the heterogeneity of this socio-technical arrangement seems to correspond to the digital media environment that now pervades our lifeworld.“ (Beyes & Pias 2018: 40)

Die Schriften, die in dieser Arbeit zusammengefasst sind, stellen das Unterfangen dar, „Gamification“ einer grundlegenden kulturhistorischen Kritik und Revision zu unterziehen.

Die systematische Verwendung des Begriffs „Gamification“ für die Durchdringung ehemals als spielfern angesehener Bereiche der Gesellschaft mit Metaphern, Methoden und Attributen aus der Welt der (Computer-)Spiele ist kaum mehr als 15 Jahre alt. Gleichwohl der Gedanke, dass Kultur ihren Ursprung im Spiel habe, von Huizinga 1938 prominent formuliert, von Caillois (1958), Sutton-Smith (1997) u.a. reformuliert und modifiziert wurde und bis in die idealistische Ästhetik zurückreicht, entstanden etwa seit der Jahrtausendwende immer mehr Arbeiten dazu, inwiefern das Spiel in spielferne Bereiche ausgreift und damit zum kulturprägenden Medium unserer Gegenwart wird. Im englischen Sprachraum wird frühestens seit 2002 von „Gamification“ (Pelling 2002; Schell 2010; Deterding et al. 2011) gesprochen, seit 2008 von „Gameification“ (Terrill 2008; Huotari & Hamari 2012) und seit 2006 von „Ludification“ (Raessens 2006). Im deutschen Sprachraum war zuvor bereits von einer neuen „Spielkultur“ (Rötzer 1995) oder von „Ludifizierung“ die Rede (Böhm 1997). Eine weitere Begriffsbildung, die speziell auf die Konvergenz von Arbeits- mit Spielzusammenhängen verweist, besteht in der Bezeichnung „Ludefaction“ (Kirkpatrick 2015). Allerdings wurden die Begriffe von Böhm und Kirkpatrick ebensowenig von der Forschung aufgegriffen wie Ian Bogosts Ersatzvokabel „Exploitationware“ (Bogost 2011), die der Autor polemisch vorstellte, um den ‚Etikettenschwindel‘ des Begriffs Gamification anzumahlen.

Interessant sind im Zusammenhang dieser Arbeit im Jahr 2018 publizierte, theoretische Überlegungen dazu, wie eine antagonistische Bewegung zu Gamification vorstellbar sei. Lydia Martin und Julian Alvarez schlagen mit dem Begriff „dégamification“ vor, Dispositive („dispositif, numérique ou non“) zu untersuchen, die ludische Komponenten extrahieren, anstatt sie hinzuzufügen (Martin & Alvarez 2018). Dabei blicken die Autoren auf Serious Games und Simulatoren und untersuchen wie in der Ausbildung von französischen Führungskadern spielähnliche Dispositive eingesetzt werden, die aber einer „suppression d’éléments ludogènes“ (Martin & Alvarez 2018: 6) unterzogen werden, um dem Ausbildungsziel dienlich zu sein. Aus den empirischen Untersuchungen entwickeln die Autoren das Konzept der „Dégamification“, die sich unterscheidet von der „Counter-Gamification“, die Daphne Dragona als

künstlerische oder zivilgesellschaftliche Möglichkeit des Widerstandes vorstellte (Dragona in Fuchs et al. 2014). Während das erstgenannte Phänomen die Extraktion des Spielerischen konstatiert, verwendet das letztgenannte spielerische Elemente als Widerstandsstrategie.

Inzwischen hat sich im deutschen Sprachraum der Begriff „Gamification“ bzw. „Gamifizierung“ durchgesetzt und bezeichnet die Konjunktur spielerischer Methoden, Metaphern, Objekte und Ästhetiken in Arbeits-, Erholungs-, Bildungs- und Alltagszusammenhängen, die auch als ein Motor der umfassenden Ästhetisierung des Sozialen gedeutet wird (Reckwitz 2012). Insbesondere US-amerikanischen „Evangelisten“ der Gamification geht es oft darum, Motivation, Kundenloyalität oder Kundenakquisition durch Gamification besser verstehen und herstellen zu können (Zichermann & Cunningham 2011; Werbach & Hunter 2012) oder eine Position effizienzsteigernden Designdenkens einzunehmen, die sich bis in die terminologische Fassung von Gamification als Verwendung von „Game Design Elementen“ hineinzieht (Deterding et al. 2011).

Demgegenüber versucht etwa Joost Raessens, eine kulturhistorische Einbettung von Gamification in die gegenwärtige Medienökologie darzustellen, die auch Fernsehformate, Werbeästhetik und die Strategien von Wahlkampagnen in Betracht zieht (Raessens 2006). Daneben finden sich eher vereinzelt auch kritische Einschätzungen (Escribano 2012; Fuchs et al. 2014; DeWinter 2014; Kirckpatrick 2015; Rautzenberg 2015). Gemeinsam ist diesen, dass sie „Gamification“ als zentralen Moment für die Analyse gegenwärtiger Vergesellschaftungsformationen kritisch in den Blick nehmen. Mit Bezug auf politische und soziale Veränderungen sowie fortschreitende Digitalisierungsprozesse im Kontext des Neoliberalismus deutet etwa Rolf Nohr Gamification als „eine der zentralen Konstellationen der Kontrollgesellschaft“ (Nohr 2015: 205).

Unter solchen Voraussetzungen ist die in der Forschung gängige Definition von Gamification als „Verwendung von Computerspiel-Elementen in spielfremden Anwendungsbereichen“ (Deterding et al. 2011) unzulänglich. Auch Deterding selbst ist sich im Klaren darüber, dass seine ursprünglich als „Definition“ betitelte Arbeit einer weiter gefassten Untersuchung bedarf und schreibt im Editorial des Journals *Computers in Human Behavior* (gemeinsam mit Lennart E. Nacke) unter dem Titel „The maturing of gamification research“ (Nacke & Deterding 2017) einen Aufruf zur Neubesinnung. Gerade darum geht es mir in den nachfolgend

zusammengefassten Kapiteln und Texten. Gamification wird als ein kulturhistorisch, medienwissenschaftlich, politisch und ästhetisch zu begreifendes Phänomen betrachtet, dessen Dynamik sich daraus ergibt, dass die Grenzen zwischen Spielerischem und noch-nicht bzw. nicht-mehr Spielerischem stets neu ausgehandelt werden.

### 3. Themenkomplexe, Untersuchungsfelder

Die Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit Themen, die sich mit dem vielschichtigen Phänomen der Gamification auf verschiedenen disziplinären Feldern und mittels verschiedener Methoden beschäftigen.

#### 1. Ideologiekritische Untersuchungen

Unter Bezugnahme auf Alfred Sohn-Rethel und Louis Althusser wird der Versuch unternommen, Gamification als eine zeitgenössische Form von Ideologie, im Sinne der Vorgenannten also als notwendig falsches Bewusstsein darzustellen.

#### 2. Prädigitale Vorläufer aktueller Gamification

Hier wird auf historische Praxen, Schriften und materiale Kulturen eingegangen, die Gamifizierung/ Ludifizierung vor der proklamierten Stunde Null (2010) exemplifizieren.

#### 3. Künstlerbeiträge und ästhetische Strategien

Ludische Methoden und spielerische, ästhetische Statements werden und wurden von Künstlern als Irritation, Kritik oder Gegenentwurf zu klassisch wissenschaftlichen Welterklärungsversuchen eingesetzt. (z.B. Yinka Shonibare, Michael Johansson, Öyvind Fahlström)

#### 4. Begriffsgenese, etymologische Stränge

Zu Spielifizierung, Gamifizierung, Ludifizierung, Ludiktatur, Gamen und Gamblen

#### 5. Philosophische Fragestellungen

des Weltentzuges und des Weltzerfalls in ludischen Prozessen

#### 6. Ludische Interfaces als gamifizierte Human-Computer Interfaces

Mit dem Begriff der „Ludic Interfaces“ werden Schnittstellen bezeichnet, deren Designmaxime die Herstellung eines kreativen, oft überraschenden



und nichtkonventionellen Übertragungsmechanismus zwischen Benutzeraktionen und Maschinenzuständen darstellt.

#### **7. Das Problem des interpassiven Spielens**

Slavoj Žižek, Mladen Dolar und Robert Pfaller bezeichnen bestimmte Formen des Mediengebrauchs als „interpassiv“. In verschiedenen Ausformungen spielerischer Tätigkeit manifestieren sich Kulturtechniken, die eine starke Ähnlichkeit zu solchen Gebrauchsformen aufweisen, und die Prämisse, dass das Spiel stets eine interaktive Handlung sei, in Frage stellen.

#### **8. Weitere Fragestellungen und Problemfelder**

## **4. Umriss und Überblick über die Buchkapitel und Journalartikel**

### *Gamification as 21st Century Ideology*<sup>4</sup>

Mit dem ideologischen Charakter von Gamification setzte ich mich in einem Artikel für das *Journal of Gaming and Virtual Worlds* auseinander. In Volume 6 Number 2 erschienen verschiedene Beiträge zu politischen Aspekten von Gamification. Mein Beitrag auf den Seiten 143 – 157 geht von Beobachtungen aus, die die Erwartungen der Marktforschungsinstitute im Hinblick auf Gamification seit 2011 betreffen und die die Heilsversprechungen der sogenannten „Evangelisten“ der Gamification kritisch hinterfragen. In Büchern, Artikeln, Blogs und auf Vorträgen wird behauptet, dass Gamification Techniken die Produktivität der Angestellten um 40% steigern kann (Gartner 2014), dass „wir nicht leiden, wenn wir spielen“ (McGonigal 2012), dass Gamification die „Auswirkungen des Alterungsprozesses reduzieren kann“ (Ramos 2013), dass das Spiel die Welt ökologisch „freundlicher“ machen würde (Sexton 2013) und vieles mehr. Diese präsentischen Eschatologien entbehren jeglichen Beweises, bilden aber in ihrer Vielzahl und gestützt durch gegenseitige Bezugnahme ein Dispositif, das sich in den Diskursen der öffentlichen Meinung, der Wissenschaft, der Förderrichtlinien und EU Programme, der administrativen Regularien und des *Common Sense* niederschlägt. So wird Gamification zu genau

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<sup>4</sup> „Gamification as 21st Century Ideology“ (2014), in: *Journal of Games and Virtual Worlds*, Volume: 6 issue: 2. intellect, London, S. 143 – 157.

der Art von systemischem Zusammenhang, den Foucault (ohne an Gamification zu denken) allgemein beschreibt als „ein durch und durch heterogenes Ensemble aus Diskursen, Institutionen, [...] administrativen Maßnahmen, wissenschaftlichen Behauptungen, philosophischen, moralischen und philanthropischen Aussagen – kurz gesagt, dem Ausgesprochenen und dem Unausgesprochenen.“<sup>5</sup> (Foucault [1977] 1980: 194). Foucault nennt das Netzwerk zwischen all diesen genannten Instanzen ein Dispositif.

Ich suche aber nach einem theoretischen Zugang, der nicht nur wissenschaftsgeschichtlich beschreibt, sondern handlungsleitend relevant ist, und es scheint mir, dass man mit Alfred Sohn-Rethels bzw. Althussters Ideologiebegriff (Althusser 2010: 54 f.) der Sache nahekommt. Sohn-Rethel wies darauf hin, dass es in der Ideologiekritik nicht um das Aufzeigen falschen Bewusstseins ginge, sondern dass die notwendige Bedingtheit dieses falschen Bewusstseins im Zentrum der Kritik stehen müsse. Für Althusser stabilisieren Instanzen des ideologischen Staatsapparates das herrschende System und sind wesentlich mehr als Überbau-Phänomene, die sich auf der sozioökonomischen Basis erheben. So beschrieb er in den 1960er Jahren den Apparat der Informationen (Presse, Radio, Fernsehen usw.) und den kulturellen ideologischen Staatsapparat (Literatur, die schönen Künste, der Sport usw.) als Mittel zur Reproduktion der Produktivkräfte und der Produktionsverhältnisse. Aus heutiger Sicht würde man Althussters vorläufige Liste der Instanzen des ideologischen Staatsapparates um Computerspiele erweitern müssen. Die Wirkmächtigkeit der Games wird dadurch potenziert, dass sie sowohl im Apparat der Information als auch in dem der Kultur fest verankert sind. Kein Wunder also, dass die Spiele, die vor drei Dekaden noch als roh und verrohend klassifiziert wurden, kürzlich als „Kulturgut“ nobilitiert wurden und - stellvertretend für viele andere Veranstaltungen - im Berliner Rathaus mit der Rückendeckung der Ministerin für Verkehr und digitale Infrastruktur als nützlichen Bestandteil der „Digitalen Transformation“ gepriesen wurden. Repräsentanten des repressiven Staatsapparates sind in diesem Zusammenhang der Konsolidierung neuer Instanzen des ideologischen Staatsapparates dienlich. Letzterer hat die Funktion, „konkrete

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<sup>5</sup> Übers. MF, im Original: “C'est, premièrement, un ensemble résolument hétérogène, comportant des discours, des institutions, des aménagements architecturaux, des décisions réglementaires, des lois, des mesures administratives, des énoncés scientifiques, des propositions philosophiques, morales, philanthropiques, bref: du dit, aussi bien que du non-dit, voilà les éléments du dispositif. Le dispositif lui-même, c'est le réseau qu'on peut établir entre ces éléments.”

Individuen als Subjekte zu ‚konstituieren‘ (ibid: 85). Kultur spielt im Konstitutionsprozess der Individuen daher eine wesentliche Rolle, die nicht jenseits bestehender Macht- und Reproduktionsverhältnisse verstanden werden kann. So gesehen ist Gamification ein Paradebeispiel für die Dynamik medialer Verwandlungen, die im ‚magischen Dreieck‘ von ‚Kultur, Macht und Identität‘ angesiedelt sind. (Marchart 2003: 10)

### *Ludische Mobilmachung. Zur vollständigen Gamifizierung oder: Du mußt spielen!*<sup>6</sup>

Johan Huizingas Bemerkung ‚Befohlenen Spiel ist kein Spiel mehr‘ muss im Zeichen gegenwärtiger Gamifizierungstendenzen neu betrachtet werden. Spiele zur Kundenbindung, gamifizierte Gesundheitsapps und spielerisch angelegte Rankingverfahren in Wirtschaft, Bildung und Freizeit entziehen das Spiel dem ‚Regime sinnlicher Sensitivität‘ und unterwerfen es dem ‚Regime der Repräsentation‘. (Rancière 2008: 15-17) Jeder spielerische Akt muss in diesem Zusammenhang etwas bedeuten, jedes Spielobjekt muss etwas repräsentieren. Diese Flucht aus der Zweckfreiheit ist ein verordneter Rückzug. Wenn Krankenkassen Beitragsvorteile versprechen, wenn die Versicherten Health-Apps spielen, wenn Universitäten gamifizierte Rankingsysteme anbieten und wenn Meinungsmacher wie der ehemalige US Vizepräsident Al Gore verkünden ‚Games are the New Normal‘ (Al Gore 2011, zit. nach Tsai 2011), dann kündigt sich ein Regimewechsel an, der normativ vorgibt, was als normal und was als anormal gilt. Diese Grenzziehung definiert in der Folge dann auch, was als schick und *en vogue* oder als nicht mehr salonfähig angesehen werden soll. Die Dynamik der Grenzverschiebung zielt aufs Ganze. Dies ist aber eben das Unwahre, wenn man den Gedanken aufrechterhalten will, dass es ernsthafte und nichtspielerische Aspekte des Lebens gibt: beispielweise Destruktion, den Tod, Krankheit oder festgefahrene Machtverhältnisse. Die Arbeitshypothese lautet: ‚Wenn man durch Gamification jegliches Spielferne in Spielerisches verwandeln kann, dann kann man diesen Prozess als eine Strategie der Mobilisierung in allen gesellschaftlichen Bereichen betrachten.‘ (Fuchs 2016) Den schwer besetzten Begriff der Mobilisierung kann man

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<sup>6</sup> ‚Ludische Mobilmachung. Zur vollständigen Gamifizierung oder: Du mußt spielen!‘ (2016), in: Ernst Strouhal (Hrsg.) *Agon und Ares. Der Krieg und die Spiele*. Campus Verlag. Frankfurt/New York 2016, S. 375 - 38.

deshalb verwenden, weil es bei Gamification um die fortgesetzte Einbindung menschlicher und technischer Ressourcen geht. Digital spielen dürfen ja nicht mehr nur die 16- bis 18-jährigen jungen Männer der westlichen Welt. Spielen sollen und müssen nun auch die Schulkinder, die Älteren und die ganz Alten, Frauen, ethnische Minderheiten, die Kranken, die Wohnungssuchenden, Alzheimer Patienten, Depressionsgefährdete usw. Gesundheitsapps, Fitnesstechnologien, lebenslanges spielerisches Lernen und *Serious Games* belegen das. Es scheint, dass es keine gesellschaftliche Gruppe mehr gibt, der nicht nahegelegt wird, dass sie ihre Probleme via Spielmechanismen und unter Verwendung von Technologien, die der Computerspielentwicklung entstammen, lösen kann. Die Durchdringung der Gesellschaft mit Spielmethoden, Spielmetaphern und Objekten aus der Welt der Computer Games hat damit ein Randphänomen der Medienlandschaft ins Zentrum gesellschaftlicher Steuerung und Kontrolle getragen. Auf den Seiten der digitalen Agenda der Bundesregierung liest man dementsprechend auch: „Der digitale Wandel ist zu einer der zentralen Gestaltungsaufgaben für Wirtschaft, Wissenschaft, Gesellschaft und Politik geworden.“<sup>7</sup> Im Verband digitaler Medien zeigt dieser Wandel sich am prägnantesten im Felde desjenigen Mediums, das als das erfolgreichste Medium der Gegenwart gilt: das Computerspiel. Dieter Mersch bezeichnete die Hypothese, dass das Digitale nicht mehr nur Teile, sondern das Ganze der Gesellschaft eingenommen habe als den „Totalitätsverdacht“ des Digitalen.<sup>8</sup> Dem gleichen Verdacht fällt auch das Regime des Spielerischen anheim, wenn Gamification als ein Allheilmittel - oder die neue Norm - für Legitimität und Performativität jedweder Anwendungssituation verkündet wird.

### *Between Drudgery and ‚Promesse du bonheur‘: Games and Gamification*<sup>9</sup>

Der Artikel, der bei Routledge unter der Herausgeberschaft von Rachel Kowert und Thorsten Quandt in dem Band „New Aspects on the Social Aspects of Gaming“ erschien, setzt sich mit einer Verortung des Spieles zwischen zwei Polen

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<sup>7</sup> [https://www.digitale-agenda.de/Webs/DA/DE/Grundsaeetze/Grundsaeetze\\_Digitalpolitik/grundsaeetze-digitalpolitik\\_node.html](https://www.digitale-agenda.de/Webs/DA/DE/Grundsaeetze/Grundsaeetze_Digitalpolitik/grundsaeetze-digitalpolitik_node.html)

<sup>8</sup> unveröffentlichter Vortrag an der Leuphana Universität am 16. Mai 2018.

<sup>9</sup> *Between Drudgery and ‚Promesse du bonheur‘: Games and Gamification* (2017), in: Rachel Kowert & Thorsten Quandt (Hrsg.) *New Aspects on the Social Aspects of Gaming*. Routledge, London New York, S. 185-195.

auseinander: Auf der einen Seite stehen Einschätzungen von Walter Benjamin, Jürgen Habermas und Theodor Adorno, die von der „Fron des Spielers“ (Benjamin 1939: 72-73) oder dem „Nachbild von unfreier Arbeit“ (Adorno 1970: 401) sprechen, oder kritische Ansätze der jüngeren Vergangenheit unter anderen von Jeremy Rifkin (2000) und Thomas Malaby (2007). Auf der anderen Seite steht die Fraktion der Hoffnungsfrohen: Georges Bataille (1975), das *Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales* (M.A.U.S.S.), in geringerem Masse auch Marcel Mauss (1923/24) und in letzter Zeit Jane McGonigal (2012). Es geht hier um die Möglichkeit einer Interpretation spielerischen Exzesses als eines Spunges aus dem Reich der Notwendigkeit in das der Freiheit. Die Reziprokalität des Tausches wird in denjenigen Spielen, die Caillois mit „*paidia*“ verbindet (Caillois 1958), durch die grenzenlose Großzügigkeit des sich Verschwendens überschritten und als emanzipativer Akt gesehen.

### *Predigital Precursors of Gamification*<sup>10</sup>

Die Konferenz „Rethinking Gamification“, die im Mai 2013 an der Leuphana Universität stattfand, inspirierte den Sammelband mit demselben Titel, der im Jahr 2014 bei *meson press* erschien. Zusätzlich zu den Beiträgen, mit denen die Herausgeber ausgewählte Konferenzteilnehmer beauftragten, enthielt der Band auch Kapitel von Joost Raessens, der 2006 mit seinen Überlegungen zu Ludification einen wichtigen frühen Beitrag zur Gamification Debatte lieferte, und von Sebastian Deterding, dessen Definitionsversuch aus dem Jahr 2011 zumindest für ein halbes Jahrzehnt beinahe kanonischen Rang einnahm. Schließlich bemühte ich mich im Kapitel zu den „prädigitalen Vorläufern der Gamification“ um eine kulturhistorische Einschätzung des Phänomens (Fuchs 2014a: 119–140). Es geht in dieser Untersuchung darum nachzuweisen, dass Gamification *avant la lettre* in verschiedenen Ausprägungen existierte und dass die Anwendungsfelder, die Gamification mit spielerischen Methoden, Metaphern und Attributen des Spiels versah, weit gefächert sind: Religiöse Praxis (ibid: 122-124), Musik (ibid: 124-129), Zauberkunst (ibid: 129-130), Wissensvermittlung (ibid: 132-133) und Hinrichtungsrituale (ibid: 133-135) werden als Einsatzgebiete für spielgeleitete

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<sup>10</sup> „Predigital Precursors of Gamification“ (2014), in: Mathias Fuchs, Sonia Fizek, Niklas Schrape & Paolo Ruffino (Hrsg.) *Rethinking Gamification*. meson press, Lüneburg, S. 119 – 140.

Prozesse vor dem digitalen Computer untersucht. An Beispielen aus Musik, Zauberei und Alltagsreligiösität zeigt sich bereits, was ich in einer späteren Veröffentlichung (Fuchs 2017) noch ausführlicher darlegen konnte: Das 18. Jahrhundert – insbesondere die zweite Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts – kann in den Worten Bernoullis nicht zu Unrecht als „Spielsaeculum“ bezeichnet werden. Dabei ähneln sich Methoden der Ludifizierung zu Zeiten des Spätrokoko und in der Gegenwart (Aleatorik, agonistische Elemente, kombinatorische Methoden), während die Attribute aus den jeweiligen „Spielwelten“ (Pias 2002) sich naturgemäß unterscheiden (Controller, Bildschirminterfaces heute – mechanische „Uhrwerke“ und Fabrikationen damals). Im Hinblick auf die Metaphern lassen sich Kongruenzen festmachen: der Spielteufel, das Glücksrad und *Cornu copiae*, das Füllhorn der Amaltheia. Was damals der „tuivel des Würfelspil“ war (Reinmar von Zweter, zit. nach Wolferz 1916) ist heute die behauptete und vielbeschworene, dämonische Gewaltverherrlichung der Computerspiele. Eine weitere Parallele, auf die übrigens Doris Lessing hingewiesen hat, ist das dichte Nebeneinander von moralischer Ablehnung und hemmungsloser Ausbeutung der finanziellen Möglichkeiten. Zwei Hypothesen kristallisieren sich aus den Beobachtungen des Kapitels heraus:

1. Die Zeiten der Hochkonjunktur spielerischer Welterzeugung liegen oft vor politischen Krisen. Gamification scheint ein Vorbote von Systemkrisen und kollabierenden Ökonomien zu sein. Dies gilt sowohl für die vorrevolutionäre Zeit der zweiten Hälfte des 18. Jahrhunderts als auch für die „goldenen“ Zwanziger und Dreissiger Jahre. n. Ich zitiere daher auch Pamela Travers, die 1934 ihrer Mary Poppins in den Mund legte, was durch den Disney Film (1964) dann popularisiert wurde: „In ev’ry job that must be done/ There is an element of fun“ (Travers 1934) Dass dieses frühe Gamification-Credo in einer Zeit und in einem Land formuliert wurde, die von massivem Elend und Rekord-Arbeitslosigkeit geplagt wurden, ist kein Zufall. Die Behauptung ist hier, dass in sogenannten „dekadenten“ Spätphasen oder vielmehr in Zeiten, die mittels freier und experimenteller Praxen prophylaktisch auf einen bevorstehenden Umbruch vorbereiten, spielerische Verfahren eingeführt und propagiert werden. Dies könnte einerseits kompensatorische Funktion haben, oder aber den Versuch darstellen, systemimmanent nach einem Ausweg aus der Krise zu suchen. Will man allerdings weder im Rahmen der Psychologie noch in der individuellen Kreativität argumentieren, so erscheint es ergiebig, Gamification als ein systemisches Phänomen einzuordnen, das in der

Tradition des Denkens Althusser und Sohn-Rethels als Ideologie bezeichnet werden kann.

2. Im Buchkapitel schlage ich deshalb vor, Gamification nicht als Option kreativer Gestalter zu sehen, sondern vielmehr auf ihre Notwendigkeit für ein politisches Ganzes hin zu analysieren (Fuchs 2014a: 134 f.) Ich argumentiere, dass einzelne Gamification Anwendungen im Dispositiv des Spielerischen als Ausdruck spiel-immanenter Logik betrachtet werden können, und gerade die Zwangsläufigkeit solcher Vollzugsmechanismen ihren ideologischen Charakter ausmacht (ibid). Ich untersuche diesen politischen Aspekt von Gamification in späteren Publikation unter verschiedenen Gesichtspunkten noch ausführlicher (Fuchs 2014b; Fuchs 2018)

### *„Sposi, Amici, al ballo, al gioco!’ Brevi cenni di ludicizzazione ... del diciottesimo secolo<sup>11</sup>*

Der Aufsatz „Paare und Freude, zum Tanz, zum Spiel!“ erschien 2016 bei Edizioni Unicopli auf Italienisch. Die Übersetzung meines Textes besorgte Matteo Bittanti. Der Beitrag zum Buch „Jenseits des Spiels“, im Original „Oltre il gioco. Critica della ludicizzazione urbana“ (Bittanti & Zilio 2016) setzt an den Überlegungen der „Prädigitalen Vorläufer der Gamification“ (Fuchs 2014a) an, und nimmt zwei Aspekte der „ludicizzazione“ unter die Lupe, die mir aufschlussreich für die zweite Hälfte des „Spielsaeculum“ erscheinen.

1. Im Abschnitt „Neue Spiele für eine neue Gesellschaft (ibid: 26 – 30) stelle ich die kunstvoll verspielten Luxusmöbel aus den Werkstätten von Abraham und David Röntgen vor. Abraham Röntgen, der Vater, und sein Sohn David stellten im 18. Jahrhundert bis zum Beginn der französischen Revolution Spieltische, kuriose Intarsienmöbel und Androiden her. Die Unternehmung der Röntgens, die eine Vielzahl von Handwerkern und internationale Spezialisten zusammenführte, baute auch ein Logistik- und

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<sup>11</sup> „Sposi, Amici, al ballo, al gioco!’ Brevi cenni di ludicizzazione ... del diciottesimo secolo“ (2014), in: Matteo Bittanti & Emanuela Zilio (Hrsg.) Oltre il gioco. Critica della ludicizzazione urbana. Edizioni Unicopli, Milano, S. 23 – 43.

Transportunternehmen auf, das zwischen Paris und St. Peterburg Tische, Kabinettschränken und Uhrwerke vertrieb. Darüberhinaus inszenierten die Röntgens ganz wie ein moderner Luxuswarenhersteller langwierige Marketing- und Lobbying-Kampagnen, um die teuren Möbel Käufern wie Marie-Antoinette, der russischen Zarin oder dem preußischen Hof anbieten zu können. Die Gamifizierung der Möbelstücke zeigt sich am deutlichsten an den Spieltischen (z.B. dem zwischen 1780 und 1783 entstandenen Klapptisch für Spiele, siehe Fig. 1, *ibid*: 21), die ganz im Sinne von Deterding et al. „Game-Design Elemente“ (2011) in nicht-ludischen Kontexten, bzw. Gegenständen implementieren. Versteckte Schubladen, Überraschungseffekte und Transformationsmöglichkeiten bereichern nicht nur die Funktionalität der Möbel, sie verschieben darüber hinaus das Möbelstück selbst und seine Bedienung in den Bereich des Spieles und des Spielens. Der Spieltisch zeichnet sich durch kalkulierte Multifunktionalität aus und ermöglichte es, wahlweise zu schreiben, zu lesen, Dokumente zu ordnen oder Bücher zu verbergen. In der Zeit, in der man Marquis de Sade und Julien Offray De La Mettrie rezipierte, aber nicht immer gesehen werden wollte, wenn man diesen oder jenen las, war ein prädigitales „Inkognitofenster“ (Google Chrome) eine willkommene Einrichtung. Da die Spieltische der Röntgens wie moderne, tragbare Computer zusammenklappbar waren, schlage ich in dem Artikel vor, die Tische als Vorläufer und Funktionsverwandte der Laptops zu betrachten. Es handelt sich in beiden Fällen um Prestigeobjekte, die verschiedene Symbolverarbeitungsebenen anboten: Textverarbeitung, Spiel, Exploration obskurer, clandestiner oder anrüchiger Materialia (vgl. Jauch 2014). Die Besitzer der Spieltische konnten sich wie die Eigentümer besonders teurer Laptops einiger Bewunderung sicher sein. Fast nebensächlich war dann in beiden Fällen die Tatsache, dass man mit den Dingen auch schreiben konnte: damals mit Feder und Tinte auf Papier, heute mit Microsoft Word. Selbstverständlich wussten die Röntgens auch über die Bedeutung des *desktop wallpapers* und fertigten auf Wunsch des Kunden Schreibunterlagenmaterial aus grünem, rotem oder purpurnem Filz.

2. Der zweite Forschungsgegenstand des Beitrages ist die Veränderung der Glücksspielgesetzgebung im Europa des 18. Jahrhunderts. Am Beispiel der Lockerung der Gesetze zu den Lotterien aus vatikanischer Seite (Fuchs 2016: 32 – 33) beschreibe ich, wie ökonomische Interessen Grenzverschiebungen



zwischen dem Spielerischen und dem Nicht-Spielerischen motivieren. Während 1728 Papst Benedikt XIII noch mit der Exkommunikation denen drohte, die Lotterien veranstalteten, sollte bereits drei Jahre später, im Jahr 1731 der Nachfolger Benedikts, Klemens XII, die Lotterien erneut zulassen. Der Papst musste die Verwendung der Gelder allerdings darauf beschränken, dass die Profite für „unverheiratete Frauen mit Kindern“ verwendet wurden. Der nachfolgende Papst, Pius VI, konnte dann im Jahr 1785 die Lotterien in eine vatikanische Organisation umwandeln und der „Depositeria General“ die Verwaltung der Mittel übertragen. Mit den Profiten wurden unter anderem die Pontinischen Sümpfe für den Vatikan angekauft, also *Real-Estate Business* betrieben. Es kann mir natürlich nicht darum gehen, dem Heiligen Stuhl einen Mangel an frommer Motivation für die Legalisierung der Lotterien vorzuwerfen, sondern zu zeigen, wie die Dynamik von Gamification oft von ökonomischen Beweggründen geleitet ist.

## *Ruinensehnsucht*<sup>12</sup>

Der Aufsatz zur „Ruinensehnsucht“ fasst die Ergebnisse der Untersuchungen zu Korrosion, Verfall und Ruinen in Computerspielen zusammen. Dabei wird anhand von vier Argumentationssträngen analysiert, was Spieler und Spieledesigner an Verfallsprozessen fasziniert und warum dies der Fall sein könnte. Die Arbeitshypothese besteht darin zu behaupten, dass in Computerspielen, wie auch im Film, Gemälden, der Poesie und anderen Medien Bauliches über Nicht-Bauliches spricht und der Aufsatz zeigt anhand ausgewählter Beispiele auf welche Weise man Erklärungen für Ruinenfaszination in Computerspielen finden kann.

1. Die erste Argumentationslinie beschäftigt sich mit der Mediengeschichte der Computerspiele und vergleicht frühe Formen der Darstellung von Rost, Staub, Schmutz und Verfall.
2. Die zweite Linie nimmt die Darstellungsgeschichte von Ruinen in der Bildenden Kunst unter die Lupe. Dabei wird der Frage nachgegangen, wie Motive, die Canaletto, Leonardo Coccorante, Hubert Robert oder

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<sup>12</sup> „Ruinensehnsucht - Longing for Decay in Computer Games“ (2017), in: Ashley Brown, Rafael Bidarra (Hrsg.): ToDiGRA, Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association, Vol. 3, Issue 2. ETC Press Carnegie Mellon, S. 37-56.

beispielsweise Caspar David Friedrich malerisch einführen, in Computerspielen wiederverwendet werden. Insbesondere werden malerische Verwendungen von Licht und Schatten, Gegenlicht, Unschärfe, Farbigkeit und Form zwischen den Medien der Ölmalerei und des Computerspiels verglichen. So sind, um ein Beispiel zu nennen, Szene aus dem Spiel *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* (2007) dem *Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (1817) von Friedrich deutlich nachempfunden.

3. Der dritte Untersuchungsstrang sieht auf psychoanalytische Überlegungen zu Destruktion und bezieht sich dabei auf die Beobachtung Hartmut Böhmes (*Die Ästhetik der Ruinen*, 1989), dass Ruinen oftmals gebaut werden, um als Verfallsobjekte in Opposition zu Herrschaftsverhältnissen stehen zu können, welche als solide proklamiert werden sollen. Böhme verweist hier auf die künstlichen Ruinen der Palastgärten von Pesaro (1530), nennt aber auch Alfred Speers Ruinenwerttheorie in diesem Zusammenhang. Sigmund Freuds positioniert in seiner Schrift „Jenseits des Lustprinzips“ (1920) den „Todestrieb“, also den Trieb zur Zerstörung, vis-à-vis des konstruktiven *Eros*. Im „Unbehagen in der Kultur“ (1930) wird das Zusammen- und Gegeneinanderwirken“ von *Eros* und Todestrieb zur Erklärung der „Phänomene des Lebens“ herangezogen. Die Widerstände auf die Freud in der *Internationalen Psychoanalytischen Vereinigung* für seine Theorie stieß, wurden von Wilhelm Reich und anderen in den 1930er Jahren prononciert, später dann aber von Melanie Klein und auch von Lacan wieder relativiert. Für Computerspiele zu Ruinen ist dies von Bedeutung, weil Ruinen gleichzeitig mit der Möglichkeit der Zerstörung von Spielobjekten operieren und der erforderlichen Robustheit des Spielsystems bedürfen.
4. Schließlich analysiert der Beitrag die Transmedialität der Ruinensehnsüchte und breitet den Vorschlag aus, Transmedialität hier nicht im Sinne Henry Jenkins als „transmedia storytelling“ (Jenkins 2003) zu verstehen, sondern auf transmediale „Megatexte“ (Segal 1986) zu sehen, die mediale Ausformungen überspannen. Segal bezeichnet als Megatexte die jenigen „unterbewussten Muster“, „tiefen Strukturen und thematischen Affinitäten“, die hinter verschiedenen Erzählungen stehen. Im Text behaupte ich, dass archetypische räumliche Dispositive, wie beispielsweise die Ruine, als unterbewusste Muster fungieren, die bereits vor der Narration informieren und oftmals viel mehr sagen können als im Computerspiel gesprochener oder

geschriebener Text es vermag. Diese Information wird geborgen am Weg über medientechnologische, kunsthistorische, psychoanalytische und medienvergleichende Forschung. Während der Beitrag zur Ruinensehnsucht nur ein Raumdispositiv untersucht, gehe ich an anderem Orte<sup>13</sup> auf acht verschiedene Orte ein. Im Sinne einer Bachelardschen „Topo-Analyse“ (Bachelard 1964: xxiv) untersuche ich die Straße, die Ruine, die Klippe, die Wolken, die Höhle, den Wald, die Insel und Portale in Computerspielen.

### *Nordic game subcultures: between LARPer and avant-garde*<sup>14</sup>

Live Action Role Playing Games (LARPs) ziehen eine große Anzahl von Spielern an, die bereit sind, mit hohem Zeit- und Geldaufwand komplexe, nicht-digitale Spielwelten zu bevölkern. Die Themen der Spielmilieus reichen von mittelalterlicher Fiktion über literarisch inspirierte Stoffe bis hin zu Science-Fiction Szenarios, die allesamt in Alltagsumgebungen eingebettet sind und von den LARPern gespielt werden. Studiert man die Manifeste der verschiedenen LARP Fraktionen so fällt die Ähnlichkeit mit den Manifesten der Avantgardebewegungen des 20. Jahrhunderts und mit subkulturellen Selbstverständnisbezeugungen auf. Die Ähnlichkeiten sind einerseits struktureller Natur, andererseits rhetorisch und gruppenformationsstrategisch zu lesen. Ich untersuche Ähnlichkeiten der sich selbst als Kunstform deklarierenden LARP Spiel-Performances mit den Aktionen zu den Manifestos der italienischen und der russischen Futuristen, der DOGMA Bewegung, der Radiokunst Avantgarde und der Internet-Kunst. Dabei weise ich auf Ähnlichkeiten und Gründe für Ähnlichkeiten in Bezug auf Kunstanspruch, Arroganz, Sprachduktus, Territorialansprüche und Kleidung hin und untersuche die „kalkulierten Zornesausbrüche“ (Clark 2003: 2) der nordischen LARPer.

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<sup>13</sup> Die Monographie „Phantasmal Spaces. Archetypal Venues in Computer Games“ wird 2019 bei Bloomsbury Academic, New York/ London erscheinen.

<sup>14</sup> *Nordic game subcultures: between LARPer and avant-garde* (2014), in: *GAME – Games Subcultures*. The Italian Journal of Game Studies, Vol. 3.

## *Foul Play in Context*<sup>15</sup>

Der Aufsatz, der anlässlich der Wiener F.R.O.G. Konferenz entstand, stellt in Frage, ob die Figuren des Falschspielers und des Spielverderbers, für die Huizinga nicht viel mehr als Verachtung zeigt, eine wesentlich produktivere Position einzunehmen vermögen, als ihnen das gewöhnlich zugestanden wird. Im Kunstbetrieb und in der Kunstgeschichte zählt der Bruch mit den Regeln und das bewusste Ausscheren aus Regelkonventionen zur allerersten künstlerischen Innovationsquelle. Der Zusammenhang zwischen Kunst und Spiel wurde von verschiedenen Autoren thematisiert: mit Einschränkungen bei Schiller („wirklich vorhandene Schönheit“ und „wirklich vorhandener Spieltrieb“ Schiller 2000, Fünfzehnter Brief: 62) und mit ausschließlichem Blick auf die Kunst vor dem 2. Weltkrieg bei Huizinga (1956: 153 – 156). Die modernen Avantgarden, Futuristen, Dadaisten, Fluxus-Pioniere, Net-Art Künstler, Cage, Duchamp, Richter, Tinguely, Damien Hirst, Tracey Emin, Sarah Lucas und viele andere mehr setzen sich auf den Präsentierteller der Kunstszene indem sie „falschspielen“, das heißt, dass sie sich nicht an überkommene Regeln darüber halten, was eine gültige künstlerische Praxis darstellt. So sind die Zerstörung der Leinwand durch Messerschnitte, wie dies Lucio Fontana im *Concetto spaziale* (ab 1949) vorführte oder Tracey Emins Ausstellung des eigenen Bettes als Kunstobjekt (*My Bed* 1998) Aktionen, die zwar durch die Verwendung von Leinwand, oder Lein-Tuch, an die Materialität konventioneller Kunstpraktiken anknüpfen, aber durch gezielte Fehlverwendung aus dem Kanon des Akzeptierten ausscheren. Ganz im Stil professioneller Falschspieler in den Spielsalons und Spielhöllen werden dabei rhetorische Tricks verwendet, um das Falschspiel zu kaschieren. So verleiht Tracey Emin durch eine Material- und Bemaßungsrhetorik, wie sie in Galerien und Museen üblich ist, dem Argument, dass ihr Bett nun ein Kunstwerk sein soll, Nachdruck. „*My Bed*, 1998, mixed media (79 cm × 211 cm × 234 cm)“ lautet die Werkbeschreibung, die sich nahtlos an Konventionen der Ausstellungsgeschichte anpasst. Man kommt der Strategie der Britart Künstlerin allerdings nicht nahe, wenn man im Sinne von Katie Salen and Eric Zimmerman, danach fragt, ob hier ein „bona fide cheating“ oder ein „true cheating“ vorläge (Salen and Zimmerman 2004). Diese Kategorien versuchen, ein moralisch-ethisches Maß an den Prozess des Falschspielens zu legen, das im Kunstbetrieb irrelevant ist. Den

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<sup>15</sup> *Foul Play in Context* (2014), in: Konstantin Mitgutsch, Simon Huber, Jeffrey Wimmer, Michael G. Wagner, Herbert Rosenstingl (Hrsg.) *Context Matters!* Wien: Academic Publishing, S. 76 – 88.

regelbrechenden Künstlern und Künstlerinnen geht es nicht darum, gut, gemein oder hinterlistig zu handeln, sondern vielmehr durch die Zulassung noch nicht weitläufig akzeptierter Referenzsysteme das System Kunst im Ganzen zu erweitern. In dem Moment, in dem dies gelingt, wird die falschspielende Kunstaußenseiterin zur Künstlerin erklärt, die im erweiterten System der Regeln perfekt regelkonform spielt. So erklärt sich, dass Tracey Emin nach vorgängigen Protesten und Beschimpfungen zuerst den Turner Price und dann £ 150.000 für den Verkauf des Bettes bekam. Solche Prozesse gehören im Kunstbetrieb zum Tagesgeschäft. Verwandte Prozeduren lassen sich allerdings auch in der Welt der Computerspiele finden. Cheat-Codes werden zu etablierten und akzeptierten Tastenkombinationen. Subversives Spielverhalten wird von den Spieleentwicklern für zukünftige Programmversionen implantiert, als neue Konvention gut geheißen, beworben und schließlich ausgebeutet.

### *Weltentzug und Weltzerfall*

*(World-withdrawal and world-decay)* <sup>16</sup>

Für das Buch *Philosophical Perspectives on Play* (MacLean, Russell & Ryal 2015) entwickelte ich eine Argumentationslinie, die von Szenen aus dem damals noch neuen Computerspiel *Assassin's Creed: Unity* (Ubisoft 2014) inspiriert wurde, und eine Frage Heideggers aufgreift, die dieser im *Ursprung des Kunstwerks* (1960) reflektiert: Wenn es wahr ist, dass ein Kunstwerk bemüht ist, „die jeweilige Wahrheit eines Geschichtsabschnitts ins Werk zu setzen“ (Heidegger 1960: 34), was geschieht dann, wenn das Ins-Werk-Setzen abgeschlossen ist, das Kunstwerk also nicht mehr weltet, weil Welt sich dem Kunstwerk entzogen hat? Im Schlimmsten Falle liegen diese Kunstwerke dann leblos in Archiven der Sammler und Herausgeber. „Das Bild hängt an der Wand“, bemerkt Heidegger, „wie ein Jagdgewehr oder ein Hut. Ein Gemälde, z.B. jenes von van Gogh, das ein paar Bauernschuhe darstellt, wandert von einer Ausstellung in die andere. Die Werke werden verschickt wie die Kohlen aus dem Ruhrgebiet und die Baumstämme aus dem Schwarzwald. ... Beethovens

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<sup>16</sup> *Weltentzug und Weltzerfall (World-withdrawal and world-decay). Heidegger's notions of withdrawal from the world and the decay of worlds in the times of computer games* (2015), in: Malcolm MacLean, Wendy Russell & Emily Ryal (Hrsg.): *Philosophical Perspectives on Play*. Routledge, London.

Quartette liegen in den Lagerräumen des Verlagshauses wie die Kartoffeln im Keller.“ (Heidegger 1960: 9) Ein Computerspiel ist wohl auch ein “angefertigtes Ding” (Heidegger 1960: 10) wie ein Kunstwerk und oftmals versuchen Game Designer „die jeweilige Wahrheit eines Geschichtsabschnitts ins Werk zu setzen“ (Heidegger 1960: 34). Die Firma *Ubisoft* hat sich in dieser Hinsicht besonders hervor getan. Auch Computerspiele werden in alle Welt verschickt wie die Kohlen aus dem Ruhrgebiet und sie liegen im Keller wie die Kartoffeln. Wenn man die Bildwelten von *Assassin's Creed: Unity* betrachtet und den exzessiv betriebenen Versuch, historischen Realismus zu inszenieren sieht, drängt sich die Frage auf, was übrig bleibt, nachdem die Welt, die hier beschrieben und beschworen wurde, zerfallen ist? Allerdings geht es den Welten der Computerspiele etwas anders als den Welten der Historienmalerei: Computerspiele werden in den meisten Fällen nicht betrachtet, sondern gespielt. Im Akt des Spielens werden Welten aber permanent neuerfunden, geschaffen und verändert. Möglicherweise werden die fiktionalen Räume der Computerspiele also doch, und es ist richtig, was Chris Bateman vermutet: „Worlding is the essential action of the play of such a game - at least as I (dimly) understand this term! - since the players are constantly discovering, inventing, revising, and creating the fictional world they are playing within.“ (Bateman 2013)<sup>17</sup>

Der Beitrag beschäftigt sich auch mit der Betrachtung der gegenseitigen Verschränkung von Erde und Welt, die sich im gespielten Computerspiel anders dynamisiert, als im abgeschlossenen Tafelbild. „Die Welt gründet sich auf die Erde und Erde durchdringt Welt“, sagt Heidegger (1960: 46). Doch an dem Punkt, an dem van Goghs Bauernschuhen die  $\Phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  abhanden gekommen ist, gibt es im Spiel, das in einem lebendigen Spielkontext sich aktualisiert immer wieder aufs Neue ein „Herauskommen und Aufgehen selbst und im Ganzen“, und das – so Heidegger – „nannten die Griechen frühzeitig die  $\Phi\upsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$ .“ (Heidegger 1960: 38)

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<sup>17</sup> Email von Chris Bateman, am 8. Juni 2013.

## *Ludische Interfaces* <sup>18 19</sup>

In einem Beitrag für das Italian Journal of Game Studies, GAME, Vol. 1, 2012 und in einem Buchkapitel in der Springer Edition Angewandte mit dem Titel „Coded Cultures. Creative Practices out of Diversity“ stellte ich das Konzept der „Ludic Interfaces“ vor. Unter diesem Begriff, der gleichzeitig der Projektname für ein *Joint ERASMUS* Studienprogramm der Universitäten Valencia, Potsdam, Linz und Salford war, sollen Mensch-Maschine Interfaces verstanden werden, die spielerische Designelemente verwenden. Während in dem Kapitel zur *Coded Cultures* Publikation konkrete Beispiele solcher Interfaces analysiert werden, fragt der Aufsatz im *Italian Journal of Game Studies* nach dem Ort der Ludizität. Die Frage knüpft an ein Problem der Musikwissenschaften an. In der musikalischen Semantik wird von verschiedenen Autoren, die man die „Expressionalists“ nennt (Bouwsma, 1950; Meyer 1956, 1973; etc.), vorgeschlagen, dass musikalische Emotion vom Klangdesigner via Musik an den Rezipienten übertragen wird. Eine andere Gruppe, die „Arousalists“ Jerrold Levinson (Fuchs, 2010); Aaron Ridley (Beever, 1998); etc. meinen hingegen, dass erst der Hörer die Emotionen erzeugt. Eine dritte Formation zu der Peter Kivy und Stephen Davies gehören, vertreten die Ansicht, dass Emotionalität überhaupt nur der Musik selbst zugeordnet werden kann. (Davies, 1994; Kivy 1980) Meine entsprechende Frage lautet nun, ob Ludizität eine Design Qualität darstellt, die gute Spiele Designer an die Spieler weitergeben können, ob Ludizität aufgrund einer „lusory attitude“ (Suits 1978) entsteht, die im Spieler oder in der Spielerin angesiedelt ist, oder ob die Ludizität sich an das Interface des Spielapparates anbindet.

## *Interpassives Spielen* <sup>20 21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Mouseology – Ludic Interfaces – Zero Interfaces (2012), in: Georg Russegger, Matthias Tarasiewicz & Michal Wlodkowski (Hrsg.): *Coded Cultures. Creative Practices out of Diversity*. Springer Edition Angewandte. Wien, New York, S. 242 – 261.

<sup>19</sup> Ludic interfaces. Driver and product of gamification (2011), in: GAME, vol. 1, ALL OF US, PLAYERS. The Italian Journal of Game Studies, Ass.ne Culturale Ludica, Bologna, Via Veneto, Bologna.

<sup>20</sup> *Interpassives Spielen* (2018), in: Judith Ackermann (Hrsg.) *Phänomen Let's Play-Video. Entstehung, Ästhetik, Aneignung und Faszination aufgezeichneten Computerspielhandelns*. Wiesbaden: Springer, S. 31-41.

<sup>21</sup> *Get Yourself a Life!* (2010), in: Ekmel Ertan (Hrsg.): *interpasif persona*. BIS Body-Process Arts Association, Istanbul 2010, S. 90-98.

Interpassivität wurde von Octave Mannoni (1985), Slavoj Žižek (1998), Robert Pfaller (2000) und Mladen Dolar (2000) als ein Modus des Umgangs mit Personen und Situationen vorgestellt, der es möglich macht, delegiert zu genießen. Diese von Pfaller als Kulturtechnik bezeichnete Form der Partizipation ohne Interaktivität gibt es nicht nur im Fernsehkonsum (vgl. Žižek 1998 und Dolar 2000), in Voksbräuchen (Pfaller 2000), Religion (Dolar 2000) und Erotik (Mannoni 1985), sondern in jüngerer Zeit auch in interpassiver Spielkonsumation, wie sie *twitch.tv* oder die *Let's Play* Videos erlauben. Zwei Buchkapitel setzen sich mit unterschiedlichen Aspekten der Interpassivität im Spiel auseinander.

In türkischer und englischer Sprache erschien *interpasif persona*, herausgegeben von Ekmel Ertan im Anschluss an eine Konferenz in Istanbul, an der auch Mladen Dolar und Robert Pfaller teilnahmen. Ich beschäftige mich in diesem Beitrag mit Phänomenen, die in der damals (2010) populären *Second Life* online Umgebung zu beobachten waren. In dieser Welt der Travestie und des ritualisierten Sozialspiels waren Vorgänge der Maskerade, des Exhibitionismus, der gespielten Rebellion, Banküberfälle, delegierte Schwangerschaften oder Geschlechtsumwandlungen möglich und von einem großen Publikum mit hohem Zeitaufwand inszeniert oder betrachtet. Insbesondere stützen sich meine Beobachtungen auf Donald Winnicotts Theorie des „transitional object“. (Winnicott 1953)

Das zweite Buchkapitel erschien in Judith Ackermanns kürzlich erschienenem Buch *Phänomen Let's Play-Video. Entstehung, Ästhetik, Aneignung und Faszination aufgezeichneten Computerspielhandelns.* (Ackermann 2018) Hier versuche ich eine Systematik zu erstellen, die unterschiedlichen Ausformungen interpassiven Handelns gerecht wird. Es ist schließlich ein Unterschied festzustellen zwischen individuellem, passivem, und alleinigem Konsum eines *Let's Play* Videos und einer Rezeptionsweise desselben Objektes in einer kleinen Freundesgruppe mit Feedback zum *Let's Play* Autor. Nochmals anders liegt der Fall, wenn die Interpassivität inszeniert wird wie in e-sports Veranstaltungen. Da sich Interpassivität nach Slavoj Žižeks Meinung negativ gegenüber Interaktivität aufstellt, versuche ich auch, Formen der Interaktivität als Fundament einer Theorie interpassiven Spielens aufzustellen. Dabei folge ich Katie Salen und Eric Zimmermans Kategorien der kognitiven Interaktivität, funktionellen Interaktivität, expliziten Interaktivität und der „beyond-the-object-interactivity“. (Salen & Zimmerman 2004)



## *Ludoarchaeology*<sup>22</sup>

Der Aufsatz „Ludoarchaeology“ entstand als Konferenzbeitrag für die Tagung „Extending Play“ an der Rutgers University im April 2013. Zu einigen ausgewählten Konferenzbeiträgen stellten Aaron Trammel und Anne Gilbert eine Ausgabe des Journals *Games and Culture* zusammen, die 2014 erschien. Mein Beitrag (Fuchs 2014b) experimentiert mit einer ausgefallenen Forschungsmethode, die zwischen Poesie, Hermeneutik und Wissenschaftskritik liegt. Ich behaupte in meinem Artikel schlichtweg, dass ich mit einem internationalen Ausgrabungsteam in de Steeg in der Provinz Gelderland, also an dem Ort, an dem Johan Huizinga gezwungenermaßen seine letzten Lebensjahre verbrachte, ein bisher nicht bekanntes und von ihm persönlich annotiertes Exemplar des *homo ludens* gefunden hätte, in dem er späte Erkenntnisse und wichtige Revisionen seiner kulturalanthropologischen Schrift vorgenommen hätte. Huizinga war bekanntlich bis zu seinem Tod am 1. Februar 1945 durch die Nazi-Besatzungsmacht unter Hausarrest gestellt worden. Johan Huizinga, der in Leipzig studiert hatte und ein großer Bewunderer Goethes und der deutschen Hochkultur war, begann in diesen Tagen an der Größe deutscher Kultur zu zweifeln. Dies muss wohl auch dazu geführt haben, dass er seine mehrdeutigen Äußerungen zum Verhältnis von Krieg und Spiel überdachte. Ein Dokument, das diese Zweifel und Revisionen seiner früheren Position dokumentiert, existiert jedoch nicht. Selbstverständlich habe ich solch ein Dokument auch nicht im Erdreich Hollands ausgegraben. Huizinga hat sich allerdings in den *Kultur- und zeitkritischen Schriften* zur politischen Situation der 1930er Jahre geäußert und in dieser Publikation ein sehr düsteres Bild seiner Zeit gezeichnet: Im *Schatten von Morgen* (1935) setzt sich Huizinga unter anderem mit dem Problem des Puerilismus auseinander, einem Phänomen, das in der gegenwärtigen Tendenz zur Gamifizierung der Gesellschaft seine Fortsetzung findet. Auch in den Buchkapiteln, die unter der Überschrift „Verratene Welt“ versammelt sind, wird ein desillusionierter Standpunkt gegenüber der Verfassung der Kultur jener Tage deutlich. Huizinga bezieht sich aber außer in einer Fußnote und der Vorbemerkung nie konkret auf den Text des *homo ludens*. Die von mir hergestellte „revidierte“ Fassung des *homo ludens* ist also eine Schrift, die es so nicht gegeben hat, sehr wohl aber hätte geben können.

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<sup>22</sup> Ludoarchaeology (2014), in: *Games and Culture*, Volume 9 issue 6, S. 528-538.

Die Methode, die ich mittels Konstruktion einer posthum revidierten Ausgabe verwende, ist nicht als Schelmenstreich gemeint. Es handelt sich nicht um einen sogenannten „hoax“. Das erfundene, aber nicht gefundene Schriftstück stellt streng gesprochen eine Fälschung dar - intentional einen „Fake“. Martin Doll weist in seiner Schrift „Fälschung und Fake. Zur diskurstheoretischen Dimension des Täuschens“ (2012) darauf hin, dass man durch grammatikalische Analyse von einem Text nicht sagen kann, ob er fiktional oder faktual ist (ibid: 322) und beruft sich dabei auf Searle. John R. Searle stellt in *Expression and Meaning* (1979: 68) fest: „The utterance acts in fiction are indistinguishable from the utterance acts of serious discourse, and it is for that reason that there is no textual property that will identify the stretch of discourse as a work of fiction.“ Es muss im Falle meiner provokativen Veröffentlichung also ein illokutionärer Akt den Text an sich ergänzen, um überhaupt nachvollziehbar zu machen, ob einzelne Statements als fiktional oder faktual begriffen werden sollen. Das ist auf der Konferenz sicher gelungen: Nach etwa 10 Minuten meines Vortrags sah ich an den Gesichtern der Zuhörer, dass jeder im Saal verstanden hatte, dass ich nicht mit Spaten und Ausgrabungswerkzeugen in de Steeg fündig geworden war, sondern am Schreibtisch einen spekulativ-konstruktiven Vorschlag zur Huizinga Lektüre entwickelt habe. Außerhalb des Vorlesungssaales der Universität war die Rezeption der Leser nicht so eindeutig. Ich erhielt nach der Veröffentlichung des Artikels email Anfragen, die höflich aber verunsichert nachforschten, ob ich denn wirklich gegraben hätte. Ein Leser wollte wissen, ob er den Ausgrabungstext für eine Neuauflage der Huizinga Texte erwähnen könne, und ich musste sofort erklären, dass es sich um einen fiktionalen Text und kein reales Fundstück handele. Diese Rezeption der *Ludoaraeologie* war allerdings die Ausnahme, für gewöhnlich wurde der Text als das erkannt, was er sein sollte: ein dezidiert fiktionaler Text, der auf mögliche Transformationen eines Gedankengebäudes Huizingas verweist.

## **5. Weitere Forschungsfragen und in Arbeit begriffene Untersuchungen**

Ebenfalls in die Textsammlung habe ich aufgenommen eine STS Studie zu Mehrspieler Computerspielen, die Aspekte des Privaten und der Überwachung in

solchen Spielen untersucht.<sup>23</sup> Der Aufsatz aus den Proceedings der *ICT Critical Infrastructures and Society* Konferenz in Amsterdam wurde bei Springer verlegt. Anhand von Beispielen des Data Harvesting in Online-Spielen wird versucht zu zeigen, wie Verfahren des *Player Tracking* oder der automatischen Erzeugung von *Heatmaps* zur Überwachung von Spielern genutzt werden. Ein Rechtsstreit, der gegen den Computerspielerhersteller *EA* (Electronic Arts) geführt wurde, entlarvte, wie Spieler unwissentlich und unvermeidlich Software benutzten, die in der Branche als „Spyware“ benannt ist.

Der einzige Textbeitrag in dieser Sammlung, der aus der Zusammenarbeit mit einem Koautor entstanden ist, ist der Beitrag „Bewegte Spiele. Zur Verschiebung des Verhältnisses von Spiel und Alltagswelt durch mobile Games“<sup>24</sup>, der in der Zeitschrift *Sprache und Literatur* erschien, und den mein Kollege Niklas Schrape und ich gemeinsam verfassten. Dabei wird der Konjunktur der Smartphones als Spielplattform nachgegangen. Durch die Transportabilität dieser Geräte wird eine neue Qualität der sozialen Einbettung von Computerspielen ermöglicht, die so mit Heimcomputern oder Spielekonsolen der früheren Generationen nicht möglich war.

Der letzte Beitrag in der Textsammlung ist ein Buch, das vom Verlag angenommen wurde und derzeit im Satz ist. Die ersten Druckfahnen erhielt ich im Dezember 2018. Die Monografie „Phantasmal Spaces“ wird im Sommer 2019 bei Bloomsbury Academic herauskommen. Es geht in diesem Buch um eine systematische „Topoanalyse“ (Bachelard 1964: xxiv) acht verschiedener Raumarchetypen, auf die in Computerspielen immer wieder verwiesen wird: die Straße, die Wolken, der Wald, die Ruine, die Klippe, die Höhle, die Insel und das Portal. Dabei wird jedes der acht Raumdispositive aus vier verschiedenen Untersuchungsrichtungen betrachtet: kunsthistorisch, spieltechnologisch, psychoanalytisch und transmedial. Offenbar werden die Phantasmen, die in diesen Räumen „schwingen“ (ibid) von technologischen Bedingungen begrenzt, von psychischen Zuständen getrieben und durch kunstgeschichtliche Rahmungen modifiziert. Es ist auch Wert zu betrachten,

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<sup>23</sup> Social Games. Privacy and Security. In: Magda David Hercheui, Diane Whitehouse, William McIver et al. (Hrsg.) *ICT Critical Infrastructures and Society*. Springer Heidelberg, Dordrecht, London, New York 2012, S. 330 – 337.

<sup>24</sup> Bewegte Spiele. Zur Verschiebung des Verhältnisses von Spiel und Alltagswelt durch mobile Games (gemeinsam mit Niklas Schrape), in: Natalie Binczek, Ludwig Jäger und Erika Linz (Hrsg.) *Sprache und Literatur* 111. 44. Jg., 2013, 1. Halbjahr. Themenheft: App-Kultur. Red. Stephanie Heimgartner. S. 69 – 83.

wie die Phantasmen im Austausch zwischen den Medien des Filmes, der Literatur, der Malerei, Skulptur, Musik und nicht zuletzt der Spiele gegenseitige Verstärkung erfahren, bisweilen aber auch semiotischen Brüchen erliegen. Die Darstellung der phantasmatischen Räume ist keine lineare Ableitung am Strang der Geschichte oder einer psychoanalytischen Genese, sondern das Ausbreiten eines Netzes von Querverweisen und Referenzen. Dies ist, wie Bachelard bemerkt, nicht ausschließlich durch ein Wissen über die Räume zu erreichen, sondern erfordert eine Nähe zu diesen Räumen, die zwar jeweils bekannt sind, die er aber als „intime Räume“ bezeichnet, weil ihr Verständnis sich nicht allein aus distanter Beobachtung einstellt. Die Haltung, die solch eine topoanalytische Annäherung ermöglicht, nennt er die „Topophilie“ (Bachelard 1964: 20), die Liebe zu den spezifischen Räumen. Die Methode, der ich hier folge, oszilliert also auf einer vertikalen Untersuchungsachse (historische Analyse) und einer horizontalen Achse (Transdisziplinarität und laterales Denken) und wechselt beständig den Fokus zwischen Fernsicht und Nahaufnahme. Am Beispiel des phantasmatischen Raumes der Straße werden historisch Straßen in Computerspielen verschiedener Dekaden betrachtet, gleichzeitig aber auch Straßen in Film, Malerei und in anderen Medien. Ein immer wiederkehrendes Detail in Road Movies, Driving Games, und Gemälden, wie denen von Edward Hopper ist die Tankstelle. Dieser phantasmatische Ort des Verweilens und des Weiterfahren-Müssens wird im Detail betrachtet (die Zapfsäule, das Tankstellenschild usw.) und vor dem weiteren Horizont der Psychologie des Fahrens.

Die nachfolgenden Publikationen wurden aus Gründen, die ich in der Einleitung beschrieben habe, nicht in die Textsammlung zu Games und Gamification aufgenommen, seien hier aber dennoch aufgelistet:

*Intelligenz-Comptoirs (2018)* In: Imanuel Schipper (Hrsg.) *Staat 1-4 Phänomene der Postdemokratie*. Berlin: Theater der Zeit.

*Gamification. Wunderwaffe oder Bullshit?* (2017) In: form Design Magazine. No. 26: Spielen/ Play.

33  $\frac{1}{3}$  *Revolutions*. (2016) In: Harald Kraemer, Daniel C. Howe & Kyle Chung (Hrsg.) *Cultural R>Evolution*. Catalogue. School of Creative Media/ City University of Hong Kong.

*Gamification. Die Ausweitung der Spielzone.* (2013) In: *Die Visionäre des Silicon Valley.* Zürich: Du - Das Kunstmagazin.

*Maulwurf* (2012) In: Stephan Günzel (Ed.): *Lexikon der Raumphilosophie.* Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.

(gemeinsam mit Debrah Leighton) *Ordsall Hall in Manchester. A Creative Game for Heritage Studies.* (2011) In: Ma, M., Oliveira, M. F. & Pereira, J. M. (Hrsg.) *Serious Games Development and Applications: Second International Conference, SGDA 2011, Lisbon, Portugal, September 19-20, 2011.* Proceedings Springer-Verlag (Lecture Notes in Computer Science; Nr. 6944),

Sowie Herausgeberschaften mit Einleitungskapiteln:

(gemeinsam mit Ramón Reichert): *Rethinking AI. Neural Networks, Biometrics and the New Artificial Intelligence.* (2018) transcript Verlag, Bielefeld.

(gemeinsam mit Pablo Abend): *Quantified Selves and Statistical Bodies.* (2016) transcript Verlag, Bielefeld.

(gemeinsam mit Natasha Lushetich): *On Game Structures.* (2016) In: *Performance Research Journal*, 21(4).

In den nächsten zwei Jahren wird die Arbeit zu Gamification im Rahmen eines DFG geförderten Projektes mit dem Titel „Gamification. Grenzverschiebungen zwischen dem Spielerischen und dem Nichtspielerischen“ (FU 942/4-1) fortgesetzt werden. Im Rahmen dieses Projektes sind zwei Ausgaben des *Journal Digital Culture and Society* bei transcript Verlag/ Bielefeld, geplant (Heft 9/ Dezember 2019, Heft 11/ Oktober 2020), die ich gemeinsam mit Pablo Abend, Karin Wenz und Sonia Fizek herausgeben werde. Die vorläufigen Themen dieser Hefte sind „Laborious Play“ (Heft 9) und „Playful Work“ (Heft 11).

## 6. Methodische Ansätze

Da die hier vorgestellten Texte unterschiedliche disziplinäre Schwerpunkte haben, sind auch die verwendeten Forschungsmethoden unterschiedlich. Bei den ideologiekritischen Aufsätzen wurde vorrangig hermeneutisch gearbeitet, die kunsthistorischen Untersuchungen verwenden vergleichende Bildanalyse, die spekulativen Texte, wie der zu *Ludoarchaeology* sind als Versuche zu werten, eine ludische Methode zu entwickeln. Nur in Ansätzen wurden empirische Untersuchungen verwendet (beispielsweise unter Verwendung von sehr kleinen, nicht repräsentativen Samples in den Aufsätzen zu *Let's Play Videos*). Der Grund dafür liegt darin, dass die meisten meiner Forschungsfragen auf Phänomene blicken, deren Verifizierbarkeit nicht von Interesse oder gar unmöglich ist. Meine kulturwissenschaftliche Forschung bemüht sich um theoretisch innovative Vorschläge zum Verständnis komplexer Phänomene und muss keine soziometrisch exakten oder quantitativ abgesicherten Aussagen liefern. So ist beispielsweise die Behauptung, dass visuelle Korrespondenzen zwischen Third Person Darstellungen verschiedener Computerspiele und einer Betrachtungsperspektive in der Malerei der Deutschen Romantik nicht sinnvoll empirisch zu belegen. Es gibt natürlich in der Malerei Caspar David Friedrichs und anderer Künstler Hunderte von Gemälden, die nichts mit den Darstellungsformen der Computerspiele gemein haben. Das ist aber nicht der Punkt. Wichtig ist der Entwurf von Kriterien und Fragestellungen, die auf Gründe von Ähnlichkeiten verweisen.

Es ist offensichtlich, dass im Buchkapitel zur „Ruinensehnsucht“ stark über den Vergleich von Bildern zwischen Computerspiel und kunsthistorischen Kontexten argumentiert wird. Das Verfahren, das hier angewendet wird, hat Herbert Lachmayer in einer Vorlesung an der Universität Wien einmal so beschrieben: „Die Methode der kunstgeschichtlichen Forschung ist sozusagen: Stelle zwei Diaprojektoren nebeneinander auf. Stecke interessante Dias in die Projektoren und beginne über die Zusammenhänge oder Unterschiede zu sprechen.“<sup>25</sup> Das klingt willkürlicher als es gemeint ist. Natürlich geht es darum, signifikante Ähnlichkeiten und Unterschiede herauszuschälen und in den meisten Fällen werden mehr als nur zwei Bilder vonnöten sein um zu aufschlussreichen Schlussfolgerungen gelangen zu können. Insofern folgt der kunsthistorische Vergleich der Methode Aby Warburgs, die dieser

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<sup>25</sup> Eigene Mitschrift aus der Vorlesung zur Gegenwartskunst an der Universität Wien, gehalten von Prof. Herbert Lachmayer im Sommersemester 1982.

in den Mnemosyne Atlanten erprobte und vorstellte. Warburg ging es dabei nicht um historische Konsistenz oder die Geschlossenheit der Genres der betrachteten Objekte. So montierte er beispielsweise im Panel 77, das Warburg zwischen 1925 und 1929 abfotografierte, das Foto eines Golfspielers, eine Münze aus hellenistischer Zeit mit Frauenkopf, ein akademisches Ölgemälde einer weiblichen Person in Kontorsion, die Titelseite aus einem Seefisch-Kochbuch der Zwanzigerjahre und verschiedene Briefmarkenmotive, um dem Geheimnis des zentraleuropäischen „Leidschatzes“ näher zu kommen. Diese Methode scheint mir hervorragend geeignet zu sein, um Auskünfte über verdeckte Bezüge und Fernreferenzen in Computerspielen entlarven zu können. Ich verwende die Methode des mehrdimensionalen Bildvergleiches in dem Buchbeitrag „Ruinensehnsucht“ (2017) und entwickle sie in dem in Kürze bei Bloomsbury erscheinenden Buch „Phantasmal Spaces“ (2019) weiter. Wenn beispielsweise bildliche Darstellungen des *Wanderers über dem Nebelmeer* (Friedrich 1817) neben einen Screenshot aus dem Computerspiel *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* (2007) des Entwicklers GSC Game World montiert werden, so ist die Absicht dabei, Ähnlichkeiten, Unterschiede, technische und historische Referenzen auszuleuchten und klarzulegen, auf welche kulturhistorischen Referenzsysteme diese Bildlichkeiten Bezug nehmen und auf welche Weise sie dies tun. Dabei sind Aspekte der Perspektive, des Lichteinfalls, der Darstellung der Charaktere/ Avatare, der Körperhaltung, der Kleidung, der klimatischen Bedingungen und der Konstruktion fiktiver landschaftlicher Environments von außerordentlicher Bedeutung. Ich versuche nachzuweisen, dass Landschaft im Computerspiel (wie auch in Gemälden) eben kein Resultat von Repräsentation, sondern ein Produkt kreativer Konstruktion ist. Die Konstruktionen, die im Game Design hergestellt werden, sind dechiffrierbar als im Spiel materialisierte Phantasmen, auf die die Designer bewusst oder unbewusst zugreifen.

Schließlich möchte ich noch auf ein methodisches Experiment eingehen, das ich bereits im Abschnitt zu *Ludoarchaeology* erwähnt habe. Ich bin der Ansicht, dass sich „Fakes“ (Doll 2012) als Referenzobjekte in einer ernsthaften Diskussion sinnvoll einsetzen lassen. Im Falle meines Beitrages war solch ein „Fake“ ein selbstproduziertes Faksimile einer vorgeblich von Huizinga annotierten Seite aus dem *Homo ludens* (1938). Wie Martin Doll in seinem Buch über „Fälschung und Fake. Zur diskurstheoretischen Dimension des Täuschens“ (2012) ausführt ist ein „Fake“ keine mutwillige Fälschung. Es ist auch kein „hoax“, also kein Schelmenstreich oder Studentenuk. Es geht vielmehr darum mittels eines möglichen, wenn auch nicht faktisch existenten Objektes eine Diskursfigur eröffnen

zu können, die positiv zu einem Diskursfeld beiträgt. Die Faktizität des heuristischen Quellenmaterials ist in den exakten Wissenschaften aus gutem Grund ein fast unentbehrliches Requisite. Man kann allerdings in Frage stellen, ob alle Quellen, auf die Philosophie und Geisteswissenschaften sich stützen, immer faktisch nachweisbar waren.<sup>26</sup> Verlassen wir uns nicht in der Sokrates Lektüre auf Platons Schriften und die des Xenophon? Können wir wirklich davon ausgehen, dass die Herderschen Beobachtungen über „Die Wilden in Nordamerika“ (Herder [1770] 1966) faktisch korrekt sind? Selbst bei einem modernen Soziologen und Spieleforscher wie Roger Caillois kann man sehr stark in Zweifel ziehen, ob die angeblich spielerisch vorgetragenen Tötungsgesänge der Eskimos, die Caillois ohne Quellenangabe im Detail wiedergibt (Caillois [1958] 1982: 48-49), jemals von Inuit-Jägern gesungen wurden. Auch seine Ausführungen über die „Gewaltakte der Halbwüchsigen von Stockholm“ (ibid: 145), die er niemals miterlebt hatte, und die sich vage an Beschreibungen einer Journalistin von *Le Monde* anlehnen, sind eher gut erfunden als sorgfältig recherchiert. Dafür sollte man Caillois nicht zürnen. Die fiktiven Quellen fügen sich in sein argumentatives Gerüst und machen einen Gedankengang nachvollziehbar, den sie eher ornamentieren als dass sie ihn fundieren.

Es gibt allerdings noch eine viel fundamentalere Kritik an der Faktizität, die beispielsweise von Derrida vorgetragen wurde. Derrida untersucht was in der deutschen Übersetzung als „Lüge“ bezeichnet wird und stellt fest: „Es gibt nicht die Lüge, es gibt dieses Sagen oder Sagen-Wollen, das man das Lügen nennt. Man sollte sich nicht fragen, ‚Was ist eine Lüge?‘, sondern vielmehr ‚Was macht und, davor noch, was will ein Lügen?‘“ Letztendendes kann man nach Derrida falsch Sprechen – lügen - *ex negativo* als einen Sonderfall des wahr Sprechens auffassen, denn was wahr oder unwahr ist, basiert auf dem Verständnis über Sachverhalte. Dieses Verständnis problematisiert Derrida aber, denn in jedem Verstehen liegt die Möglichkeit des Missverstehens. Der Derrida Schüler Jonathan Culler liest Derrida so, dass er meint: „... understanding is a special case of misunderstanding“ (Culler 1982: 176) Das ist, wie Michael Ryan feststellt, näher an Cullers Auffassung als an der Derridas. (Ryan 1989: 238) Beide, Culler und Derrida, bestehen allerdings darauf, dass die wissenschaftliche Sprache eine Sprache sei, die sich des

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<sup>26</sup> Man könnte in diesem Zusammenhang auch untersuchen, was es für den Originaltext von Komponisten bedeutet, wenn unvollendete Werke von Kollegen oder Herausgebern ergänzt und überarbeitet oder aktualisiert werden. Dies ist gängige Praxis, die „Originalmaterial“ von vermeintlichen Irrtümern befreit und ergänzt.



Bewusstseins über ihre Fiktionalität entledigt hat. „Wenn die wissenschaftliche Sprache ein Spezialfall der nicht-wissenschaftlichen Sprache ist, und wenn Wahrheiten Konstrukte sind, deren Fiktionalität vergessen wurde, dann ist die Dichtung weder Sonderbereich noch parasitärer Auswuchs der Sprache.“<sup>27</sup> (Culler 2003: Bd. 2, 36) In *La double séance* setzt Derrida der Wahrheitsästhetik dezidiert eine Spielästhetik entgegen, und findet *jouissance* im Wiederholungsspiel, das eine negative Erkenntnis vermitteln soll. Ruth Sonderegger kritisiert Derrida in ihrem Buch *Für eine Ästhetik des Spiels* (2000) scharf und bemerkt, dass Derrida der Ansicht wäre, dass „dort wo wir von Sinn und Wahrheit sprechen nur sinnsubversive Spielereien stattfinden.“ (Sonderegger 2000: 118) Der französische Philosoph will in der Tat der objektiven Wahrheit ans Messer zugunsten von Formen der literarischen Praxis, wie er sie bei Mallarmé findet: Figuren des Rhythmus, des Reimes und der Faltung. Derridas Methode – vielleicht auch nur seine Strategie, wie Sonderegger einschränkt – besteht also darin „den Überschuss der Syntax über den Sinn“ (Derrida 1995: 260) einzugestehen und sich darauf (negativ) einzulassen. In diesem Bestreben steht Derrida nicht allein da. Kollegen aus dem französischen Sprachraum beziehen beispielsweise Position für *La Philosophie comme fiction* (Cassou-Nogués 2010)

Man kann aber auch in unserem Sprachraum, zum Beispiel bei Hans Blumenberg, fiktionale Elemente finden, die jeder Verifizierbarkeit widerstehen. Blumenbergs Erkenntnisinteresse deckt sich nicht mit dem Derridas, es lassen sich aber dennoch in seinen Texten Quellen finden, die der Blumenbergschen Phantasie entsprangen und nicht paläoanthropologischen Recherchen oder irgendwie nachweisbaren Sachverhalten. Wenn Blumenberg sagt, dass „die urweltliche Höhle [...] ein Ort der Konzentration von Aufmerksamkeit“ (Blumenberg 1989: 27) ist, und eine frei erfundene Fabel präsentiert, in der die Schwachen der Gruppe in einer Höhle zu den Mythenbildern und Kulturstiftern werden, die den Jägern des Clans kreativ überlegen gegenüberstehen, dann nimmt er eben selbst die Rolle des Märchenerzählers und des Märchenerfinders ein. Weit weg ist seine Argumentation an diesem Punkt von dem, was John Locke „the original truth“ nennt (Lockes *Essay on Human Understanding* [1690], zit. nach Doll 2012: 159) Blumenberg ist sich im Klaren darüber, dass seine „urweltlichen“ Raisonnements nicht als faktisches Beweismaterial gelten können. Er sagt deshalb aufrichtig: „Wenn ich sage, Läßt sich

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<sup>27</sup> Im Original: „If serious language is a special case of non-serious, if truths are fictions whose fictionality has been forgotten, then literature is not a deviant, parasitical instance of language.“

verstehen ... so ist das eine philosophische Behauptung in dem schwach definierten Sinne, daß sie weder bewiesen noch widerlegt werden kann. Philosophie ist der Inbegriff von unbeweisbaren und unwiderlegbaren Behauptungen [...]“ (Blumenberg 1989: 22)

Im Licht der vorgenannten Standpunkte möchte ich daher die Methode, die ich in dem Aufsatz *Ludoarchaeology* verwende und die an den Maximen orthodoxer Ethikausschüsse möglicherweise als nicht nachweisbar scheitern würde, verteidigen als eine Methode, die einer Spielästhetik im Derridaschen Sinne, gerecht wird, und als ein Versuch im Bereich einer Auslassung (des Spieltheoretikers Huizinga bezüglich seines eigenen Textes) weiterzuforschen, und kontextkonsistente Revisionen vorzuschlagen. Der „absolute Fake“ ist, wie Jaap Kooijman unter Berufung auf Umberto Eco feststellt, „eine Form der Hyperrealität in der ein kulturelles Artefakt hergestellt wird, das eine verbesserte Kopie des Originalen darstellt, weil es ‚echter‘ ist als das Original“ (Kooijman 2013: 12). Schließlich sagen „Fakes“ immer auch etwas über die Diskursumgebung aus, in die sie implantiert werden. So stellt Martin Doll fest: „Denn Fälschungen und Fakes – so eine leitende These – lassen, nachdem sie sich in einem Diskurs ins Werk gesetzt haben, in ihm *ex post* ihre Akzeptanzbedingungen und damit die des Diskurses fragwürdig werden. (Doll 2012: 12)

Wichtig ist mir in dieser Hinsicht, dass die Forschung zu Games und Gamification nicht nur neue Einsichten zum Objekt der Forschung beitragen kann, sondern darüber hinaus auch die Diskursumgebung beleuchtet.

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Mathias Fuchs

**Games und Gamification.  
Kulturhistorische,  
medienwissenschaftliche, politische  
und ästhetische Dimensionen**

Schriften 2010 bis 2018



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# Gamification as twenty-first-century ideology

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## Abstract

Gamification as the process of turning extra-ludic activities into play can be seen in two different ways: following Bataille (1975), we would hope that play could be a flight line from the servitude of the capital-labour relationship. Following Adorno (1970) and Benjamin (1939), however, we might discover that the escape from the drudgery of the worker leads to an equally alienating drudgery of the player. I argue that gamification might be seen as a form of ideology and therefore a mechanism of the dominant class to set agenda and to legitimize actions taken by this very class or group. Ever since the notion of gamification was introduced widely (Reilhac 2010; Deterding et al. 2011; Schell 2011), scholars have suggested that work might be seen as a sort of leisure activity. This article analyses the controversial dialectics of play and labour and the ubiquitous notion of gamification as ideology.

## Keywords

gamification, ideology, false consciousness, labour, ethics, counter-gamification

## Introduction

The list of promises that the evangelists of gamification espouse is long:

- ‘Gamification can make work more interesting’ (Gartner 2013, n.p.);
- ‘Gamification techniques can increase productivity of employees by 40%.’ (Zichermann 2013, n.p.);

- ‘When we’re playing games, we’re not suffering’ (McGonigal 2012, n.p.);
- ‘Gamification is projected to be a \$5.8 billion market for 2018’ (Markets & Markets 2013, n.p.);
- Gamification can ‘combine big data with the latest understanding of human motivation’ (Paharia 2013);
- ‘Gaming makes living eco-friendly a lot more interesting’ (Sexton 2013);
- ‘Gaming can help children learn in the classroom, help build and maintain muscle memory, fight against some of the effects of aging, and distract from pain and depression’ (Ramos 2013);

Similar to the cure-alls of medieval charlatans, the panacea of gamification seems to have an unlimited range of possible application areas and unrestricted trust and loyalty by the consumers. It is difficult to prove any of the announced effects of gamification as false because the inherent logic of the *apparatus* of gamification is consistent. Michel Foucault uses the notions of *apparatus* and of *dispositif* for powerful societal frameworks of thought and understanding and defined his concept of *dispositif* in an interview that has been published as “The confession of the flesh” in the 1970s (Foucault in Gordon 1980). Foucault thought of the *dispositif* as

‘a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, [. . .] administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid’ (Foucault [1977] 1980: 194).

Nowadays gamification has turned into one of those systems that the philosopher described. Gamification as a *dispositif* or *apparatus* supports the current power-structure: gamification is used as an administrative measure, it is talked about on blogs and in academic journals like this one, it is used and misused by journalists, and it is applied to work as the rationale for propositions that contain a *promesse du bonheur* (wealth, health, end of suffering, reduction of the effects of aging) like religious salvation once did.

## The Hype

The *dispositif* that supports gamification is a heterogenous ensemble in Foucault’s understanding of the apparatus because it contains multiple fields of application. Gamification can nowadays be spotted almost everywhere: When we look at theatre theory, we will find ‘game theatre’ (Rakow 2013, n.p.); when we look at religious blogs, we’ll find ‘gamifying religion’ (Toler 2013, n.p.); when we look at the information from health services, we’ll find ‘fun ways to cure cancer’ (Scott 2013,



n.p.) or ‘dice game against swine flu’ (Marsh and Boffey 2009, n.p.); and when we investigate collective water management, we’ll find ‘games to save water’ (Meinzen-Dick 2013, n.p.). Most of the suggestions to gamify this or that benefit from the hype of gamification—a hype that, according to Gopaladesikan (2012), will give way to a low and then steady and sustainable rise. Notions that are on the ascending branch of ‘the hype function’ suggested by companies that label themselves as ‘world's leading information technology research and advisory company’ (Gartner 2014) are so attractive to investors, governments, and opinion makers that most social sectors will try to embrace these notions—however absurd it might sound in each particular case.

As Foucault observed, the cornerstones of a new *dispositif* are not built upon rational decision only but take from and produce ‘administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions’ (1977: 194). Let us look at an example from contemporary political decision-making. The European Commission’s technology trend-spotter organisation CORDIS conducted research on directions for future and emerging technologies. This sounds like a business that should be carried through with objective empirical methods, cold blood, and a critical distance to subjective opinion. As Figure 1 shows, the web-based part of the investigation uses the familiar ‘Like’ and ‘Dislike’ buttons that we know from social media and social gossip pages and that we can attribute to the style and methods of gamification. How can one find out whether scientific cutting-edge research is of relevance by asking competitor scientists whether they would put their thumbs up or down? There are many problems with such a method: Conflict of interest is one, reproducibility of data is another one, and a logic circle is a third problem. As evidenced in Figure 1, the question of whether gamification is a relevant research topic is asked with a gamified method. This is as if the Academy of Sciences were trying to find out whether the method of reading tealeaves is a valuable scientific approach by reading tealeaves.



Figure 1: Consultation on directions for Future and Emerging Technologies (screenshot from [http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/fet-proactive/fetconsult2012/results\\_en.html](http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/ict/fet-proactive/fetconsult2012/results_en.html))

I hope to have been able to demonstrate or hint here that gamification is invading discursive fields by virtue of hype rather than by virtue of appropriateness. There is another aspect to calling gamification a *dispositif*. When Foucault speaks about ‘philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions’ (1977: 194), he reminds us of the variety of statements that contribute to the persuasiveness and plausibility of the apparatus. When Jane McGonigal (2012a; see Figure 2) promises the audience of the popular TED talks to know how to increase the life expectancy of every single person in the room by ten years, she is of course telling a lie. But her statement that is firmly and intentionally integrated within the *dispositif* of gamification carries a philanthropic utopian promise that connotes with moral statements, quasi-empirical data, and light philosophical speculation. Nobody cares whether one year, ten years, eleven years, or no time at all of added lifetime results from her gamified self-control therapy. And nobody will ever know. This is the nature of ideological statements: whether they are true or false does not really matter. What matters here is an ensemble of references (‘I am a game designer’), of status symbols (TED talks), of power (R&D director of the Institute for the Future), commitment to rationality (‘I have maths to prove this’), and an endearing naïveté that announces big changes to come with only minimal efforts to be undertaken.

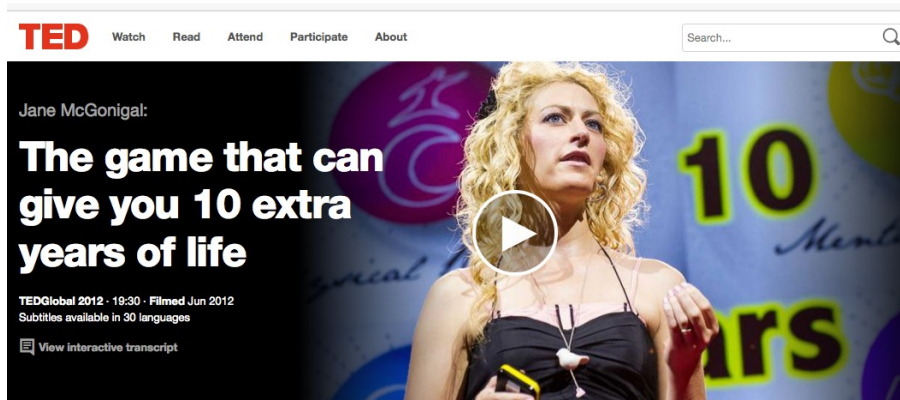


Figure 2: Jane McGonigal at the TED talks (detail of screen capture from [http://www.ted.com/talks/jane\\_mcgonigal\\_the\\_game\\_that\\_can\\_give\\_you\\_10\\_extra\\_years\\_of\\_life](http://www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_the_game_that_can_give_you_10_extra_years_of_life))

## Gamification as Ideology

It is too tempting to conceive gamification as the latest form of ideology. When the evangelists of gamification tell us that work must be play, that our personalities will be playful, that the whole economy is a game, and that each and every activity from cradle to grave can be turned into a game, we encounter false consciousness that is socially necessary. Today, gamification is used to tell people that if reality is not satisfactory, then at least play might be so. McGonigal (2011) phrased this aptly in her popular proposal that ‘reality is broken’. Replacing reality-based praxis with storytelling, gaming, self-motivation, or ‘self- expansion escapism’ (Kollar 2013) is what Marx and Engels would have labelled as ideology. McGonigal’s ‘[w]hen we’re playing games, we’re not suffering’ (2012b n.p.) is the cynical statement of somebody who is definitely not suffering economically and has probably little reason and even less time to play games any longer.

But gamification concepts did not start in the current decade, and they were ideologically loaded even before computer games came into existence. In 1934 Pamela Lyndon Travers, the author of *Mary Poppins*, and when Disney adapted this novel to a movie in 1964, they had Travers’ famous novel’s main character say:

In ev’ry job that must be done  
 There is an element of fun  
 You find the fun, and snap!  
 The job’s a game! (Mary Poppins 1964)

We cannot but disapprove of this statement. It was far from useful or poetic; rather, it was a cold-blooded statement of ideology that anticipated the *gamification* evangelicalism of our days. It was a few years after the *Black Thursday* of 1929 when

Lyndon Travers conceived the character Mary Poppins that suggested work could be considered fun. Almost a century later, the notion of gamification was introduced widely (Zichermann and Cunningham 2011; McGonigal 2011; Deterding et al., 2011; Schell 2011) to suggest that marketing, design, health, and work might be seen as some kind of free play or leisure activity. This was just a few years after the so-called credit crunch deprived many of work. In analyzing the controversial dialectics of play and labour and the ubiquitous notion of *gamification* as ideology, I raise the question of whether the affirmative process aiming at gamification of society has a counterpoise of subversive gamification. Subversive gamification could provide a glimmer of hope in a situation that has been described as a ‘ludictatorship’ (Escribano 2014). There are two complementary reasons, however, to conceive of gamification as ideology<sup>128</sup>:

1. Gamification is false consciousness: The proposition that game design elements can change the nature of labour and successfully cope with exploitation, ‘alienation’ (Zichermann and Linder 2013, n.p.), or ‘suffering’ (McGonigal 2012, n.p.) is proven on the basis of subjective assessment or mere speculation and not based on empirical economic analysis.
2. Gamification is socially necessary: concluding from market analysis and market predictions data that Saatchi & Saatchi (Ipsos OTX MediaCT 2011), Gartner (Burke 2012), and Ernst & Young (2011) offer, the industry needs to implement gamification in most of the sectors that drive our economy. The reason for that, according to the aforementioned sources, is increasing demand for customer loyalty and customer motivation in order to guarantee sustainable economic growth. It will, therefore, be mandatory for consumers and prosumers to embrace gamification as well. Gamification is not a choice; it is necessary for the political economy of this decade.

## False Consciousness

Ideology works best when it distorts reality in such a way that we do not notice the distortion because everything seems to be alright. While in fact a mistaken identity and a unification of play and labour serve the needs of the economic system, the ideas of ideology make it appear natural. It makes the subordinate classes accept a state of alienation against which they would otherwise revolt. This state of alienation has also been referred to as ‘false consciousness’. In the closing chapter of Alfred Sohn-

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<sup>28</sup> As Joseph McCartney demonstrates in his text ‘Ideology and False Consciousness’ (2005), Marx never talked of ideology as ‘false consciousness’. Althusser (1970) and Sohn-Rethel (1978), however, made a connection between the two.

Rethel's *Intellectual and Manual Labour* (1978, pp. 196), the author invokes the concept of 'necessary false consciousness'. This is a type of false consciousness that is not just faulty consciousness; necessary false consciousness is rather a type of false consciousness that is logically correct. However cruel, meaningless, or destructive it might seem, it is necessary for the system in which we are working to keep working until we die so that we will shop until we drop.

Theoreticians like Huizinga, Bataille, and Marcel Mauss were desperate to identify an element in society that would have the potential to disrupt or to even break open this cage of necessities effected by the system. Marcel Mauss (1923/24) believes that a fundamental quality of human interaction must exist outside the rationality of exchange and of monetary interest. Based on ethnological research, he proposed the notion of the gift as an alternative to the rationalist calculation of capitalist exchange (1923/24). Giving away without any expectation for payback allows us to act in a way that is non-alienated and differs considerably from the exchange of commodities with the aim of profit making. George Bataille's (1975) perspective on economic structure used the concept of the gift developed by Mauss in order to support his affirmation of the possibility of human sovereignty within economic systems. For Bataille, play was one of the conceivable frameworks that foster a type of sacrifice that resembles a gift. The game in a Huizingian (1938) sense of a free activity was therefore interpreted as opposed to alienated work. *Gaming* and *labour* would be diametrically opposed, and the 'sacred' within play was a source of hope to escape the master-slave dialectic of capital-labour relationships. As Robert Pfaller demonstrates in his article subtitled 'Bataille reads Huizinga' (2010), the Bataillan logic is built upon the dialectics of work and play, and one cannot have one without the other. That is why Georges Bataille, with all his sympathies for Huizinga, differs considerably from the Dutch anthropologist when it comes to the implications that follow from the assumptions made in *Homo Ludens*. The idea that animals can play, for example, is an idea that Bataille cannot share with Huizinga because a playing animal would imply that animals can also work in the sense of engaging in labour processes (Pfaller 2010: 23). No playing animal without a working animal is what Bataille insists on.



Figure 3: Cover Images of Wallpaper magazine no.111 (2008), presenting an ideological message (page reproductions available at <http://www.wallpaper.com/covers/limited---edition/work---is---play/52#nav>)

Gamification propaganda in the style of ‘work is play’, ‘work can be play’, or ‘work harder, play harder’, are suggesting that work can be contained within the ‘sphere of play’ (Huizinga 1949). Such statements and consequently the whole concept of gamification are ideological as they express false consciousness of the nature of work and play (see, for example, the magazine covers in Figure 3, designed by Anthony Burrill 2008). Gamification ideology wants to tell us that we can play when we work. Bataille, on the contrary, thought that play might disrupt the servitude of unfree labour, and he had hope that the individual’s sovereignty could find its way from servitude via radical play. In Bataille’s words, it is ‘l’homme qui excelle’ (man who is aglow) when he lets go of his material interests in a game.<sup>29</sup> This is perfectly contrary to play settings resulting from gamification apps. A gamified work process,

<sup>29</sup> According to Bataille, this could go as far as risking one’s own life in a game.



a gamified consumer service, or a gamified learning experience will always try to keep the customer accumulating points, badges, or money. In regard to the gifts offered by gamification apps, there is also a substantial difference to freely giving away (in the sense of Mauss and Bataille) on one hand and the pointsification-oriented incentives on the other hand. Bonuses and badges handed out to increase customer loyalty are the opposite of generous gifts. If gifts, as they are given in environments like *Farmville* (Zynga 2009), *SuperBetter* (SuperBetter Labs 2011), or the Starbucks App (Starbucks 2014), only serve to increase the profits of some and the exploitation of others, then they are far from sovereign praxis. They are contributing to servitude in the Hegelian sense of the ‘Herr-Knecht’ (master-servant) dialectics. This is to say that sovereignty and servitude remain attributed to one side of the provider-consumer relationship exclusively. When consuming *Farmville* playtime, the player remains a ‘Knecht’, and Zynga Corporation continues to be the ‘Herr’. Other than what the ideological message promises, it is not the player who is visited by the cash cow; the player is the cash cow, and he or she delivers monetary benefits to Zynga. The difference from the false statement to the right one is only minimal: Instead of Figure 4’s statement ‘Triple your money in a year!’ it should say ‘Triple *our* money in a year!’



Figure 4: Screenshot from Zynga's Farmville app

A gift in a gamification context is never ‘le don’ as Mauss conceived it (1923/24). The gamified *homo ludens* is just an advancement of the *homo economicus*. The former might have a smile on his face, but the smile is a sarcastic one. Mauss’ gift and even more so Bataille’s excessive gift held a promise for the possibility to escape the cage of traditional economic reasoning. Bataille was hoping for a Copernican revolution that turns an economy of scarcity into one of excess: ‘[c]hanging from the perspectives of *restrictive* economy to those of *general* economy actually accomplishes a Copernican transformation: a reversal of thinking—and of ethics’ (1991: 25). Bataille identifies the gift, excessive play, and sexuality as areas where his ‘general economy’ can already be observed nowadays. The French philosopher thinks of playing games in the wider sense as a nucleus of emancipation.<sup>30</sup>

In this regard, Bataille differs essentially from how Adorno and Benjamin thought about gaming: for Adorno, the ‘repetitiveness of gaming’ is nothing but ‘an after-image of involuntary servitude’ (1984: 401; Adorno, ‘Nachbild von unfreier Arbeit’, 1970: 371), and for Benjamin, the gamer’s actions resemble those of the proletarian worker as they perform what is derived of all meaning: ‘drudgery of the player’ (‘Fron des Spielers’, 1939: 72 -73). Like Bataille, Adorno was aware of the importance of Huizinga’s writing and developed a critical standpoint vis-à-vis the catchy yet misleading notion of *homo ludens*. Adorno did not allow for a difference between magic circle and ‘common world’ when he wrote about the ‘repetitiveness’ of play and followed up on the suggestion of Benjamin to compare players’ activities with those of the workers in a factory.

Adorno’s main critique of Huizinga culminates in the statement that ‘[h]e fails to realize how much the element of play is itself an afterimage of praxis rather than of semblance. In all play, action has fundamentally divested itself of any relation to purpose, but in terms of its form and execution the relation to praxis is maintained’ (1984: 401). Adorno grabs Huizinga’s text by the metaphorical notion of ‘disguise’ and talks about play having ‘divested itself’ of purpose. He also replaces Huizinga’s somewhat blurry notion of the ‘common world’ by ‘praxis’, that is socially relevant action. Praxis and labour are in the tradition of materialist Marxist theory key factors for the formation of society; praxis would not stop in front of ‘the sphere of play’ or a mysterious ‘magic circle’. ‘The element of repetition in play is the afterimage of unfree labour’, remarks Adorno, ‘just as sports—the dominant extraaesthetic form of play—is reminiscent of practical activities and continuously fulfils the function of

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<sup>30</sup> ‘A play of energy that no particular end limits’ is a phrase from ‘The Accursed Share’ (1991), which expands the notion of play into something others might call activity, action, or praxis.



habituating people to the demands of praxis above all by the reactive transformation of physical displeasure into physical pleasure, without noticing that the contraband of praxis has slipped into it' (1984: 401). But neither Adorno's sharp remarks nor Caillois' (1958) attention to gambling with monetary interests could stop generations of games scholars from repeating the formula of the 'magic circle' and subscribing to Huizinga's dichotomy of work and play. Indeed, Georg Lauteren (2007) finds it 'surprising [. . .] how much effort is spent reconciling an almost 70 year-old model of thinking with a contemporary subject of investigation' and accuses Salen and Zimmerman (2003), Montola (2005), Harvey (2006) and Rodriguez (2006) of doing so (2007: 2).

The differences in between Huizinga's appreciation of the play element and Benjamin's, Adorno's, and Bataille's view on play can be traced back to their idealistic or materialistic standpoints respectively. Huizinga never references Friedrich Schiller directly, but the way he contextualises play points directly to the position Schiller developed in the 'Aesthetic Letters' (1794). 'Playing, so we say, has a certain inclination to be beautiful', (1987: 19) writes Huizinga in a Schillerian tone. Huizinga's statement is actually a resonance of Friedrich Schiller's famous phrase: 'man should only *play* with beauty, and play *only* with beauty' (2000: 62). Huizinga differs from Friedrich Schiller's idea of a 'play-instinct' and dismisses it explicitly, but as Lauteren points out, Huizinga sticks to 'the idealistic concept of playing as an inexplicable "last" which remains ultimately resistant to empirical investigation' (2007: 3). Schiller could, in the eighteenth century, still suggest that 'we must not indeed think of the games that are conducted in real life' and continue to present his dismissal of materiality by classifying games that are conducted in real life as 'commonly refer[ring] only to the material plane' (2000: 60 – 61). The 'material plane' of the beginning of the twenty-first century demonstrates clearly that the political factors shaping gaming practices are stronger than beauty, purity, or freedom (Strouhal et al. 2012/2013). In particular, Huizinga's idealistic position that play could encompass 'in a more specialised sense arguably also work', (1958: 55) does not account for contemporary discourses concerning play.<sup>431</sup>

Jürgen Habermas wrote his ultimate anti-gamification statement in the 1950s, when he told us in a somewhat melancholic mood: '[a]nd where it ever had existed, the unity of work and play dissolved' (1958/59: 220). Habermas talks about social practice here and is clearly the voice of the Frankfurt Critical School but also the voice of a materialistic and Marxist view on a possible relation of labour and play. It is not by chance, therefore, that Habermas shares the belief promoted by Benjamin and Adorno

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<sup>31</sup> Huizinga also said very much in the same tone: '[f]or us, the opposite of play is earnest, also used in the more special sense of work' (1949: 44).

that labour and play are two different things that certainly have an influence on each other, but that never can be harmonized as one.<sup>532</sup>

## Counter-Gamification

In line with the Adorno's negative dialectics and his detection of an 'afterimage of unfree labour' within play, there are artists that criticise ludic ideology by demonstrating through parody or subversion how games are instrumental in promoting user sovereignty – where there is none. Leif Rumbke's *Wargame* (2005; see Figure 5) is an example of a de-gamified and critical game. Rumbke restricts interface actions to a 'Stop the Game' command only— implemented as a nuclear fire button's binary single function. The interface in striking red and impressive size limits the player's interactivity to one single non-reversible command: to erase the whole population of soldiers in the game and to restart the game from the beginning. In the literal sense of the word, Rumbke's game is playable, but when investigating it on a semantic level, the game is not playable as the operations offered through the interface do not allow for an intentional game start.

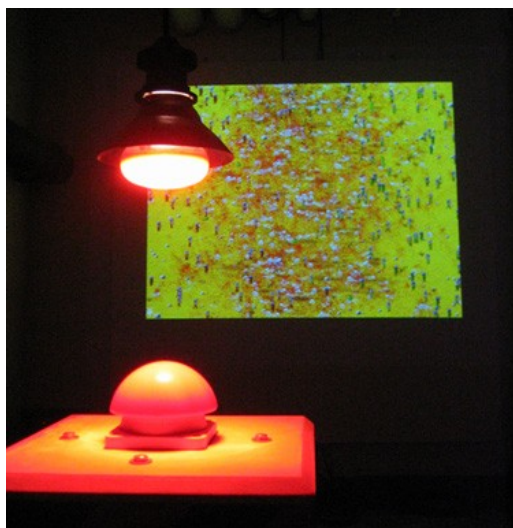


Figure 5: *Wargame* by Leif Rumbke (image courtesy of artist and <http://www.rumbke.de/data/art/wargame/wargame.html>)

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<sup>32</sup> In his statement that '[a]ccording to one theory play constitutes a training of the young creature for the serious work that life will demand later on' (1949: 2), Huizinga approaches Adorno's worries, but with an altered direction: work follows play. This is the opposite of Adorno's 'afterimage of unfree labour' .

*4 Minutes and 33 Seconds of Uniqueness* (2009) is another game with no input or interaction. Its designer Petri Purho tells us: ‘You’ll win the game if you’re the only one playing the game at the moment in the world. The game checks over the Internet if there are other people playing it at the moment and it’ll kill the game if someone else is playing it. You have to play the game for 4 minutes and 33 seconds’ (2010). Clearly inspired by John Cage’s 4’33” (1952) this game listens to the Internet rather than telling a story or presenting a statement. The game’s interface consists of a single white progress bar on a black background and challenges the player to consider the world he’s playing with as an obtrusive element and his/her own role as an actor within the gaming environment.

The definitive death of playability (and of gamification if we think of the latter as the attempt to motivate the user to participate and interact) can be glimpsed in *The Graveyard* (2008) by Tale of Tales (Figure 6). Tale of Tales is a game art/designer duo consisting of Auriea Harvey and Michaël Samyn. Here, the player plays an old lady who visits a graveyard and can walk around, sit on a bench, and listen to a song. But however hard the player tries, no meaningful interaction beyond this can be accomplished.



Figure 6: Screenshot from *The Graveyard* (2008), Tale of Tales

In contrast to gamification’s promise of limitless playability of any social activity, *The Graveyard* is a disillusioning presentation of self-imposed tutelage and the user’s impotence to achieve anything via play. Conceptually related but functionally inverse

is the game *CarnageHug* (2007) by British game artist Corrado Morgana. Morgana's piece could be understood as a form of counter-ideology or counter-gamification (Dragona 2014).

The game runs in auto-execution mode and does not allow for interactivity except for the minimal 'Start' command. *CarnageHug* uses the *Unreal Tournament* 2004 games engine, to set up and run a bizarre, self-playing spectacle (Morgana 2007). Morgana removed the weapons from the level and has the player-pawns attack each other in a ridiculous massacre without player-based gameplay objectives or other constructive teleological human-player commitment. The game exemplifies the opposite of gamification. Other than the ideological suggestions that we can change the world by playing and by using gamified decision-making mechanisms, this game demonstrates clearly that we are just a pawn in the game of an automated market, automated wars, and of an automated society. What the artist Morgana renders nicely in front of the beholders' eyes is a (games-)world that contains actors who have to work ceaselessly without achieving anything for themselves or for others. The actors in Morgana's game work like the users of *Farmville* or any other gamification apps work when they think they play.

Ultimately, the attempt to harmonize play and labour, however, is ideology. Gamification that has at its core the suggestion that work can be fun is therefore caught in the trap of a self-contained ideological system that is in synch with the development of the relations of production of our society. And that is as glamorous and successful as it is untrue because of its nature as necessary false consciousness.

## Conclusion

The question that remains to be answered at this point is whether gamification has any use-value, now that we have identified it as ideology. It probably has. Similar to other ideologies like catholicism, puritanism or neo-liberalism the ideology enhances performance for the ruling system. With the aid of the unconscious motivational processes that an ideology like gamification can provide, many processes including economical, educational, cultural and political ones can run more smoothly than when governed by persuasion, rational reasoning or brute force. It is up to the reader and up to further research to find out whether the gamification of society is a more desirable form of ideology than traditional ideological systems – or not.

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# Totale Gamifizierung: Du musst spielen!

(erschieden in: Ernst Strouhal (Hrsg.) *Agon und Ares. Der Krieg und die Spiele*. Campus Verlag, Frankfurt/New York 2016, S. 375 - 385)

„Befohlenes Spiel ist kein Spiel mehr“, bemerkte Johan Huizinga im *Homo Ludens* (Huizinga 1956, S. 15). Unvorstellbar schien es, dass man Menschen zum Spiel zwingen würde. Die Durchdringung unserer Gesellschaft mit Spielmethoden, Spielmetaphern und Spielzwängen – wie dies das Programm der Gamifizierung fordert (vgl. Fuchs 2014), legt allerdings den Verdacht nahe, dass das Ludische seine Freiwilligkeit längst eingebüßt hat. Die Lawine von Gamifizierungsprozessen, die sich über unsere Freizeitaktivitäten, Arbeitszusammenhänge, Konsum, Bildung und Gesundheit gewälzt hat, rollt unaufhaltsam weiter und macht jedermann klar, dass die Grenze zwischen Spiel und Nichtspiel, die einst als Zauberkreis postuliert wurde, durchlässig geworden ist. So ist das Spiel denn auch nichts Außergewöhnliches mehr, dann alles kann Spiel sein: Es muss lediglich gamifiziert werden.

Immer wenn Spitzenpolitiker auf öffentlichen Veranstaltungen ihre Sympathien zu einem neuen Medium bekennen, wie dies beispielsweise im Sommer 2015 anlässlich der GAMES WEEK in Berlin geschah, merkt man, dass das Medium nicht nur seine Jugend sondern auch seine Unschuld verloren hat.<sup>33</sup> Ich spreche hier von augenzwinkernd vorgetragenen Bekenntnissen der parlamentarischen Staatssekretärinnen für Wirtschaft und Energie beziehungsweise für Transport und digitale Infrastruktur<sup>34</sup>, die uns wissen ließen, dass die Staatssekretärinnen auch mal ganz gerne ein Spielchen spielen – wenn auch nicht in Parlamentssitzungen. Noch besser auf den Punkt brachte es der frühere US-Vizepräsident Albert Arnold Gore, der die Penetration der nordamerikanischen Gesellschaft mit Spielmethoden, Spielmetaphern und Spielattributen lakonisch als „normal“ bezeichnete. „Games are the New Normal“ (Al Gore 2011) – „Spiele sind jetzt der Standard“ sollte wohl bedeuten, dass sich niemand mehr – nicht einmal ein Vizepräsident – vor

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<sup>33</sup> Der Beitrag setzt Ideen fort, die in der englischsprachigen Publikation „Diversity of Play“ (Fuchs 2015) angedacht wurden.

<sup>34</sup> 21. April 2015: Brigitte Zypries, Parlamentarische Staatssekretärin im Bundesministerium für Wirtschaftliche Angelegenheiten und Energie und Dorothee Bär, Parlamentarische Staatssekretärin im Bundesministerium für Transport und Digitale Infrastruktur.

Computerspielern fürchten muss, und schon gar nicht von den Spielern. Spiele waren früher mal frech und provokativ, lustig oder albern, süß oder gepfeffert, jetzt sind sie „normal“. Spiele sind offenbar in die Jahre gekommen. Die Zeiten, zu denen Videospiele Eltern und Lehrer in Angst und Bange versetzen konnten, sind vorbei. Die Spiele haben ihre Unschuld verloren. Nun, da Spiele nicht mehr nutzlos sind, hat Selbstbewusstsein die *naïveté* ersetzt und Schuldbewusstsein die Unschuld. Brauchbarkeit und Verwertbarkeit stellen die neuen Legitimationsmaximen aktueller Spiele dar. Spiele eignen sich zur Schlachtfeldsimulation, sie können helfen Disaster vorherzusagen, sie können Profit maximieren und sie können Märkte zerstören. Der Preis der Reife der Computerspiele ist der Verlust ihrer bezaubernden Nichtintentionalität. Was einmal Nichtsnutz war, ist nun zur Nützlichkeit verdammt. Die *Naïveté* ist dahin, doch was an ihre Stelle trat, ist eine Naivität zweiter Ordnung.<sup>35</sup> Kein Mensch fragt mehr – und kein Mensch kann mehr nach der Nichtintentionalität der Spiele fragen, ohne sich hoffnungslos als gestrig zu blamieren. Niemand würde heute noch ein Spiel als „verunreinigt“ oder „korrumpiert“ bezeichnen, wie es Caillois vor 50 Jahren noch tat (Caillois 1982, S. 52 ff.), nur weil es finanzielle Interessen befriedigt. Offenbar gibt es keine Tabuzonen für Spiele mehr: Anwendungsbereiche umfassen Krieg, Gewalt, Pornographie, finanzielle Manöver, Spionage und Counter-Spionage, Diebstahl und antisoziales Verhalten. Willkommen zur totalen Gamification!

Wir sind im Begriff eine Ausweitung der Spielzone zu erleben, die das Ludische in alle vorstellbaren gesellschaftlichen Bereiche einzuschreiben versucht, und die Spiele wenn auch nicht zu einem Massenmedium so doch zu einem massiven Medium, einem Schlüsselmedium und möglicherweise zu einem Meta-Medium macht. Rautzenberg beschreibt in diesem Sinne Computerspiele als „erfahrbare Generalmetapher für digitale Medien“<sup>36</sup> und fährt fort, dass wir beginnen, durch dieses Medium hindurchzuschauen. In seinen Worten, „sehen wir Spiele nicht mehr an, wir blicken durch sie durch“<sup>37</sup> (Rautzenberg 2015), um etwas erkennen zu können, von dem wir nicht annehmen, dass es das Medium selbst ist. (vgl. Günzel mit den *Call of Duty* Beispielen in diesem Band, aber auch Betrachtungen zur Malerei, wenn verschiedene Künstler sinngemäß sagen, dass sie Farben malen und keine Landschaften.)

Die Vielzahl der Mediensegmente und der sozialen Nischen machen Spiele auch zu einem Super-Medium, einem Medium, das in bewusster Transvestie als

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<sup>35</sup> Die Argumentation lehnt sich an einen Gedanken Adornos an, den er im Hinblick auf die Kunst und ihre verlorene „naïveté“ formulierte. (Adorno 2004, S. 3)

<sup>36</sup> Übersetzung Fuchs, im Orig.: „an explorable universal metaphor of the digital medium“

<sup>37</sup> Übersetzung Fuchs, im Orig.: „that we start looking through games“

Schwestermedium auftreten kann. Spiele geben sich als Film, Radio, Erzählung, Performance oder Skulptur aus. Spiele können auch in Camouflage oder Maskerade als mittelalterlich, futuristisch, 50ies oder Gothic erscheinen. In diesem Zusammenhang sind die Spiele der Weltkriegszeiten (vgl. den Beitrag von Gejus van Diggele in diesem Band) oder auch die an zeitgenössischer Politik angelehnten Reinterpretationen des Gänsespiels (vgl. Ulrich Schädler und Adrian Seville, ebenfalls in diesem Band) zu sehen.

Astrid Ensslin vergleicht die Macht der Spiele mit derjenigen ihrer Vorgängermedien und kommt zu dem Schluss:

„Ich bin mir nicht sicher, ob die (gedruckte) Literatur jemals so populär und allgegenwärtig war wie es die Computerspiele heute sind. Es gibt zwar noch die Teilung in digital Gebildete und die darin nicht so Erfahrenen, aber selbst zu einem Zeitpunkt als Radio, Fernsehen und Film Massenmedien waren, hatten sie weder den Effekt auf die Massen noch das kulturelle Gewicht, das Computerspielen heute eigen ist. (...) Man könnte sagen, dass Computerspiele (und insbesondere mobile Computerpiele) das neue Fernsehen sind.“<sup>38</sup> (Ensslin 2015)

Auf ähnliche Weise wie Fernsehen die *conditio sine qua non* in the 50iger Jahren war, sind Spiele heute unumgänglich. Moderne Großeltern müssen *Angry Birds*-skills vorweisen können um als cool eingestuft zu werden – und Schulkinder müssen gamifizierte Learning-apps bedienen können und wollen, um als clever zu gelten. Feuerwehrleute müssen sich mit Programmen zur Indoktrination der Löscheinsätze anfreunden und selbst die todgeweihten Fälle auf den Krankenstationen sollen weiterspielen um fit zu bleiben, bis sie der Tod erlöst. Man kann sich kaum mehr eine soziale Gruppe oder ein Nischensegment vorstellen, das ohne Spiele auskommt. Möglicherweise die, die denen man attestiert nicht ganz bei Trost zu sein. Das bestätigt dann aber Al Gore's „Games are the New Normal“, denn nur die, die nicht ganz normal sind, spielen nicht.

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<sup>38</sup> Übersetzung Fuchs, im Orig.: „Not sure whether you can say that (print) literature was ever as popular and all-pervasive as games are nowadays. Of course there's still the digital divide, but even before radio, television and film came to be mass media, literature never had the kind of 'mass effect' and the kind of creative, user-driven popular culture that games have today – due to low literacy levels and social discrimination in centuries past. Perhaps you could say that games (and particularly mobile games) are the new television.“

## Serious Games als Problem

Als wir begannen, die Möglichkeit nicht auszuschließen, dass Spiel und Ernst in Eins fallen könnten und dafür die Bezeichnung *Serious Games* akzeptierten (das was ungefähr um das Jahr 2005 herum. Vorläufer des Konzeptes finden sich allerdings bereits bei Goethe und seiner Idee der „Wissenschaftlichen Spiele“) versickerten zwei wesentliche Quellen der Widerständigkeit (Rancière 2008)<sup>39</sup> einzelner Spiele gegen das falsche Ganze eines allumfassenden Spiele-Apparates: Widerstand gegen das Regime der Repräsentation und Widerstand gegen das Regime der nur konsumierenden Sinnlichkeit. Der Durchlässigkeit zum Seriösen wurde der Weg gebahnt durch eine Vermengung von empirischer Realität mit dem Ludischen, die noch vor 20 Jahren unvorstellbar war.

Immer schon hatten Kinder Doktor und Krankenschwestern gespielt, oder Soldaten und Polizisten, doch nie zuvor war das Spiel als reale Möglichkeit erklärt worden, die medizinische Wirksamkeit oder militärischen Effekt hervorrufen könne. Gamification gepaart mit den Serious Games jedoch, behauptet genau dies. Das Paradoxon der ernstesten Spiele und die suggestiv widersprüchliche Beschreibung von Gamification als Einsatz „spielerischer Entwürfe in spielfremden Anwendungsbereichen“ (Deterding et al. 2011) bereitete die Bereitschaft vor, Spielen zuzutrauen, dass sie auch das nicht-Ludische mitprägen können.

Die Evangelisten der Gamification erklären heute unwidersprochen, dass wir 10 Jahre länger leben würden, wenn wir nur mehr spielten (McGonigal 2011) oder dass es „spaßige Methoden der Krebstherapie“<sup>40</sup> (Scott 2013) gäbe. Die Hochschätzung solch fragwürdiger Behauptungen fußt auf der Liaison des Spielerischen mit der empirischen Realität und resultiert in einen Zustand in dem das echte Leben ununterscheidbar von den Computerspielen wird – um Horkheimer und Adorno zu paraphrasieren.<sup>41</sup>

## Anfänge totalitärer Spieltheorien

Friedrich Schillers Behauptung (Schiller 1795), dass der Mensch da und nur da ganz Mensch ist, wo er spielt, kann als Vorläufergedanken der Totalisierung des Ludischen gesehen werden. Im fünfzehnten Brief zur ästhetischen Erziehung postuliert Schiller,

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<sup>39</sup> Rancière spricht vom Regime der Repräsentation dem Regime der „sensuous sensitivity“. (Rancière 2008, S. 15 – 17)

<sup>40</sup> Übersetzung Fuchs, im Orig.: „Fun Ways to Cure Cancer“

<sup>41</sup> Bei Adorno und Horkheimer heißt es bezogen auf ein Vorgängermedium: „Real life is becoming indistinguishable from the movies.“ (Adorno & Horkheimer 1993)

dass der Mensch „nur da ganz Mensch (ist), wo er spielt.“ (Schiller 2013, S. 62 f.) Offenbar von der eigenen Courage erschreckt, hier gesagt zu haben, dass der Mensch nicht ganz Mensch ist, wenn er nicht spielt (also beispielsweise arbeitet - oder denkt), greift Schiller zu einer rhetorischen Figur, die eine Erklärung der ungeheuerlichen Behauptung, die „endlich einmal herausgesagt“ werden muss, auf später verschiebt: „Dieser Satz, der im Augenblicke vielleicht paradox erscheint, wird eine große und tiefe Bedeutung erhalten, wenn wir erst dahin gekommen seyn werden ihn auf denn doppelten Ernst der Pflicht und des Schicksals anzuwenden.“ (ebd., S. 63) Im zweiundzwanzigsten Brief kommt Schiller dann endlich auf den Punkt zurück, den er im fünfzehnten in Aussicht stellte. „Der ernsteste Stoff muß so behandelt werden, daß wir die Fähigkeiten behalten, ihn unmittelbar mit dem leichtesten Spiele zu vertauschen.“ (ebd., S. 89) Warum der ernsteste Stoff auf die von Schiller vorgeschlagene Weise behandelt werden muss, wird uns nicht gesagt. Es handelt sich hier eben um eine „Du musst!“ Anweisung, die sich mit verschiedensten Stoffen schlägt. Schiller sieht selbst, dass der Stoff der Tragödien sein Argument ins Wanken bringen könnte und rettet sich, indem er die Tragödie einfach aus dem „Zauberkreise des Künstlers“ (ebd.) ausschließt: „Künste des Affekts, dergleichen die Tragödie ist, sind kein Einwurf; denn erstlich sind es keine ganz freien Künste (...)“ (ebd.) Schiller verfährt hier typisch totalitär, indem er Widersprüche des Systems dadurch beseitigt, dass er die widerspüchlichen Elemente für nicht zum System gehörig erklärt. Als Konsequenz daraus wird klar, dass man spielen muss.

Doch Schiller steht mit seinem Versuch Spiel als essentielle Kategorie nicht allein da. Huizinga, der ja selbst auf den „Zauberkreis“ setzte, legt definitorisch fest: „Spiel ist eine freiwillige Handlung oder Beschäftigung, die innerhalb gewisser festgesetzter Grenzen von Zeit und Raum nach freiwillig angenommenen, aber unbedingt bindenden Regeln verrichtet wird.“ (Huizinga 1944, S.21 f.) Kein Wunder, dass solch striktes Reglement an allen Ecken und Enden „die wirkliche Perversion des *agôn*“ (Huizinga 1956, S. 55) oder die „Korruption des Prinzips der Glückspiele“ (ebd., S. 55 f.) entdecken muss. Auch bei Roger Caillois wird Spiel nicht im Hinblick auf seine Möglichkeiten sondern im Hinblick auf Notwendigkeit gelesen. „Das Spiel besteht in der Notwendigkeit, *unmittelbar innerhalb der Grenzen und Regeln eine freie Antwort* zu finden und zu erfinden.“ (Caillois 1962, S. 14) Wäre da nicht Wittgenstein, so sollte man meinen, dass Definitionen, die auf Ausschluss beruhen, die spieltheoretische Landschaft dominieren.

## Am Weg zum Totalen Spiel

Im folgenden Abschnitt soll der Versuch unternommen werden, das Verhältnis von Spiel und Krieg weder in Form einer Gleichsetzung oder Verlängerung zu postulieren,

wie dies Friedrich Kittler mit seinem Diktum vom „Missbrauch von Heeresgerät“ (Kittler 1986) vorbereitet hat. (vgl. dazu auch die Ausführungen Günzels in diesem Band). Das Verhältnis soll vielmehr daraufhin befragt werden, ob Spiel Spielfernes zu mobilisieren imstande ist, das dann wiederum martialisch genutzt werden kann. Die vorläufige Hypothese lautet: Wenn Gamification jedliches Spielferne in Spielerisches verwandeln kann, dann kann man diesen Prozess als eine Mobilisierung aller gesellschaftlichen Bereiche im Dienste des Ludischen betrachten.

Die Diversifizierung der Spiele kann man als eine Qualität der Reife des Mediums verstehen. Doch die uneingeschränkte Integrativität verschlingt die Vielfältigkeit, die einst seine Stärke war. Desto stärker Spiele integrativ und vereinnahmend werden, desto höher wird die Gefahr, dass es sich nur mehr um ein „spinning of wheels“ (Adorno 2004) dreht. Man könnte auch behaupten, dass die Ausweitung des Spielerischen zu einer Über-Akkumulation des Ludischen führt,<sup>42</sup> das dem Spiel seine befreiende Kraft nimmt und auf quantitativer Ebene in eine Sackgasse führen muss, an deren Ende es beinahe unmöglich ist noch mehr zu gamifizieren, und dass an diesem Punkte ein qualitativer Umschlag unausweichlich sein wird, der Vielfalt in Totalität verwandelt und freies Spiel in das Korsett der „Ludictatorship“ (Escribano 2012) einzwängt.

In perverser Verkehrung des Spieltriebes, der bei Schiller sinnlich, befreiend und emanzipativ gedacht war, könnte das Spiel und die Spiele dann zu statischen Apparaten mutieren, die ganz einfach nur normal sind - und eben auch das *einzig* Normale. Exklusive Normalität nennt man bekanntlich auch Totalität. Totale Gamifizierung wäre dann eine Situation in der alle menschlichen und technischen Ressourcen in die Schlacht für das Spielerische geworfen werden müssen. Bereits jetzt ist es so, dass die grosse Spieleindustrie in Kooperation mit ihren Elitetruppen der Indie-Entwickler und der Serious Games Produzenten neue Human Resources erschließen und aufs Spielfeld setzen: die Alten und die ganz Jungen, Frauen, ethnische Minderheiten, die Klientel der verschiedensten Nichensegmente: Obdachlose, Black Teenage Mums, Alzheimer Patienten, Alkoholmissbrauchsoffer, Depressionsgefährdete usw.

Nicht nur in der Personalpolitik, sondern auch auf der Ebene technischer Verfügbarkeiten tritt Gamification auf den Plan. Flavio Escribano beschreibt in seinem Aufsatz *Gamification as the Post-Modern Phalanstère* (Escribano 2012, S.

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<sup>42</sup> Schell bezeichnet in seiner Rede am DICE Summit 2010 die Überakkumulation als „over-gamification“ und zeichnet vor diesem Hintergrund ein Orwellsches Szenario. (Schell 2010)



206-207) was er als „technological gamification“ bezeichnet.<sup>43</sup> Dieser Typus der Gamification wird durch technologische Entwicklung ausgelöst und vorangetrieben. Simulationen in großem Maßstab, medizinische Forschung, Fitness und Gesundheitsvorsorge werden zunehmen mit der Hilfe von Spieltechnologien durchgeführt. (vgl. Escribanos Beispiel der Simulation nukleartechnologischer Prozesse auf vernetzten Spielekonsolen) Grund für den Einsatz von Spieltechnologie in diesen wie auch in anderen Feldern ist nicht der Spieltrieb, sondern Kostengründe oder handelsrechtliche Erwägungen.

Die Legitimation für Spiele, das „New Normal“ zu sein, kann sich auf keine Wahl stützen, die unter alternativen Möglichkeiten selektiert, wir sehen hier eher eine Form neuer Macht, die Alex Gekker als „casual power“, also als eine Art von alltäglicher und unterschwelliger Macht bezeichnet. In seiner Analyse der gegenwärtigen Situation muss man beobachten wie „Designer gewisse Auswahlpräferenzen in sozio-technische Assemblagen einbauen, die das Ziel haben, den kritisch-reflexiven Umgang mit dem Objekt zu Grunde zu richten und seine Intransparenz zu erhöhen, indem es sich als Black Box zeigt“<sup>44</sup> (Gekker 2015, S. 1). Wenn aber die Wahlmöglichkeiten verschwinden, weil wir Spiele als normal akzeptieren, so verschwinden auch die Fragen danach, warum wir sie überhaupt spielen, warum wir sie zu gewissen Zeiten spielen, und warum wir sie an gewissen Orten spielen. Zugestandene „Normalität“ wird zur Ersatzantwort auf Fragen, die nicht einmal mehr gestellt werden. „Casual power verwandelt die alltägliche Realität der Normalverbraucher, indem bewusstes Nachdenken oder ein Gefühl für Entscheidungskonsequenzen durch Handlungsanweisungen ersetzt werden“<sup>45</sup> (Berry 2014).

Man ist versucht, die Beweggründe und die Organisation totaler Gamification mit den Gründen und der Abwicklungslogik totaler Mobilisierung im ersten Weltkrieg zu vergleichen. Die Begrifflichkeit und das Konzept totaler Mobilmachung wurde im ersten Weltkrieg u.a. von Walther Rathenau, dem Direktor des deutschen Elektrokonzerns AEG, und von General Erich Ludendorff, damals

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<sup>43</sup> „Technological gamification“ unterscheidet Escribano von den Mechanismen, die er als „natural gamification“ und „forced gamification“ bezeichnet. Technologische Gamification zeichnet sich dadurch aus, dass sie als Resultat einer Technologie eingeführt wird, der gegenüber anderen Wissensformen oder „belief systems“ hegemonialer Vorrang eingeräumt wird. (Escibano 2012: 203-206)

<sup>44</sup> Übersetzung Fuchs, im Orig.: „Designers inscribe certain affordances into sociotechnical assemblages that aim to nullify users’ reflexive capacities towards the object in question and enhancing its black-boxed condition.“

<sup>45</sup> Übersetzung Fuchs, im Orig.: „Casual power transforms quotidian realities of everyday user, supplementing the thinking or pre-thinking with suggested actions.“

Generalquartiermeister, propagiert (Ludendorff 1935). Um im Kriege den notwendigen Fortschritt erzielen zu können, müssten alle menschlichen und industriellen *Ressourcen* in das Kriegsgeschehen miteingebunden werden.<sup>46</sup> Die Forderung lautete also nicht etwa, dass es mehr einsatzfähige Soldaten einzustellen gälte, sondern dass Nicht-Soldaten zu Soldaten erklärt werden sollten. Auch in der industriellen Herstellung sollten Materialien und Menschen, die bis dahin nicht als industrielle Ressourcen verstanden wurden, in den Produktionsprozess eingebunden werden, als Menschenmaterial beispielsweise Nicht-Deutsche, Frauen, junge Menschen, als industrielles Material Fahrzeuge des öffentlichen Verkehrs, Privatfahrzeuge, etc.<sup>47</sup>

30 Jahre nach Ludendorffs ursprünglichen Überlegungen machte Goebbels dann unmissverständlich klar, was totaler Krieg für sein System darstellen sollte. Am 24. Februar 1943 sprach Goebbels im Berliner Sportpalast nicht zu kampffähigen Soldaten, die ja eigentlich fürs Siegen zuständig gewesen wären. Er adressierte „deutsche Verwundete von der Ostfront, (...) Rüstungsarbeiter und -arbeiterinnen aus den Berliner Panzerwerken, Ärzte, Wissenschaftler, Künstler, Lehrer, (...) Über das ganze Rund des Sportpalastes verteilt sehe ich Tausende von deutschen Frauen. Die Jugend ist hier vertreten und das Greisenalter.“

Diese Ausweitung der Zielgruppe in Hinblick auf Alter, ethnische Zugehörigkeit, Gender und Gesundheitszustand klingt tatsächlich wie eine Marktanalyse eines Gamification Konsumenten unserer Tage. Ich möchte deutlich machen, dass ich nicht behaupten will, dass Gamification vom gleichen Kaliber wie totale Mobilisierung oder gar der totale Krieg wären, es ist jedoch verblüffend zu sehen wie ähnlich Mechanismen des sogenannten „Audience Development“ und der Kriegsmobilisierung sind und wie sich rhetorische Muster der einen und der anderen ähneln.

Gamification Evangelisten wie die ominöse Jane McGonigal, sprechen vom „Computerspielen als spiritueller Praxis“<sup>48</sup> oder behaupten „Gamification design is

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<sup>46</sup> In der brutalen Rede Joseph Goebbels im Berlin Sportpalast wurde bekanntlich der „Totale Krieg“ ausgerufen. Wie bei Ludendorff ging es um die Konzentration und die Mobilisierung menschlicher Ressourcen (Frauen, Kinder, Greise usw.) und industrieller Ressourcen, um einer angeblich vorübergehenden Krise entgegenwirken zu können. „Die Krise, in der sich unsere Ostfront augenblicklich befindet, ...“ (Goebbels 1943)

<sup>47</sup> vgl. Imbusch, der die folgenden vier Elemente des totalen Krieges identifiziert: total mobilisation, total control, totality of methods, totality of the aims and objectives. (Imbusch 2005, S. 526 ff.)

<sup>48</sup> Übersetzung Fuchs, im Originalwortlaut von Jane McGonigal auf der Plattform Buddhistgeeks heißt es: „Gaming as a Spiritual Practice“.

largely about what is pleasureable“ (Schell 2010)<sup>49</sup>. Damit verschleiern sie massive ökonomische Interessen und Einsatzgründe für Gamification. Erich Ludendorff spricht von der „Seelischen Geschlossenheit des Volkes“ und verschleiert die Abschlußquoten, um die es ihm in erster Linie natürlich geht. Imbusch nennt vier Achsen auf denen totaler Krieg sich entwickeln muss: Totale Mobilisierung, totale Kontrolle, Totalität der Methoden und Totalität der Ziele.

Ich möchte, und muss auch nochmals betonen, dass ich auf keinen Fall selbsternannte zweitklassige, kalifornische Privatgelehrte der Gamification in ein Boot mit Goebbels und Ludendorff setzen will. Zwischen ersteren und letzteren liegen Welten an Professionalität und an übelwirkender Effizienz. Ich denke auch, dass wir noch nicht am Punkte einer Total Gamification angelangt sind. Was mir wichtig erscheint sind Fluchtlinien, die aus drohender Totalität herausleiten können. Dazu zählen Verweigerungsstrategien, „Asocial Gaming“, künstlerische Projekte (wie beispielsweise diejenigen, die Margarete Jahrmann in diesem Band präsentiert), „Subversive Gamification“ (Daphne Dragona) und auch Distanztechniken, wie Ironie, Spaß und Widerständigkeiten der Art, die beispielsweise Rancière uns ans Herz legen will.

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<http://www.buddhistgeeks.com/2011/01/bg-205-gaming-as-a-spiritual-practice/>

<sup>49</sup> Übersetzung Fuchs, im Orig.: „Gamification design is largely about what is pleasureable“. Schell setzt dieses stark vereinfachende Argument in eine anthropologische Klammer, die uns in ein drittes, offenbar als golden gedachtes Zeitalter setzen will: „We are moving from a time when life was all about survival to a time when it was about efficiency into a new era where gamification design is largely about what is pleasureable.“ (Schell 2010)

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# Subversive Gamification

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## Abstract

Since the beginning of this decade, Gamification has become a buzzword for marketing, advertising and behavioural management, but also an accurate description of a fundamental shift in modern society: “Gamification is the permeation of society with methods, metaphors and attributes of games” (Fuchs 2012). Graphic game design elements, rule structures and ludic interfaces are exceedingly used by corporations to create and manage brand loyalty and to increase profits. This chapter aims at stirring up common sense notions of gamification as a marketing tool and will discuss alternative artistic concepts, activist tactics and subcultural strategies aiming at a subversive ludification of society.

## 1. Introduction

Today we encounter a vast offer of gamified applications that promise to strengthen customer loyalty, to increase profit or to create other benefits for users and society. But there are currently only few attempts to apply gamification mechanics in a critical and subversive manner. It seems however essential for an understanding of the societal effects of gamification, to take a closer look at the rather controversial and less general aspects of playfulness. Core objects of the analysis are artistic interventions, playful hacking and ludic disobedience. Gamification has been ridiculed as a mere buzzword, but it is also a symptom of an underlying, fundamental transformation of our society. The trendy term is not embraced warmly by everybody. Ian Bogost’s remark that “Gamification is bullshit” (Bogost 2011), Dragona’s concept of “counter-gamification” (Dragona 2013), Escribano’s Mene Tekel of a “ludictatorship” (Escribano 2013) oppose the emphatic use of the notion and will be laid out in this article. Concrete apps, games and interventions will be looked at with a critical eye. A comparative analysis of the “destroy all surveillance cams” game, that Berlin anarchists promoted as playful political action, and artistic interventions leads to a distinction of different modes of subversiveness: The chapter suggests that

there is a difference between the subversive rhetorics of gamification, and political subversion in a playful manner.

## 2. Subversive Gamification

I have suggested elsewhere that gamification can be understood as a new form of ideology, a form that might even be the dominant form of ideology in the twenty-first century (Fuchs 2014). When the evangelists of gamification tell us that work should be enjoyed as being playful, that our personalities are experimental avatars, that the whole economy is nothing but a game and that each and every activity from cradle to grave can be turned into play, we encounter false consciousness that is socially necessary. Today gamification is used to tell people that if reality is not satisfactory then at least play might be so. Jane McGonigal phrased this aptly in her popular proposal that “Reality is broken” (McGonigal 2011). Replacing reality-based praxis with storytelling, gaming, self-motivation or “self-expansion escapism”<sup>1</sup> is what Marx and Engels would have labelled “ideology”. McGonigal’s “When we’re playing games, we’re not suffering.” McGonigal (2013) is the cynical statement of a writer/designer/self-promoter who is definitely not suffering economically and has little reason and even less time to play games. But ideological and necessary false statements on the relationship of work and play have not been premiered in the current decade. They were invented and intentionally introduced as ideology before computer games came into existence.

It was only 5 years after the Black Thursday of 1929 when Pamela Travers’ Mary Poppins suggested “The job’s a game!” (Travers 1934) and as a consequence to consider work fun. Almost a century later, the notion of gamification was introduced widely (Zichermann and Cunningham 2011; McGonigal 2011; Deterding et al. 2011a; Schell 2011) to suggest that marketing, warfare, health and labour might be some kind of free play or leisure activity. This was just a few years after the so-called credit crunch deprived many of work. This chapter analyses the controversial dialectics of play and labour and the ubiquitous notion of gamification as ideology. The question is raised here, whether the affirmative process aiming at total gamification of society has a counterpoise of subversive gamification. Subversive gamification would be an apparition (Adorno 1984, p. 104) or a glimpse of hope in a situation that has been described as “ludictatura” or “ludictatorship” (Escribano 2013). Subversive gamification can be seen as a strategic move, an aesthetic operation or a rhetoric figure to oppose the totality of playfulness.

There are two coinciding reasons that convince us to conceive gamification as ideology<sup>2</sup>:

Gamification is false consciousness: Gamification promises to offer a method that could make work compatible with self-realisation and fun. The proposition that game design elements can change the nature of labour and successfully cope with exploitation, “alienation” (Zichermann and Linder 2013) or “suffering” (McGonigal 2013) is proven on the basis of subjective assessment or mere speculation, and not based on empirical economic analysis.

Gamification is socially necessary: Concluding from market analysis and market predictions data that Ernest and Young,<sup>3</sup> Saatchi and Saatchi, and Gartner<sup>4</sup> offer, business needs to implement gamification in most of the sectors that drive our economy. The reason for that is that according to capitalist logic, economic sectors have to grow. Gamification methods are seen as a means to avoid stagnation of productivity by keeping the customers (and the workforce) satisfied. It will therefore be mandatory for consumers and prosumers, i.e. consumers that voluntarily or involuntarily contribute to the production of commodities, to embrace gamification as well. Gamification is not a choice, it is socially necessary.

Ideology works best when it distorts reality in such a way that we do not notice the distortion, because everything seems to be alright. While in fact a mistaken identity and a unification of play and labour serve the needs of the economic system, the ideas of ideology make it appear natural. Althusser observes two different kinds of what he calls state apparatuses: the repressive state apparatus, i.e. is the military and police, and the ideological state apparatuses that have formerly been religion, education, family, sports, culture. The repressive state apparatus functions “by violence”, whereas the ideological state apparatuses function “by ideology” (Althusser 1971). Ideology is the soft and yet the most effective way of executing subordination. It makes the subordinate classes accept a state of alienation against which they would otherwise revolt. This state of alienation is stabilised by ideology that looks completely natural on the surface. In our days religion, education and family have lost their ideological potential; they look a bit worn out and are not accepted as “natural” guiding principles for behaviour. It is therefore now the time to replace these ideological frameworks with a new one, that everybody likes: Gamification. In the closing chapter of Alfred Sohn-Rethel’s “Intellectual and Manual Labor” (Sohn-Rethel 1978), he invokes the concept of “necessary false consciousness”. This is a type of consciousness that is not just faulty consciousness. Necessary false consciousness is rather an ensemble of ideas, legitimisation mechanisms and moral codes that is logically flawless. For the very reason of the inherent logic of ideology, ideology cannot be proven to be logically inconsistent. It can only be subverted.



### 3. Subversive Gamified Activism

In 2013, various media reported about a game to destroy CCTV cameras that activists in Berlin have developed to gamify the process of destroying surveillance devices. In this game points are given to the players for smashing cameras, with bonus scores for the most innovative modes of destruction (Fig. 1). The Guardian newspaper reports:

“As a youth in a ski mask marches down a Berlin U-Bahn train, dressed head-to-toe in black, commuters may feel their only protection is the ceiling-mounted CCTV camera nearby. But he is not interested in stealing wallets or iPhones—he is after the camera itself. This is Camover, a new game being played across Berlin, which sees participants trashing cameras in protest against the rise in close-circuit television across Germany. The game is real-life Grand Theft Auto for those tired of being watched by the authorities in Berlin; points are awarded for the number of cameras destroyed, and bonus scores are given for particularly imaginative modes of destruction. Axes, ropes and pitchforks are all encouraged”.<sup>5, 6</sup>



Fig. 1 Screenshot from a movie about activists destroying CCTV cameras in Berlin's subway

Camover is a form of resistance that highlights the “importance of the power to act against the power” as Daphne Dragona puts it, (2014, p. 238) following a proposal of Gilles Deleuze. Dragona sees counter-gamification related to the concept of Gilles

Deleuze's "counter-actualisation"<sup>7</sup> that highlighted the possibility of one becoming the actor of his own events. She also relates counter-gamification to Hardt and Negri's "counter-empire"<sup>8</sup> that emphasises the potentiality of multitude for resistance. Dragona suggests that counter-gamification could use any of the tactical approaches of obfuscation, over-identification, hypertrophy, exodus or devaluation to name just a few (Dragona 2014, pp. 237–245). Each of these tactical moves can be political. The case of Camover lends itself as an example for devaluation and obfuscation. The former is accomplished by trashing the surveillance cameras, and the latter one is accomplished as the players devise fake names for their teams. A name like "Brigade Rosa Luxemburg" is in this case not adopted for the reason of identification with a historic figure, but rather in order to create confusion and camouflage. Counter-gamification differs from traditional political action as names and meaning of terms are often introduced playfully. The political action staged by the Camover team—the name of the game is a pun in itself—intends to stir up a situation with humour and playfulness. The guideline for counter-gamification of this kind is therefore not the seriousness of well-organised class struggle, but a political and hedonistic attitude that follows the motto of "every event or demonstration should be planned so as to be fun for the participants".<sup>9</sup>

#### 4. Aesthetic Subversion of Gamification

Gamification can be a tool, a sujet or a strategy to criticise the ideological character of gamification. In his project "Start-A-Revolution",<sup>10</sup> the artist Friedrich von Borries in collaboration with designer Mikael Mikael and the artist Slavia appropriates the jargon, visual appearance and the game mechanics of gamified apps and social networks to call for participation in starting a revolution. Von Borries and friends dress an absurd proposition—that the revolution can be gamified—in a costume of social media chique and website mimesis. We seem to have become so much accustomed to Web 2.0 mechanics that the artist can present a "Resistance Ticker", badges for revolutionary activities, actual challenges and the notorious "Thumbs Up" icons on a Web page in close vicinity with Facebook and Twitter links to make the page look completely plausible.

The statement that Friedrich von Borries' group makes here is inherently logical. If we believe that everything in the world can be gamified, then the revolution must as well be an object of gamification. The artists' project is much more than a mockery of hyped icons, services and notions. Von Borries tries to subvert an ideology by showing that this ideology is false and at the same time necessary in the sense Sohn-Rethel conceived ideology to be "necessarily false" (Fig. 2).

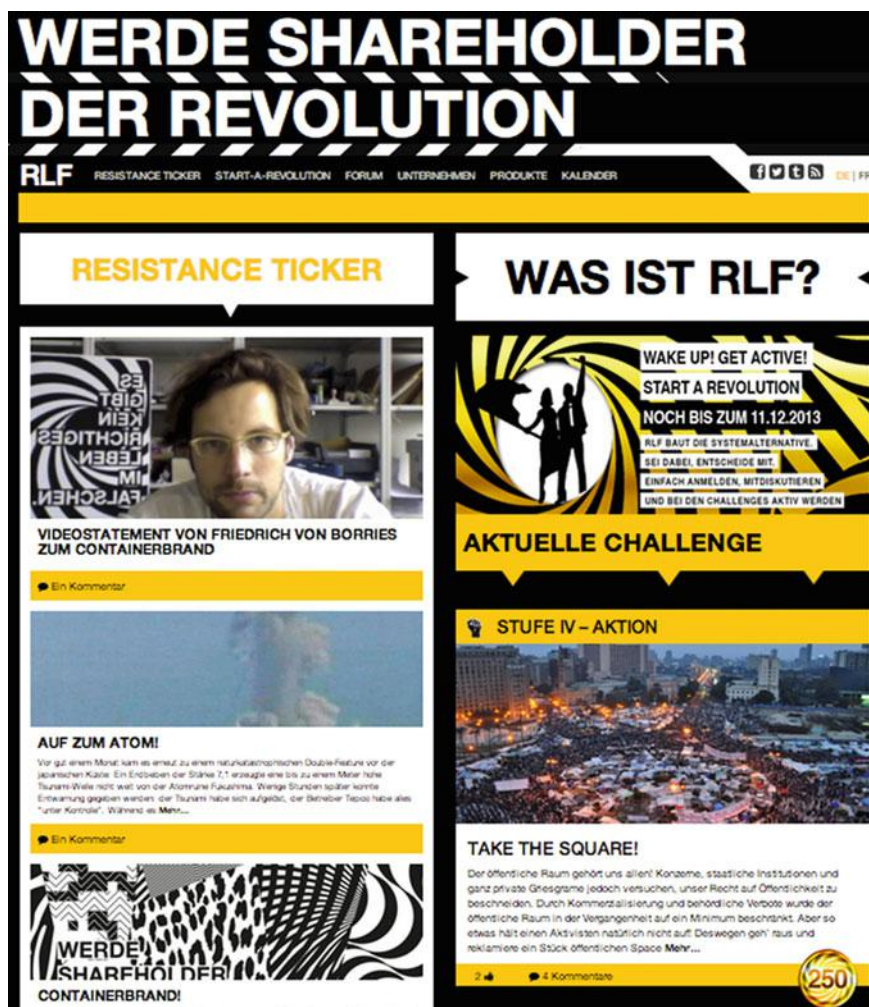


Fig. 2 Screenshot from the Start-A-Revolution Web page by Friedrich von Borries

The name RLF<sup>11</sup> for the project turns Adorno's famous memento from *Minima Moralia* that "there is no right life in falsehood" ("Es gibt kein richtiges Leben im falschen" (Adorno 1980, p. 43)) off its head, and places it upon its feet and into the

artists' shoes. The RLF Web page offers shoes as well, as any Web page nowadays seems to sell T-shirts and gadgets. The RLF shoes are exclusively redesigned limited edition adidas sneakers of the type "Adidas Torsion Allegra X". The shoes contain pure gold decorative elements and a revolutionary message embedded invisibly in the sole that will create footmarks after the soles wore off. The artists promoting the shoes advertise it with the words "this shoe cannot be bought, it has to be fought for" ("Kann man nicht kaufen. Nur erkämpfen."). All of the game elements like challenges, points and badges contribute to a consistent experience of gamification, yet the content is compromised by the ideological framing. For the very same reason that alienation of labour and alienation of workers cannot be solved via religion, revolution cannot be accomplished via gamification. By showing us how gamification would shape such processes as revolutionary praxis the artist makes us aware of the difference of play and politics in a playful manner. In other words, gamification is a rescue mechanism for a reality that is said to be broken. The distorted view on this reality is subversively attacked.

Another example of play on an aesthetic level in the age of the ubiquity of computer games is the artwork of Michael Johansson. Johansson uses piled up cars, furniture and refrigerators to create bizarre photographs of a hypothetical gamified, extraordinary life.

Johansson refers to the rules he observes in computer games, to gaming stereotypes, to entertainment classics such as Tetris and to the gameplay imperatives that do not stay within the "sphere of games" (Huizinga 1949, p. 17), but escape the magic circle and change our world. When Johansson shows to us stacked cars, piles of books and containers in colourful geometric arrangements, we become aware of the fact that we constantly encounter the use of "Game Design Elements in Non-Gaming Contexts" (Deterding et al. 2011b). The artist picks up the viewpoint and definition Sebastian Deterding et al. introduced, but his artistic statement is not

## 5. Subversive Rhetorics of Gamification

Gamification is a term that has been appropriated by the wielders of power, if they have not coined the term themselves.<sup>12</sup> The rhetorics of gamification consist of a promesse de bonheur ("health", end of "suffering", "self-motivation", "self-expansion" (McGonigal 2011)), of totalitarian threats ("Games are the new Normal" (Al Gore 2011)<sup>13</sup>) and of monetary incentives ("Gamification is projected to be a \$2.8 billion market by 2016" (M2 Research 2013)<sup>14</sup> or "\$5.8 billion for 2018" (Markets and Markets 2013)). The rhetorics of gamification resemble forms of discourse of other ideological systems. When Protestant preachers of the eighteenth century used

pathos, logos and ethos to pull all strings of persuasiveness, they usually mixed promises (paradise) with threats (hell) and with monetary incentives (economic growth) (Weber 2005).

The question we want to raise here is whether this affirmative rhetoric can be counter-balanced by a critical rhetoric about gamification and within gamification contexts. One of the brilliant attempts to do so is Flavio Escribano's neologism of "ludictatorship" (Escribano 2013). To combine the antagonistic notions of dictatorship and ludus means to subvert the ideological idea that games are a "free activity" (Huizinga 1949, p. 17) and to direct a problem discovered on the level of logos to an effect on the level of pathos. Dictatorship is a term that implies fear and evokes discomfort. Other than with traumatic events from the past like the 1936 Olympics in Berlin, ludictatorship suggests that it is not the bad guys using games amongst other things for their purposes right now, but that the total regime of playfulness turns into a totalitarian concept. Al Gore's statement about "the new Normal" (Al Gore 2011) is strongly suggestive of such a situation. If games are the normal, how do non-gaming activities qualify then? Certainly non-normal, probably pathologic, maybe dispensable.

Ian Bogost seems to be of the opinion that gamification is dispensable, when he talks about gamification as "Bullshit" (Bogost 2011). He designed and made freely available an anti-game called "Cow Clicker",<sup>15</sup> that he describes as a Facebook game, but that could well be called a gamified app (Fig. 3).



Fig. 3 Screenshot from Ian Bogost's Cow Clicker game

Bogost tells us: “Cow Clicker is a Facebook game about Facebook games. It’s partly a satire, and partly a playable theory of today’s social games, and partly an earnest example of that genre.

You get a cow. You can click on it. In six hours, you can click it again. Clicking earns you clicks. You can buy custom “premium” cows through micropayments (the Cow Clicker currency is called “mooney”), and you can buy your way out of the time delay by spending it. You can publish feed stories about clicking your cow, and you can

click friends' cow clicks in their feed stories. Cow Clicker is Facebook games distilled to their essence.” (Bogost 2011). Bogost’s game is gamification distilled to its essence. The main thing is to gain points, to spend money and to be kept in the process of continuing the game. The game that is supposed to be satirical does actually not differ very much from gamified apps that are dead serious. In this regard, it resembles many acts of protest that share the channels and the idiom of the oppression. Bogost’s rhetorical figure is parody. He does not accuse or criticise on the level of ethos but subverts gamification by showing that even such an extreme app like Cow Clicker can be played and will be played. Bogost thinks that games are corrupted through gamification and describes it as “marketing bullshit, invented by consultants as a means to capture the wild, coveted beast that is videogames and to domesticate it for use in the grey, hopeless wasteland of big business, where bullshit already reigns anyway”.<sup>16</sup> Bogost does however not think that the makers of gamified apps are stupid. “Bullshitters are many things, but they are not stupid. The rhetorical power of the word ‘gamification’ is enormous...”.<sup>17</sup>

On the level of rhetoric manoeuvres there is also an ongoing struggle about terminology taking place. Raessen’s “ludification” from 2006 (Raessens 2006), the anglo-american “gamification”, as well as a whole set of European flavours and regional claims put into the grounds of the discursive fields that ask for differentiating between παιγνιδοποίηση, Ludicizzazione, Ludificação, Gamificación, Ludización or “Ludifizierung” contribute to the process of subverting the idea that there is one type of gamification—and one type only. This is helpful in deconstructing a concept that could easily appear to be exclusive. Subversive rhetorics could not only challenge whether gamification is good or bad, it could even differentiate between economically motivated gamification apps, gamification with a purpose, critical ludification, pedagogically useful “Ludifizierung”, ideological gamification and subversive gamification.

If subversive gamification is at all possible, we might come closer to developing methods and tools for this very subversive gamification, by acknowledging that there is a difference in between the subversive rhetorics of gamification, subversive aesthetics and political, subversive gamified action.

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# Between Drudgery and “Promesse du bonheur”: Games and Gamification

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gamification, ideology, necessary false consciousness, labour, ethics, *le don*, games for change

## Abstract

Gamification receives the most enthusiastic praises of leading to a “pleasure revolution” (Schell 2011) and is at the same time dismissed as “bullshit” by others (Bogost 2011). It seems that the appreciation of the process of turning extra-ludic activities into play is valued controversially and that the range of hopes and fears connected to the phenomenon range from extremely negative to utmost beneficial. This difference in opinion can be traced back to the classical positions in regard to games and play. Games can be valued in two different ways: Following Bataille (1975), we would hope that play could be a flight line from the servitude of the capital-labour relationship. Following Adorno (1970) and Benjamin (1939), however, we might discover that the escape from the drudgery of the worker leads to an equally alienating drudgery of the player. I argue that gamification might be seen as a form of ideology, but that games and gamification also hold the potential for change. Ever since the notion of gamification was introduced widely (Reilhac 2010; Deterding et al. 2011; Schell 2011), scholars have suggested that it is the mechanism of choice to turn playful activities into activities with an impact. This article analyses the controversial dialectics of self-contained play for play’s sake and the ubiquitous notion of gamification as a purpose-driven activity, that might actually trigger and shape social change.

## Good Gamification

Similar to the cure-alls of medieval charlatans, the panacea of gamification was said to have an unlimited range of possible application areas and unrestricted trust and loyalty by the consumers: Gamification can “combine big data with the latest understanding of human motivation” (Paharia 2013); “make living eco-friendly a lot more interesting” (Sexton 2013); “can help children learn in the classroom, help build and maintain muscle memory, fight against some of the effects of aging, and distract from pain and depression” (Ramos 2013); “When we’re playing games, we’re not suffering” (McGonigal 2012b). These promises contain a *promesse du bonheur*, a prospect for better living, and the suggestion that gaming can definitely change individual lives and most probably change social life. But as long as there is no evidence for such change to have happened as a result of gaming, the promises might only conceal the fact that games can neither change the individual nor society as a whole. It is difficult to falsify any of the announced effects of gamification because the inherent logic of the *apparatus* of gamification is consistent. Gamification has turned into one of the systems that Foucault described as

“a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, [. . .] administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid” (1977: 194).

Gamification as a *dispositif* or *apparatus* supports the current power-structure: Gamification is used as an administrative measure, it is talked about on blogs and in books like this one, it is used and misused by journalists, and it is applied to work as the rationale for propositions that contain a *promesse du bonheur* (wealth, health, end of suffering, reduction of the effects of aging) like religious salvation once did.

The notion of gamification was introduced widely in the 2010s (Zichermann and Cunningham 2011; McGonigal 2011; Deterding, Dixon, Khaled & Nacke 2011; Schell 2011) to suggest that marketing, design, health, and work might be seen as some kind of free play or leisure activity. A process that has been named by Joost Raessens the “ludification of culture” (2006) prepared us to consider activities as play that our parents and grandparents would never have thought of as play. Traditionally three pillars of gamification would clearly have to be considered “serious”: health, work and economic exchange. During the timespan of one generation this seems to have changed. Thirty years ago nobody would have suspected that these fields could be mistaken for fun. Conversational language, proverbs, status of characters in novels and film and pathos formulas within cultural artefacts would solidify what predecessor generations felt to be common sense and non-disputable.

- 1.) Health, to start with, was a serious matter. People have been taking about a “serious” condition. The patients asked the doctor: “Is it serious?” It took a quite a few years of ludification to arrive at a situation where popular new media could publish headlines such as “Fun ways to Cure Cancer” (Scott 2013). Our parents would have been shocked and most probably argued that you do not make fun with such things as health. (Knock on Wood!)
- 2.) Work was another aspect of life that could not be mingled with fun. “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy,” is constructed upon the firm opposition of work and play. The saying has been documented in print as early as 1659 in James Howell’s *Paroimiographia*. (Howell 1659: 12) Obviously considered to be of a commutative nature, the Irish novelist Maria Edgeworth added a line to the proverb:

“All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.  
All play and no work makes Jack a mere toy.”

Only children were allowed to confuse work and play or tools and toys and only they can say: “I am working very hard now”, when they move their *Bob the Builder* dolls or their *Playmobil* characters on their playroom floors. Nowadays proper grown-ups pretend that they play, when they work. Google employees have slides connecting their offices to prove that working for Google is mere play.

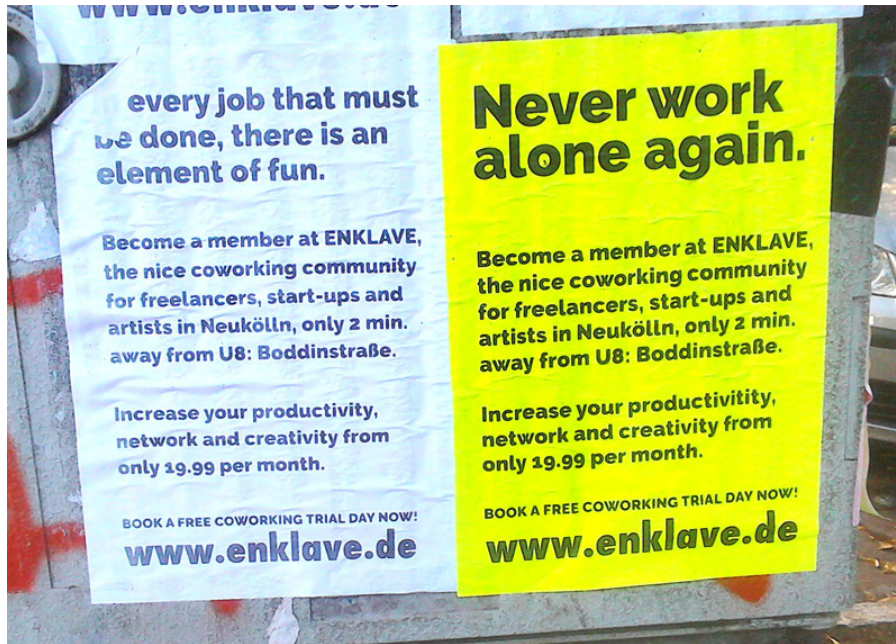


Fig. 1: Poster announcing coworking spaces in the streets of Berlin. photo: Mathias Fuchs

A poster in the streets of Berlin announcing shared office spaces for rent carries the slogan: “In ev’ry work that must be done, there is an element of fun”. Obviously inspired by Mary Poppins the landlords of the rental space rely on some kind of magic that will turn work into play. The magic trick that makes the potential customers believe in this is called gamification. Zygmunt Bauman argues that playfulness in our ludic culture is no longer confined to childhood, but has become a lifelong attitude: “The mark of postmodern adulthood is the willingness to embrace the game wholeheartedly, as children do.” (Bauman 1995: 99) This very willingness to subscribe to playfulness as a guiding principle for most different activities has been diagnosed by Johan Huizinga as a character flaw that treats serious things as games and games as serious things. Huizinga blames what he calls “puerilism” for this “contamination” of play. (Huizinga 1936) In *The Shadow of Tomorrow* Huizinga describes puerilism as

“[...] the evil of our time. For nowadays play in many cases never ends and hence it is not true play. A far-reaching contamination of play and serious activity has taken place. The two spheres are getting mixed. In the activities of an outwardly serious nature hides an element of play. Recognised play, on the other hand, is no longer able to maintain its true

play-character as a result of being taken too seriously and being technically over-organized.” (Huizinga 1936: 177)

It seems that “the evil” of Huizinga’s time has returned. The spheres of play and serious activity are mixed, blended and jumbled up. We even have an apologetic term to describe the paradoxical confusion: gamification. The second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century praises gamification and serious games as the key to wealth, health and pleasure. Jess Schell goes as far as putting it into an anthropologic framework that has survival, followed by efficiency, and then followed again by fun: „We are moving from a time when life was all about survival to a time when it was about efficiency into a new era where gamification design is largely about what is pleasureable.“ (Schell 2010). Such high hopes are in stark contrast to Huizinga’s concerns about a dangerous and widespread phenomenon of puerilism. He warns of an

“attitude of a community whose behaviour is more immature than the state of its intellectual and critical faculties would warrant, which instead of making the boy into the man adapts to that of the adolescent age.” (Huizinga 1936: 170)

The Dutch philosopher and anthropologist may sound extremely pessimistic here, and the account he gives about U.S. politics and professional sports (sic!) just underlines what he thinks is wrong with society, but he obviously did not want his writings to abandon all hope and on page nine of the *Shadow of Tomorrow* he states: “It is possible that these pages will lead many to think of me as a pessimist. I have but this to answer: I am an optimist.” (Huizinga 1936: 9) Different to the blind optimism of contemporary gamification evangelists, Huizinga did not see any benefits in turning a society into a society of eternal adolescents. His hope was rather directed towards a recovery of the “sacred” boundary separating work from play. There is no evidence for such a separation being desirable today. By the turn of the century Jeremy Rifkin argues: “Play is becoming as important in the cultural economy as work was in the industrial economy.” (Rifkin 2000, 263).

As play turns out to be the number one formula for hope in post-industrial society, it is no wonder that monetary transactions became playful as well. Extremely hazardous economic transactions of so called “big players” like Northern Rock, Bank of Scotland, Lloyds and Lehmann Brothers made it evident that gambling with huge financial resources was part of the daily banking business, the notion of “casino capitalism” (Strange 1986) demystified the alleged seriousness of Wall Street and the finance sector. Gambler-stockbrokers turned out to be the new superheroes with enormous income and massive bonuses and the new super villains, who ruined thousands of clients, companies and complete national economies in a fraction of a second. Other than the obsessive players of Dostoyevsky’s novels these gamblers

were real and did not jeopardize their own fortune and future, but those of others. The gamification of the finance sector served as legitimisation for irrational risk-taking in economic transactions. According to Kuhnen & Knutson

“The relationship between affect and risk taking that we propose here suggests a possible explanation for asset bubbles and crashes. Positive returns in financial markets may induce a positive affective state and make investors more willing to invest in stocks, and more confident that they have chosen the right portfolio, which will lead to increased buying pressure and future positive returns.”

To spell out the concrete events that Kuhnen & Knutson refer to it is the “relationship between affect and risk taking” that can be made responsible for the real estate crash and the financial crisis of 2002. It is however, also possible that this very correlation can be used to stabilise micro-economies or private households. Apps that increase the efficiency of savings work with gamification mechanics, and software like *SaveUp* or *Punch the Pig* encourage their users to account carefully for their finances, make regular savings and stop irrational spending.

If play is good for our health, our working conditions and for our financial wellbeing, why should it not be possible to play our complete selves? Self-tracking and self-observation became the fashionable way of improving oneself. Whereas “technologies of the self” (Foucault 1988) were centered around the care of oneself and used meditation and “gymnasia” (sports) in antiquity, modern technologies of the self were optimisation technologies that could be called “work on the self”.

Mark Butler argues that we have now reached a point, when playing with our selves replaces the before mentioned care of the self and the work with the selves. (Butler 2014) Jennifer Whitson identifies the playfulness in monitoring our bodies and emotions for the purpose of self-improvement:

“There is already a game being played within everyday metering. Every time we imagine an action with multiple future outcomes, this becomes a game (see Malaby 2007). For example, every time we prepare to step on a weigh scale, we play a game with ourselves: Will I be heavier? Have I lost weight? Have I hit my goal of losing two pounds? We frame our experiences in narratives of success and failure, and develop strategies for attaining victory (or evoke rituals such as the shucking out of clothes that may taint our results and praying for divine intervention).“ (Whitson 2013: 169)

Once these games become formalised and implemented on digital devices, play turns into an activity that gamifies aspects of our daily life. The reason for playing this kind

of mini-games is a mix of curiosity, boredom and a promise of trophies and prizes one is expected to be given. The gifts can rarely be monetized directly. They are either add-ons to the games played or they are access rights to services that one never did want to gain in the first place. My personal collection of gifts include a night in a 5 star hotel in Dubai (if I get there at my own expenses), an upgrade from class C rental car to a class B rental car in Funchal (Madeira), a pair of men's slippers and a free ticket for a friend to go to a Starwars movie (if I was so desperate as to go there myself and pay for it). The give-aways of gamification are like the presents you get from distant relatives at Christmas times. Worse than the teapots from old aunts, gamification prizes always serve the benefits of someone else (airlines that offer flights to Dubai or Madeira, an apartment store, a cinema that shows Starwar movies). The presents are commodities in disguise. They are given away to get something back.

## Free Gifts for All

A gift in a gamification context is never “le don” as Marcel Mauss conceived it emphatically (1923/24). The gamified *homo ludens* is just an advancement of the *homo economicus*. Marcel Mauss’ gift and even more so George Bataille’s excessive gift held a promise for the possibility to escape the cage of traditional economic reasoning. Mauss expresses his hope in the conclusions section of *Le Don*:

“Fortunately, everything is still not wholly categorized in terms of buying and selling. Things still have sentimental as well as venal value, assuming values merely of this kind exist. We possess more than a tradesman morality.” (Mauss 1990: 83)

But he is also sceptical about the possibility to escape the reciprocity of the gift and quotes an old Maori proverb, that is indicative of most of his ethnographic observations:

“Ko Maru kai atu  
Ko maru kai mai  
ka ngohe ngohe.  
‘Give as much as you take, all shall be very well.’” (Mauss 1990: 91)

Mauss was tempted, yet still hesitant to identify or predict a social configuration that would allow for an anti-utilitarian mechanism of gift-making beyond the limits of reciprocity. Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, Alain Caillé and the *Mouvement Anti-Utilitariste dans les Sciences Sociales* (M.A.U.S.S.) went a step further in this regard. (Strehle 2009: 129). It is not hard to see whose groundwork it was that prepared the theories of M.A.U.S.S. Influenced by the very same author Bataille developed his



utopian model of an economy beyond reciprocal exchange. Bataille was hoping for a Copernican revolution that turns an economy of scarcity into one of excess: “Changing from the perspectives of *restrictive* economy to those of *general* economy actually accomplishes a Copernican transformation: a reversal of thinking—and of ethics” (1991: 25). Bataille identifies the gift, excessive play, and sexuality as areas where this “general economy” can already be observed nowadays. The French philosopher thinks of playing games in the wider sense as a nucleus of emancipation.

140 years earlier Karl Marx already played with the possibility that labour could escape the state of alienation and drudgery that it needs to have under capitalist relations of production. In *Excerpts from James Mill’s Book “Éléments d’ économie politique”* Marx sketches an utopian mode of economic relations that is not based on reciprocity of equivalent value exchange.

“Lets assume we would have produced as humans. My work would be free expression of life and life’s craving. It would therefore also be the enjoyment of living.” (Marx 1981: 462).

In such a situation giving would be part of the craving and every gift would be a deliberate present. The reason to give would then not be to exchange and get back, but to just give. Samuel Strehle analyses this proposal from the viewpoint of human history:

“I give for the reason of giving, not of receiving. The communist liberation of man from his ‘prehistory’, the leap of mankind from the realm of necessity into the realm of freedom is essentially the liberation from reciprocity.”<sup>50</sup> (Strehle 2009: 144)

Theoreticians like Marx, Bataille, and to some degree Mauss were desperate to identify an element in society that would have the potential to disrupt or to even break open this cage of necessities effected by the system. Marcel Mauss (1923/24) believed that a fundamental quality of human interaction should exist outside the rationality of exchange and of monetary interest. Giving away without any expectation for payback allows us to act in a way that is non-alienated and differs considerably from the exchange of commodities with the aim of profit making. George Bataille’s (1975) perspective on economic structure used the concept of the gift developed by Mauss in order to support his affirmation of the possibility of human sovereignty within

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<sup>50</sup> transl. MF, orig.: „Das Geben selbst wird zum Bedürfnis und jede Gabe in gewissem Sinne zur Simmel’schen ‘ersten Gabe’, ja zum Geschenk aus freien Stücken. Ich gebe, um zu geben, nicht um zu erhalten. Der kommunistische Ausgang des Menschen aus der bloßen ‘Vorgeschichte’, der ‘Sprung der Menschheit aus dem Reich der Notwendigkeit in das Reich der Freiheit’ ist in seiner Essenz der Ausbruch aus der Reziprozität.”

economic systems. For Georges Bataille, play was one of the conceivable frameworks that foster a type of sacrifice that resembles a gift. The game in a Huizingian (1938) sense of a free activity was therefore interpreted as opposed to alienated work. *Gaming* and *labour* would be diametrically opposed, and the “sacred” within play was a source of hope to escape the master-slave dialectic of capital-labour relationships. Bataille did not phrase it in this way, but his theory suggests that gaming could change society in a positive way.

## Bad Gamification

The question at stake here is, whether games actually change our society in such a way that work turns into play or whether it is just an ideological misconception that makes us think the former could be the case. There are good reasons to think of gamification as ideology. Gamification is intended to raise the profits of companies, and is said to do so at a staggering rate. Gabe Zichermann, one of leading industry consultants estimates that “Gamification techniques can increase productivity of employees by 40%.” (Zichermann 2013) As this rise in productivity is achieved under prevailing economic settings, there is obviously nothing to gain for labour. The profits remain on the side of capital. The necessities of the system guarantee what Louis Althusser describes as the reproduction of production relations ensured by the wage system. (Althusser 1971) It is due to “ideological apparatuses” like the one we call gamification, that relations of production are not questioned, but are reproduced in order to increase the profit rate.

It is not always apparent on the level of individual gamification projects to see how the seemingly well-intended efforts to save water, cure diseases or increase health are linked and embedded into the whole of the “ideological state apparatuses”. (Althusser 1971) The extension of play into all kinds of non-gaming contexts leads to an over-accumulation of play. This is to say that play loses its liberating dynamics and turns into a phase that is characterized by quantitative increase of games and gaming up to the level of play congestion. A situation could arise where the system’s capacity to cope with further increase of playfulness is exhausted. This might lead to a qualitative leap that turns diversity into totality and free play into total play. As a perversion of the original play drive that is sensuous, liberating and free, a mode of total gamification could be prefigured where games are the new normal and where games are the only normal. It can be observed already in our decade that games are given a general license to be the solution to any conceivable problem. In his famous statement “Games are the New Normal” (Gore 2011), the former vice-president Al Gore paved the way for a general pardon for the impact of games and for a license for games (and the games industry) to proceed and expand without limits. Exclusive normality leads

to totality. “Total gamification” (Fuchs 2015) would describe a situation where all human and technical resources have to be gamified. In regard to human resources we are already facing a situation where the old and the young, men and women, various ethnic groups and a huge reserve army of minorities and niche population are drawn into the gaming arenas. The main games industries work with their brothers in arms of the indie games industry to incessantly recruit new audiences: the homeless, black teenage mums, those with depression or Alzheimer’s. But also on a technical level total Gamification takes its toll. In his essay *Gamification as the Post-Modern Phalanstère* Flavio Escibano describes a sector of gamification that he calls “technological gamification” (Escibano 2012, 206-207). This is a type of gamification that is triggered and driven by technological innovation. Escibano’s concept is reminiscent of Huizinga’s complaint about play “being technically over-organized.” (Huizinga 1936: 177)

Escibano describes how large-scale simulations, medical research, sports training, or military operations are run on games technology to benefit from its ease of use, low cost, efficiency, legal status and design appeal. One of the examples of “technical gamification” Escibano unmasks as serious and evil business done with allegedly harmless play-tools is the case of former Iraq authorities having bought four thousand Playstation 2 consoles to evade the computer embargo imposed upon Iraq in 2000. “Intelligence agencies suspected the hardware of these consoles was to be used to create a computer capable of controlling the trajectory of missiles equipped with chemical warheads.” (Escibano 2012, 206)

## Good-looking Bad Gamification

Are there conceivable situations, when gamification seems to be all right and still it is not right at all? When Jane McGonigal (2012a) promises the audience of the popular TED talks to increase the live expectancy of every single person in the room by ten years, if they invested in playing more often, she is of course telling a lie. But her statement that is firmly and intentionally integrated within the ideology of gamification, carries a philanthropic utopian promise that connotes with moral statements, quasi-empirical data, and light philosophical speculation. Nobody cares whether one year, ten years, eleven years, or no time at all of added lifetime results from her gamified self-control therapy. And nobody will ever know. This is the nature of ideological statements: Whether they are true or false does not really matter. What matters here is an ensemble of references (“I am a game designer”), of status symbols (TED talks), of power (R&D director of the Institute for the Future), commitment to

rationality (“I have maths to prove this”), and an endearing naïveté that announces big changes to come with only minimal efforts to be undertaken.

It is for the above mentioned reasons why we suggest to conceive of gamification as the latest form of ideology. When the evangelists of gamification tell us that work must be play, that our personalities will be playful, that the whole economy is a game, and that each and every activity from cradle to grave can be turned into a game, we encounter false consciousness that is socially necessary. Today, gamification is used to tell people that if reality is not satisfactory, then at least play might be so. McGonigal (2011) phrased this aptly in her popular proposal that “reality is broken.” Replacing reality-based praxis with storytelling, gaming, self-motivation, or ‘self-expansion escapism’ (Kollar 2013) is what Marx and Engels would have labelled as ideology. McGonigal’s ‘When we’re playing games, we’re not suffering’ (McGonigal 2012b) is the cynical statement of somebody who is definitely not suffering economically and has probably little reason and even less time to play games any longer.

There are two complementary reasons to rightly classify gamification as ideology:

Gamification is false consciousness: The proposition that game design elements can change the nature of labour and successfully cope with exploitation, “alienation” (Zichermann and Linder 2013), or “suffering” (McGonigal 2012) is proven on the basis of subjective assessment or mere speculation and not based on empirical economic analysis.

Gamification is socially necessary: Concluding from market analysis and market predictions data that Saatchi & Saatchi, Gartner, and Ernst & Young offer, the industry needs to implement gamification in most of the sectors that drive our economy. It will, therefore, be mandatory for consumers and prosumers to embrace gamification as well. Gamification is not a choice; it is necessary for the political economy of this decade.

Ideology works best when it distorts reality in such a way that we do not notice the distortion because everything seems to be all right. While in fact a mistaken identity and a unification of play and labour serve the needs of the economic system, the ideas of ideology make it appear natural. It makes the subordinate classes accept a state of alienation against which they would otherwise revolt. This state of alienation has also been referred to as ‘false consciousness.’ In the closing chapter of Alfred Sohn-Rethel’s *Intellectual and Manual Labour* (1978), the author invokes the concept of “necessary false consciousness.” This is a type of false consciousness that is not just faulty consciousness. Necessary false consciousness is rather a type of false

consciousness that is logically correct. However cruel, meaningless, or destructive it might seem, it is necessary for the system in which we are working to keep working until we die, so that we will shop until we drop.

It might be useful at this point to ask why such a complex phenomenon like gamification has to be installed, made popular and disseminated widely to warrant for the stability of the relations of production. In traditional Marxist understanding an ideology generally refers to theory that is out of touch with material processes of history. In *The German Ideology* Marx and Engels observe that the ruling ideas of an epoch “are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas.” (Marx & Engels 2004: 64) They are the “Illusion of the Epoch”. If we consider gamification as a ruling idea of our times and society, very much like “morality, religion, metaphysics” (Marx & Engels 2004: 64) have been ruling ideas for an earlier time and society, then gamification seems to the people to define and design material reality. According to Marx and Engels it is the other way round. People believe that gamification efforts would redesign the health system, would create new financial opportunities and would reconfigure working conditions. But this is ideology: false consciousness. It is instead true - according to Marx - that the production relations and the ensemble of means of production create ideas – like gamification – that become dominant ideas. Louis Althusser’s concept of the “ideological state apparatuses” advances from the classical concept of ideology as false consciousness. Althusser rejects the concept of ideology as a distorted representation of reality by which the dominant elite cynically exploits the working classes, as a simplification. For him ideology is much more than a set of instrumental lies. Althusser proposes that all consciousness is constituted by and necessarily inscribed within ideology. Neither the elite nor avant-garde under-class intelligentsia can develop “true consciousness”. Ideology as “necessary false consciousness” is a superstructure with a high degree of autonomy. Gamification can be seen as a part of this immense superstructure. In this context gamification is a mechanism for producing certain social practices. Bonus systems in supermarkets, playful communication on FaceBook and other social media platforms, hotel booking with multiple-star ranking (Schrape 2014: 21-46) or academic research incentives in the form of board games (Fuchs 2014) are such social practices. As a result of first suggesting and then producing ways of being they also circulate forms of understanding the “real”. In this way gamification has a productive role in ideology formation.

## Conclusion

I hope to have demonstrated that the complexity of the gamification phenomenon asks for an assessment that is multi-layered and goes beyond simplifying assumptions of gamification being either just good or exclusively bad. There are elements of necessity and falseness dialectically interwoven into gamification processes that make them less enjoyable than a “pleasure revolution” (Schell 2011) and more complex than “bullshit” (Bogost 2011). If we agree to analyse gamification as an ideological state apparatus we must understand that gamification has a productive role in the formation of our selves and of consciousness at large.

It would be too simple to stop at a point where Adorno criticised the “repetitiveness of gaming” as nothing but “an after-image of involuntary servitude” (1984: 401; Adorno, “Nachbild von unfreier Arbeit”, 1970: 371). One would also have to advance from Walter Benjamin’s observation that the gamer’s actions resemble those of the proletarian worker as they perform what is derived of all meaning: “drudgery of the player” (“Fron des Spielers”, 1939: 72 -73). Gamification has meaning and produces meaning in its role as ideology. An important transformation taking place in society and being reflected and promoted by gamification is the subsumption of play under the relations of production.

Aware of that Jürgen Habermas wrote his ultimate anti-gamification statement in the 1950s, when he told us in a somewhat melancholic mood: “And where it ever had existed, the unity of work and play dissolved” (1958/59: 220). Habermas is here the voice of the Frankfurt Critical School but also the voice of a materialist and Marxist view on the relation of labour and play. It is not by chance, therefore, that Habermas shares the belief promoted by Benjamin and Adorno that labour and play are two different things that certainly have an influence on each other, but that never can be harmonized as one.

Ultimately, the attempt to harmonize play and labour is ideology. Gamification that has at its core the suggestion that work can be fun is therefore caught in the trap of a self-contained ideological system that is in synch with the development of the relations of production of our society. “Work is Play” might sound spectacular and enjoyable, but it is untrue because of its nature as necessary false consciousness.

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# Predigital Precursors of Gamification

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## Abstract

*The notion of gamification is often said to have been coined in 2002 by Pelling and popularized in the 2010s by Deterding, Khaled, Dixon and Nake (2011), McGonigal (2011), Zichermann (2011) and Werbach and Hunter (2012). Academic discourse about ludification started in 2006 when Joost Raessens introduced the notion. There are, however, precursors to the idea of our society being infiltrated, revolutionised or spoiled by play. I will present examples for gamification before the word even existed and will refer to ideas brought forward by Gerhard Tersteegen, Wolfgang Schwarzkopf, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach, Mozart, Mark Twain and others. The hypothesis is that gamification is not exclusively linked to Digital Cultures and that processes that can with good reason be compared to and called gamification avant la lettre are constituted by human playfulness in the context of various constellations of historic and economic settings. Baroque spielversessenheit (game craze) will be compared to the decadent games of hazard at the fin de siècle, to 21st century ludofetishism, to moments of aleatoric dramatization in contemporary film, to playful magical performances, and to ludic rituals in the salons of the age of enlightenment.*

## Introduction

If we believe what renowned US-American market analysts tell us unanimously, then we have to accept that nothing will influence our lives as much as these: mobility, social media and *gamification*. The latter is said to have the strongest impact. “Gamification is projected to be a \$1.6 billion market by 2016“ (Corry 2011). Other sources predict \$2.8 billion for 2016 (Palmer, Lunceford, and Patton 2012) and \$5.5 billion for 2018 (Markets and Markets 2013). In 2011 marketing analyst Gartner said “by 2015 more than 50 per cent of organizations that manage innovation processes will gamify those processes” (Gartner 2011). Yet one year later Gartner said: “Gamification is currently being driven by novelty and hype. By 2014 80% of gamification applications will fail to deliver” (Fleming 2012). But irrespective of whether gamification will change little, something or everything, no one can deny that it became a buzzword that describes what many fear or hope to happen right now. The process of a total permeation of our society with methods, metaphors, values and

attributes of games (Fuchs 2011, 2013)<sup>51</sup> has been baptised *gamification* in 2002 (Marczewski 2012) and has since then been popularised by US marketing companies and their respective PR departments. Even though there have been attempts to differentiate between games-related and play-related phenomena, or by processes that could be seen as either driven by *ludus* or *paidia* (Caillois 2001/1958), gamification has remained the buzzword. Greek, Italian, Spanish, Swedish and German terminological creations have been introduced and discussed in the scholarly world, but neither *παιγνιδοποίηση*, *ludicizzazione*, *ludificação*, *gamificación*, *ludización* nor the German-Latin *ludifizierung* could compete with the Anglo-American *gamification*. The reason for this might be that the Californian league of gamification evangelists such as Zichermann (2011), McGonigal (2011) and company have already been sowing on the semantic field at a time when European game scholars were not quite sure whether the ludification they observed was more of a curse than a gift. Flavio Escribano's terminological creation of a "ludictatorship" points in that direction.

The US politician Al Gore did not seem to be worried about what gamification might bring to our society when at the 8th Annual Games for Change Festival in June 2013 he declared: "Games are the new normal". On the one hand this seems to be the Democrat's or even the democratic assumption that everybody should have the right to play. On the other hand, it declares total play with the hidden implication that those who cannot play society's games and those who do not want to play them are not to be considered normal. Even though 2002 is usually said to be the year when the term *gamification* was coined, it was only around the beginning of this decade that *gamification* became a buzzword. Deterding, Dixon, Khaled and Nacke (2011), Schell (2010)<sup>52</sup>, Reilhac (2010)<sup>53</sup> and others presented different flavours of gamification, some of them design-oriented, others psychological or judgemental. For Sebastian Deterding and his colleagues

"it is suggested that 'gamified' applications provide insight into novel, gameful phenomena complementary to playful phenomena. Based on our research, we propose a definition of 'gamification' as the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" (Deterding et al. 2011).

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<sup>51</sup> German original: "Gamification ist die Durchdringung unserer Gesellschaft mit Metaphern, Methoden, Werten und Attributen aus der Welt der Spiele" (Fuchs 2013).

<sup>52</sup> "Gamification is taking things that aren't games and trying to make them feel more like games" (Schell 2010).

<sup>53</sup> "There is no doubt that video games are the emergent form our times and that the process of gamification is transforming our world, contaminating it like never before" (Reilhac 2010).

All of the definitions of gamification that have been proposed since 2002 are based on the idea that the digital computer and digital computer games are a reference without which gamification could not be conceived. There are, however, predigital predecessors of gamification long before digital computers became popular. A decade before programmable computers such as the Z3, Colossus or the ENIAC were introduced, a playful labour attitude had been mentioned and praised by the author Pamela Lyndon Travers. As early as in 1934 Travers rhymed for her Mary Poppins Character:

“In ev’ry job that must be done  
There is an element of fun  
You find the fun, and snap!  
The job’s a game!” (Travers 1934).

This is obviously what we would nowadays call the gamification of labour. It is precisely the use of game elements in non-game contexts, as the definitions of Zichermann, Reilhac, Schell, Deterding et al. suggest.<sup>54</sup>

This article intends to present examples for gamification *avant la lettre* and compares these predigital forms of ludification with recent approaches that build heavily on the historic ideas, concepts and gadgets. In particular the following fields of predigital gamification will be looked at: religious practice, music, magic, education, lifestyle and styles for killing.

## 1. Gamifying Religious Practice

Gods from antique Greek myths knew how to play tricks on each other. Indian avatars experienced lust and joy and even the warrior gods from Nordic mythology had a lot of fun every now and then. The Loki character from *Edda* is a joker and a jester. Little fun however has been reported from the Christian god, son of god or the corresponding spirits. Protagonists in Jewish-Christian mythology never laugh, never make love, and they rarely play. Einstein is said to have commented on God’s

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<sup>54</sup> I owe my colleague Paolo Ruffino thanks for the request for a clarification in regard to the „game elements“ mentioned. In an email from January 21, 2014 Ruffino comments: “Deterding et al talk about the use of game ‘design’ elements. They refer to a specific knowledge and practice: game design – a field mostly born with the emergence of video games as an industry.” Ruffino has a point there. I acknowledge that I am trying to recontextualize gamification here not only in using predigital examples but also in looking at games before computer game design existed. Having said so, my understanding of gamification is close to what other authors label as playification (Mosca 2012) or ludification (Raessens 2006).

resistance to play with his famous phrase of „God doesn't throw the dice". If playing or gambling is reported of in the bible, it is usually the bad guys who do so. The maximum offence against piety and the example *par excellence* of how not to behave in the vicinity of Christ are the soldiers at the cross who dare to play when Christ is dying. Completely in line with the negative sanctioning of playfulness is the prohibition of any gambling practice in Christian culture. Play, that was felt to be the pastime of the Gods in other religions, was rather associated with the devil in Christianity. Who could have invented such a nuisance as play? Reinmar von Zweter, a poet from the 13th century had no doubt about that when he wrote in a truly Christian spirit: "The devil created the game of dice":

“Der tuivel schouf das würfelspil,  
dar umbe daz er selen vil  
da mit gewinnen will” (Wolferz 1916).

His anger about dice games is actually exemplifying a much wider rejection of play in general. Almost every century in Western European history knows about legal sanctions on gambling, prohibition of certain games and of violent destruction of games (Ritschl 1884). On 10th August of 1452 Capistrano, a sermoniser from the city of Erfurt in Germany was said to have collected games that he labelled “sinful luxury items” and piled them up to an impressive mountain of 3640 board games, some 40,000 dice games and innumerable card games. The games have then been burnt publicly (Dirx 1981, 82).<sup>55</sup>

It is frightening to see that game burning preceded book burning and that in both cases it was not the medium that was intended to be destroyed but a cultural practice and a practicing group.

In Western Europe gambling that involved monetary benefits was often prohibited. Reports about public houses that were accused of being gambling houses were used in many cases to shut down the pubs or to penalize the innkeepers. A class action from 1612 in Ernsdorf united the village mayor and members of the parish choir to sue an innkeeper who served alcoholic drinks in order to “attract gamblers and scallywags to visit his inn” (Schmidt 2005: 255).<sup>56</sup> In 1670 a list of all the inhabitants that were suspected of playing games was posted in the very same village of Ernsdorf. Nine years later the court usher was told to withdraw bowling pins from children on the day of their catechism classes (Ibid).

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<sup>55</sup> Translation by the author, German original: “Er errichtete einen Berg von 3640 Brettspielen, an die 40.000 Würfel, Kartenspiele ohne Zahl und 72 Schlitten und verbrannte dieses sündhafte Luxuswerk” (Dirx 1981, 82).

<sup>56</sup> Translation by the author, German original: „so daß sich allerhand Gesinde bei ihm einfinde und spiele“ (Schmidt 2005).

Yet real politics within Christian ethics developed ways and means to play and be pious at the same time. Gerhard Tersteegen can be called an 18th century gamification expert for religious practice. His Pious Lottery<sup>57</sup> was a card game consisting of 365 cards that contained words of wisdom and advice for the believers. By randomly selecting a card from the deck of cards the pious gambler would perform two activities at the same time: playing an aleatoric game of cards and practicing Christian-minded devotion. Tersteegen's gamified prayer book was successful because of the popularity of profane lottery practice of the 18th century that his game appropriated and adapted for Tersteegen's own purposes. The sermonist announces his game as a lottery with no danger of losing. If however, you hit the jackpot ("drawing the best lot") your price will be unsurpassable:

"This is a lottery for Believers,  
and nothing can be lost,  
Yet nothing would be better,  
then drawing the best lot" (Tersteegen 1769, title).<sup>58</sup>

Not everybody was happy with Tersteegen's ludification of serious content. One of his contemporaries and critics, Heinrich Konrad Scheffler, mocked the pious lottery in his essay from 1734 on strange religious practice: "Praxis pietatis curiosa" (Brückner 2010, 261) as not pleasing to God.

The itinerant preacher Tersteegen was faced with a problem that is not unlike today's problems of selling products with low use-value as desirable – or boring work as fun. Common 18th century practice of prescribing a prayer per day must have been extremely fatiguing for the average believers. When the radical pietist Tersteegen introduced *alea* (Caillois 2001/1958) he achieved what today's gamification evangelists try to accomplish: Increase customer loyalty via fun elements. "Gamification is Driving Loyalty" (Goldstein 2013), "Motivation + Big Data + Gamification = Loyalty 3.0" (Paharia 2013), "Gamification = Recognition, Growth + Fun" (DeMonte 2013). More than 200 years before the notion of gamification had been introduced, similar practices were already in use: Establish loyalty by hiding the primary company's goal and offering "peripheral or secondary mechanics" (Ciotti 2013) that establish pseudo goals and re-direct the attention of the customers aka gamers.

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<sup>57</sup> Translation by the author, German original: Der Frommen Lotterie. The Pious Lottery was part of Tersteegen's *Geistliches Blumengärtlein*. This book included the Pious Lottery at latest in the fourth edition, published in 1769.

<sup>58</sup> Translation by the author, German original: "Diß ist der Frommen Lotterie,/ wobei man kann verlieren nie,/ das Nichts darin ist all so groß,/ als wann dir fiel das beste Los".

## 2. Gamifying Music and Dance

Contemporary to Gerhard Tersteegen, Johann Philipp Kirnberger, Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach and Maximilian Stadler worked on something that could be called the gamification of music<sup>59</sup> when introducing a ludic generator for musical composition.<sup>60</sup> Kirnberger's Ever-Ready Minuet and Polonaise Composer<sup>61</sup> was first published in 1757 and then again in a revised version in 1783. The game preceded the Game of Musical Dice<sup>62</sup> from 1792 that doubtably has been attributed to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. If Mozart was the author of the Musikalisches Würfelspiel, his intention was most likely to present and sell another virtuosity stunt and not to question the nature of composition. It is probably also fair to say that Mozart was not particularly hesitant in appropriating material and concepts from fellow composers and to polish them in his personal way to make them a successful commodity. The idea of Kirnberger's gamified system of composition as well as that of Mozart's was to propose that music could be conceived as a game that follows certain rules and is affected by an element of chance, or *alea* – as Caillois would name it (Caillois 2001/1958). This idea is completely anti-classical and anti-romantic, but was epistemically coherent with the 18th century thought. It is therefore not surprising that systems like the Ever-Ready Minuet and Polonaise Composer, or the Musical Dice have been devised by various 18th century composers.

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<sup>59</sup> When 18th century musicians used card games and dice to facilitate composition processes, they aimed at something that is similar to contemporary gamification attempts in the field of marketing: The former wanted to implement a layer of fun and entertainment and they wanted the audience to believe that they were composing. Actually the audience did not compose, they were just instrumental in starting algorithmic processes. The latter try to implement a layer of fun and entertainment above the functional level of marketing and they want the customers to believe that they desire what they are told to desire. In both cases rule-based ludic systems service as persuasive devices for a subject matter that is not play. That is why I speak of gamification in the context of music and in the context of recent marketing, even if the object of gamification differs in both cases.

<sup>60</sup> The examples for aleatoric composition methods given here, do not claim to tell about the earliest attempts to do so. There is a history of aleatoric composition in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in the digital age (Nierhaus 2009) and much earlier than that. Already in the 17th century, composers had begun thinking of a piece music as a system of units which could be manipulated according to chance processes. Around 1650, the Jesuit Athanasius Kircher invented the *arca musurgica*, a box filled with cards containing short phrases of music. By drawing the cards in combination, one could assemble polyphonic compositions in four parts.

<sup>61</sup> Translation by the author, German original: Der allezeit fertige Menuetten- und Polonaisencomponist.

<sup>62</sup> Translation by the author, German original: Musikalisches Würfelspiel.



In 1758 Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach's *A Method for Making Six Bars of Double Counterpoint at the Octave Without Knowing the Rules*<sup>63</sup> introduced a game for short compositions as a demonstration of method and a tool for rule-based composition. It would not be appropriate to criticize Johann Sebastian Bach's son for a mediocre quality of the counterpoint compositions produced. The compositional spirit of the 18th century was different to classical musical thinking and for a late Baroque composer the main achievement was to produce as effective as possible what fitted the rules of musical craftsmanship. Aesthetic subtlety was not the point then.

Maximilian Stadler was another composer who worked with a set of dice. His *Table for composing minuets and trios to infinity, by playing with two dice*<sup>64</sup> was published in 1780 and might well have been the inspiration for Mozart's *Würfelspiel*. Stadler was friend to Mozart, Haydn and Beethoven and it would not be too surprising, if Mozart had picked up a few ideas from Stadler when meeting in Vienna. Innovative ideas were not copyright protected at the time of Mozart, and Mozart was reported to have appropriated material, ideas and concepts from fellow composers. But it is also possible that Haydn, another friend of Stadler's, might have influenced Stadler, Mozart or both of them when presenting his *Game of Harmony, or an Easy Method for Composing an Infinite Number of Minuet-Trios, Without Any Knowledge of Counterpoint*<sup>65</sup> that was published in 1790 or in 1793 in Naples by Luigi Marescalchi. The piece that is said to have been written in the 1780s, is very close in concept and terminology to Stadler's *Table*. *À la infinie* is what Stadler had in mind and Haydn, if he really wrote the *Gioco* himself, refers to as "infinito numero". Once more, it was the easy method – *maniera facile* – that served as key motivation for composers of the 18th century to use gamification for the compositional process.

Leonard Meyer observes that the practice of aleatoric and ludic methods in musical composition and in musical performance are for good reasons present in the 18th century but hard to find in the 19th century musical practice:

"Eighteenth-century composers constructed musical dice games while nineteenth century composers did not . . . [W]hat constrained the choice of figures were the claims of taste, coherent expression and propriety, given the genre of work being composed, rather than the inner necessity

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<sup>63</sup> Translation by the author, German original: Einfall, einen doppelten Contrapunct in der Octave von sechs Tacten zu machen ohne die Regeln davon zu wissen.

<sup>64</sup> Translation by the author, French original: *Table pour composer des minuets et des Trios à la infinie; avec deux dez à jouer.*

<sup>65</sup> Translation by the author, Italian original: "Gioco filarmonico, o sia maniera facile per comporre un infinito numero di minuetti e trio anche senza sapere il contrapunto : da eseguirsi per due violini e basso, o per due flauti e basso."

of a gradually unfolding, underlying process [as in nineteenth century music]" (Meyer 1989, 193).

I would argue here that gamification provides methods for coherence and propriety in the context of music – as has been demonstrate by Meyer –, but also in other contexts such as learning (compare the section below), religious practice (compare the section above) and dance. That is why the 18th century is a time when examples of predigital gamification can be found in many cases. Processes that are driven by gradually unfolding underlying structures are much harder to be gamified. The ludic turn of the 18th century became apparent not only in the passion for games, in ludified social manners, in religious practice or in music. It also shaped the way people used to dance then. In her "Sociology of Dance on Stage and in Ballrooms" Reingard Witzmann notices that dance was conceived as a game in Mozart's Vienna. At the end of the last act of *Le Nozze di Figaro* Mozart calls the actors of *Le Nozze* to reassemble on stage and proclaim what could be called the motto of the century: "Sposi, Amici, al Ballo, al Gioco!" (Witzmann 2006, 403).<sup>66</sup>

There are two points I want to make here by putting examples from the gamification of music and dance in close vicinity to the gamification of religious practice of the very same decades:

1. I'd like to support the concept of gamification as "permeation of society with methods, metaphors, values and attributes of games" (Fuchs 2011, 2013) as opposed to the idea that gamification can fully be understood as the transfer of game design elements to non-game contexts with no regard to the historical and social framing. The latter is symptomatic for most of the scholarly attempts to define gamification (Deterding et al. 2011<sup>67</sup>, Schell 2010<sup>68</sup>, Werbach and Hunter 2013). If I understand Deterding, Dixon, Khaled and Nacke, Shell, Werbach and Hunter correctly then a single instance of adapting game design elements for non-game contexts could qualify as gamification. I differ from understanding gamification that way and would be extremely hesitant to theorize societally isolated actions like convenience store marketing or flight sales optimisation as relevant for the phenomenon of gamification, if they are detached from a historical view and a social perspective that includes cultural analysis on a global scale.

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<sup>66</sup> English: "Beloved ones, Friends, lets Dance, lets Play!"

<sup>67</sup> "Based on our research, we propose a definition of 'gamification' as the use of game design elements in non-game contexts" (Deterding et al. 2011).

<sup>68</sup> "Gamification is taking things that aren't games and trying to make them feel more like games" (Schell, 2010).

The way I want use the notion of gamification is in line with various “fications“ and “izations“ that have been introduced in the social sciences during the past 20 years. *Globalization* (Robertson 1992, Ritzer 2011), *McDonaldization* (Ritzer 1993), *Californication* (Red Hot Chilli Peppers 1999)<sup>69</sup>, *Ludification* (Raessens 2006), *Americanization* (Kooijman 2013) or *Disneyfication* (Bryman 1999, Hartley and Pearson 2000) are all based on the assumption that we observe large societal changes that are driven by apparatuses that influence various sectors of society at a time. Of course, McDonaldization cannot be attributed to a society just by spotting a few fast-food restaurants in countries other than the USA. It is a way of living based on an economic structure, a power structure, a number of neologisms and changes in spoken language, introduction of a set of manners and habits and a perceptual shift, that make McDonaldization what it is (Kooijman 2013). I would in analogy claim that “game design elements applied to non-game contexts” do not make a society gamified. It is the permeation of many societal sectors with methods, metaphors and values that stem from the sphere of play that produce gamification.

2. I want to show here that certain historical constellations have been a fertile breeding ground for the process of predigital gamification. The second half of the 18th century certainly was one of those. The intention is also to explain why certain moments in history lent themselves to foster gamification, and to propose a few good reasons why our decade seems to be one of those as well.

### 3. Gamifying the Magic Arts

In 1762 Wolfgang Schwarzkopf published a book in the German city of Nürnberg that presented an enlightened and new take on what formerly has been said to be black magic or pre-modern sorcery. Schwarzkopf subtitled the book *Playground of rare Sciences*<sup>70</sup> and combined a description of mathematical and mechanical skills with essays about card games, dice games and an encyclopaedic section of prestidigitator tricks. This book was one of many scientific attempts of the 18th century to reclaim magic and enchantment as playful activities – and to separate it from any connotations to diabolic and irrational activities. In their book *Rare Künste* Brigitte Felderer and Ernst Strouhal lay out how the cultural history of magic took a dramatic turn in the 18th century and abandoned medieval black magic in favour of a ludic activity (Felderer and Strouhal 2006). This new form of edutainment was based on an enlightened concept of popular science, socially embedded empirical research and a

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<sup>69</sup> The Video to the rock song with the title of *Californication* by the Red Hot Chilli Peppers is a perfect example for gamification of pop music.

<sup>70</sup> Translation by the author, German original: *Spielplatz rarer Künste*.

post-religious belief in the fact that the new type of magic had much more in common with science than with ritualistic or obscure practices from the past. As James George Frazer put it in his *Golden Bough*:

“Magic is much closer to Science than it is to Religion. Different to what religion tells us, Magic and Science both are based on the presupposition that identical causes result in identical effects” (Frazer 1989, 70).

As a consequence, it made a lot of sense for the 18th century publisher to talk about “natural magic” – as Schellenberg did in 1802<sup>71</sup> – or “the magic of nature” – as done by Halle in 1783<sup>72</sup>. The reappearing pattern of legitimation for the act of talking about magic as a game and as science is the rhetoric figure that magic is useful in societal daily life and that it is entertaining: “Revised to Take Account of Entertainment and Serious Applications“ (Halle in Huber 2006, 335) or “Useful for Social Life” (Schellenberg in Ibid). This line of argumentation can be followed via Goethe’s *bonmot* of “scientific games like mineralogy and the likes”<sup>73</sup> (Kaiser 1967, 37)<sup>74</sup> up to the present. This is probably not the place to develop the idea, but I would speculate that the notion of *serious games* can be followed back to the 18th century programmatic efforts to declare magic as a game, and do so in introducing the idea that science can be entertaining and that entertainment can be scientifically relevant. Today we call this project *edutainment*.

## 4. Gamifying Lifestyle in the “Century of Play”

In 1751 Daniel Bernoulli tried to catch the *Zeitgeist* of his century by saying: “The century that we live in could be subsumed in the history books as: Free Spirits’ Journal

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<sup>71</sup> The full title of Schellenberg’s book is *A Glance/ at/ Döbler’s and Bosko’s/ Magical Cabinet,/ consisting of/ New Enchantment from the Field of/ Natural Magic/ that is Useful for Social Life*. (Translation by the author, German original: *Ein Blick/ in/ Döbler’s und Bosko’s/ Zauberkabinet,/ bestehend/ in neuen Belustigungen aus dem Gebiete/ der natürlichen Magie,/ im gesellschaftlichen Leben anwendbar*, Huber 2006, 335).

<sup>72</sup> Johann Sebastian Halle’s book was published by Joachim Pauli in 1783 in Berlin as *Magic,/ or/ Magical Power of Nature,/ Revised to Take Account of Entertainment and Serious Applications*. (Translation by the author, German original: *Magie,/ oder, die/ Zauberkräfte der Natur,/ so auf den Nutzen und die Belustigung/ angewandt worden,/ von/ Johann Samuel Halle,/ Professor des Königlich=Preußischen Corps des Cadets/ in Berlin*, Huber 2006, 335).

<sup>73</sup> Translation by the author, German original “wissenschaftliche Spiele wie die Mineralogie”.

<sup>74</sup> Johan Wolfgang von Goethe’s autobiographical *raisonnement* called *From my Life: Poetry and Truth* (German original: *Aus meinem Leben. Dichtung und Wahrheit*) was written between 1808 and 1831. It is said to be a reflection on Goethe’s life in the 1750s to 1770s. The phrase about „scientific games“ is quoted from Kaiser 1967.

and the Century of Play“ (Bauer 2006, 377)<sup>75</sup>. Bernoulli expressed an observation about the gamification of lifestyle that was based on observations in Vienna, but was valid for the main European capitals like Paris, Rome, London, Den Haag, Rome and Naples. The gaming culture was a pan-European phenomenon based on widely distributed types of games and game rules. L’Hombre, e.g., a game of cards that was originally developed in Spain, then picked up by Maria Theresia, the wife of Louis XIV, and was within a few years played in all European countries with a few local variations only.<sup>76</sup> This made it possible for a new travelling social class that extended beyond aristocracy to engage in gaming as a European lingua franca. Frequent travellers such as Mozart or Johann Wolfgang von Goethe could expect to find a gaming community in almost every city in Europe that they could share experiences and social skills with. Instructions for games like the mid-18th century “Pleasant Pastime with enchanting and joyful Games to be played in Society” (Bauer 2006: 383)<sup>77</sup> were translated into most of the European languages and became popular amongst people of different social classes (Bauer 2006, 383). Lotteries could be found everywhere and became a source of income for some and a serious economic problem for others. Hazardous games or *jeux de contrepartie*, such as the Pharo game or Hasard were temporarily banned and forbidden to be played.

The 18th century was also the time when “apartements pour le Jeu”, play rooms, were introduced in the houses of the aristocracy as well as in houses of the bourgeoisie. Special furniture to display well-designed games or to hide such games from being visible all the time were designed.<sup>78</sup> The way the gamification of social lifestyle changed from the 17th to the 18th century was via increased availability, trans-European distribution channels, and an acceptance that transcended class and social group. It is for this reason that Bernoulli’s proposition to call the 18th century the “Century of Play” makes a lot of sense. Having said so, Bernoulli was not able to see how another wave of gamification would change another century: the 21st century is about to repeat the games craze of the 18th century. Today we see ubiquitous availability, trans-planetary distribution channels, and an acceptance of computer

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<sup>75</sup> Translation by the author, German original: “Das gegenwärtige Jahrhundert könnte man in den Geschichtsbüchern nicht besser, als unter dem Titel: Das Freygeister=Journal und Spielsaeculum nennen”.

<sup>76</sup> In Spain the game was called “Juego del tresillo” and there was the Spanish set of cards used lacking the eights and nines.

<sup>77</sup> Translation by the author, German original: “Angenehmer Zeitvertreib lustiger Scherz-Spiele in Compagnien”. (anonymous 1757. Frankfurt and Leipzig, quoted by Bauer 2006: 383)

<sup>78</sup> See Salomon Kleiners “Apartment pour les Jeu” from the first half of 18th century as found in Lachmayer 2006.

games that transcends class and social group, and games do not any longer belong to an age group, ethnicity, gender or subculture.

## 5. Gamifying Learning

In 1883 Samuel Langhorne Clemens, also known as Mark Twain, was trying to create an easy way for his daughters to remember the English monarchs and the dates when they commenced and finished ruling. Twain described the problem he was faced with in his notebooks: “It was all dates, they all looked alike, and they wouldn’t stick” (Twain 2009). So Twain figured out a playful method of remembering dates, names and numbers by mapping them to positions on a piece of land. He measured out 817 feet – each foot representing a year – and then put stakes in the ground where kings and queens started their reigns. His daughters remembered the dates by remembering spatial positions. “When you think of Henry III, do you see a great long stretch of straight road? I do; and just at the end where it joins on to Edward I. always I see a small pear-bush with its green fruit hanging down” (Ibid), he wrote.

When Twain's daughters learned the monarchs in two days (they had been trying all summer), he knew he had discovered an efficient method for gamified learning. After a couple of years of tinkering, Twain patented the Memory-Builder: A Game for Acquiring and Retaining All Sorts of Facts and Dates. It consisted of a game board similarly divided by years. The game included straight pins, and players would stick a pin in the appropriate compartment to show that they knew the date of the event in question. Points were awarded based on the size of the event and how specific players could get on the date.

Mark Twain’s invention introduced two elements of play into a teacher-learner relationship. On the one hand he declared learning as an entertaining activity by framing it within a board game. On the other, he gamified historical data as spatial information. Information and knowledge about time and chronological order is reframed as spatial relationship. In terms of Derridean philosophy there is some type of play taking place (and taking time) on a semiotic level and the level of the very game’s board. According to Derrida there is *différance*, an active movement involving spacing and temporalizing. The presence of one element cannot compensate for the absence of the other. A gap or interval remains that escapes complete identity. “Constituting itself, dynamically dividing itself, this interval is what could be called *spacing*; time’s becoming-spatial or space’s becoming temporal (*temporalizing*)” (Derrida 1972/1968, 143). Mark Twain’s board game therefore plays on two levels: The game is obviously a playful approach to teaching history as it differs from

traditional and rather solemn forms of classroom lectures. The second level of play is a meta-level of spacing and temporalizing, as described by Derrida. The instructions for the Memory Builder game state that

1. The board represents *any* century.
2. Also, it represents *all* centuries.

This is what would have to be called dynamic spacing in Derrida's words or an ambiguous and playful potential for spatialisation of historical data. The player in this learning application encounters history as gamified and not as a solid body of knowledge based on numbers only.

## 6. Gamifying Killing

In this section of the article I want to present a rather small number of examples how the act of killing and the selection of victims can be gamified. I am not going to differentiate between military action killing as the so-called legal procedure during war and illegal activity by gangs or individual gangsters. It seems to me that it is impossible to differentiate between those two except on a cynical level. My intention is rather to show how the selection of victims can be influenced by a games system with proper rules and an outcome to the game played. The examples I would like to choose are the infrequent process of decimation in the Roman army and other military forces and an example taken from literature that is based on aleatoric gaming.

Roman praetor Marcus Crassus, when sent to the south of Italy in 71 BC during the Spartacan revolt, noticed that Mummius, one of Crassus' officers, engaged the rebels in an early fight and lost. Many of his troops deserted the field instead of fighting. Crassus, in response to this embarrassment, ordered his legions decimated. The process of decimation is an aleatoric process that results in what Roman law would consider fair by selecting one out of ten accused to be killed. The logic in devising such an inhuman procedure that seems completely unfair to us, is ludic. The rationale of random killing refers to a concept of Fortuna being blind and just at the same time. Gamified mechanics of killing can therefore not be called unfair, a cheat, corrupt or meaningless – if one believes in the apparatus of play, they must be seen as the ultimate form of game-inherent logic instead. I have tried to suggest in another publication that this circle of perfect logic makes gamification a perfect case of ideology in the sense of Sohn-Rethel's understanding of ideology, i.e. *necessary false consciousness* (Fuchs 2014).

The idea to use alea is not an exclusively military accomplishment. Small crime can sometimes arrive at similar methods to solve problems. So did Anton Chigurh in *No*

*Country for Old Men* (McCarthy 2005). Chigurh forces his victims to have him toss a coin, and to be killed or left alive dependant on the coin toss. The perfidiousness of delegating a vital decision upon chance is in line with the rationale of Roman martial law to decimate the legions. Chigurh's motivation to allow for an escape from the fatal consequences of his man-hunts has been speculated about a lot. Isabel Exner describes the killer as "Homo aleator" who introduces a "de-individualized" form of violence. (Exner 2010, 61) This "new man" is obviously a counter-concept to the traditional heroes of Western movies: The sheriff, the honest loner who is looking for revenge, or the intelligent gangster are all *Homo faber* type characters. They could solve their respective problems via individualized decision-making and action. Isabel Exner's proposition for the emergence of the "Homo aleator" in *No Country for Old Men* is not exclusively cinematic or related to the history of American movies and crime stories. Exner suggests that chance has become "the fundamental working principle of the prevailing order . . . that has already integrated Michel Serre's finding, that 'chance, risk, terror and even chaos have the potential to consolidate the system'" (Ibid).<sup>79</sup>

## 7. Conclusion

This article cannot provide the reader with a complete history of gamification and gamification-related historical documents, to prove that something that we call gamification now, has happened in former centuries already. I also cannot sum up all of the possible differences that might exist between games of former centuries and computer games of our days. My main hypothesis is though, that we can detect similarities in aspects of games hype, games craze, the seriousness of games, and of a process that transforms non-game contexts into playgrounds for ludic activities and of ludic experience across centuries. Such playgrounds could once be found in learning, religious practice, music, magic, dance, theatre and lifestyle. Such playgrounds for ludic activities can equally well be spotted nowadays, when we look at theatre theory and find "Game Theatre" (Rakow 2013), when we look at religious blogs and find "Gamifying Religion" (Toler 2013), when we look at the information from Health services and find "Fun Ways to Cure Cancer" (Scott 2013) or "Dice Game Against Swine Flu" (Marsh and Boffey 2009), or when we investigate collective water management and find "Games to Save Water" (Meinzen-Dick 2013).

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<sup>79</sup> Translation by the author, German original: "das basale Funktionsprinzip einer herrschenden Ordnung . . . die Serres' Erkenntnis längst integriert hat, dass 'Zufall, Risiko, Angst und selbst Unordnung ein System zu konsolidieren vermögen'". Exner quotes Michel Serres here from: *Der Parasit* (1987), page 29.



It is the width of applications and not the individual example that support the hypothesis that gamification takes place as a global trend, a new form of ideology, or as a *dispositif* – if you want so. This is not exclusively dependant on the digitalisation of society or the massive economic success of computer games. What I have tried to demonstrate here, is a historic perspective on an understanding of gamification as a way of living (and dying), making music, selling and buying, engaging in economic processes and power structures, communicating and introducing new manners and habits for a decade or a whole century. This can be the decade of the 2010s, but it can also be the 18th century, the “Century of Play” – “Spielsaeculum” – as Bernoulli called the century he was living in in 1751.

The second half of the 18th century shared “pragmatic-relevant networking” (Lachmayer 2006, 35) with our days. The contemporaries of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Schikaneder, Tersteegen, Casanova, Bernoulli, Schwarzkopf and Stadler were deeply involved in a European “supra-nationality” (Ibid) that assembled a multiplicity of languages, styles, games and sources of knowledge that somehow resembles our world wide web – without being worldwide then. Still powered by the naivety of a desire for unfiltered access to a variety of scientific, semi-scientific, popular or superstitious forms of knowledge, the enlightened and the not so enlightened ones of the 18th century were striving for visions of progress. Playfulness on a personal level that included *mimesis*, *alea* and *ilinx* (Caillois 2001/1958) was a driver for *caprice* and virtuality rather than flat realism. The ludicity of the times was conducive to multi-faceted identities and strictly contradictory to a monosequential development of character and career that later centuries requested as a prerequisite for social inclusion. It might be that we have returned to the state of a Mozartesque playfulness and that the gamification of our society sets up a scenario for an intelligent plurality of expression, experience and knowledge at a global level. Not completely serious, but myth-making and myth-breaking at the same time.

It might, however, also be true that our decade resembles the second half of the 18th century in a way that Doris Lessing once described with these words: “This country becomes every day more like the eighteenth century, full of thieves and adventurers, rogues and a robust, unhypocritical savagery side-by-side with people lecturing others on morality“ (Fielding 1992, 762). Rococo culture developed a style that was jocular, florid and graceful and at the same time full of sophisticated coarseness. And is this not identical to the state that our discourse on gamification is at. We want to be SuperBetter and want to enjoy „self-expansion escapism“ (Kollar 2013). We are slightly worried about it and we speculate about a forthcoming “Revolution” (Zichermann 2013), yet we shout out loudly “Gamification is Bullshit!” (Bogost 2011). We finally discover that „gamification is transforming our world, contaminating it like never before” (Reilhac 2010). That’s so Rococo!

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## Ludography

Der allezeit fertige Menuetten- und Polonaisencomponist. 1757. Developed by Johann Philipp Kirnberger. musical game.

Der Frommen Lotterie. 1769. Developed by Gerhard Tersteegen. card game.

Einfall, einen doppelten Contrapunct in der Octave von sechs Tacten zu machen ohne die Regeln davon zu wissen. 1758. Developed by Carl Philipp Emanuel Bach. musical game.

Gioco filarmonico, o sia maniera facile per comporre un infinito numero di minuetti e trio anche senza sapere il contrapunto : da eseguirsi per due violini e basso, o per due flauti e basso. 1790 (or 1793). Probably developed by Joseph Haydn. musical game. Luigi Marescalchi.

Hasard. 14th century (or earlier). dice game.

L'Hombre. 14th century. Spain. card game.

Memory-Builder: A Game for Acquiring and Retaining All Sorts of Facts and Dates. 1895. Developed by Mark Twain. open-air game.

Musikalisches Würfelspiel. 1792. Developed by Nikolaus Simrock (or arguably Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart). musical game.

Pharo. 18th century. card game.

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# “Sposi, Amici, al Ballo, al Gioco!”

## Brevi cenni di ludicizzazione ... del Diciottesimo secolo

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Der unveröffentlichte Text des Manuskripts in Englischer Sprache, aus dem der italienische Aufsatz entstand, folgt unten nach.

L'attuale dibattito sulla ludicizzazione si fonda su un assunto problematico. Diversi studiosi, infatti, sostengono che l'influenza del ludico sulla società sia un fenomeno sostanzialmente inedito. Per esempio, Ian Bogost (2011), Zac Fitz-Walter (2012) e Andrzej Marczewski (2013) attribuiscono al programmatore britannico Nick Pelling l'invenzione del termine. Secondo tali autori, la genesi della ludicizzazione corrisponderebbe al 2002. Joost Raessens ha ripreso e ridefinito il concetto nel 2006, introducendo l'espressione "ludificazione della cultura" per indicare la di"usione della ludologica all'interno della società (Raessens 2006). Il dibattito accademico sulla ludicizzazione è un fenomeno relativamente recente, come ci ricordano Deterding et al. (2011) e Werbach & Hunter (2012), e lo stesso vale per l'ingresso del fenomeno all'interno dell'immaginario collettivo (McGonigal 2011, Zichermann 2011) e del giornalismo di massa. Si potrebbe affermare che il fenomeno ha raggiunto la vetta del cosiddetto ciclo dell'*hype* di Gartner<sup>80</sup>, diventando un vero e proprio tormentone in ambiti disparati, dal marketing alla pubblicità, dalla politica all'economia, dove è stata descritta, in modo relativamente vago, come "l'utilizzo di elementi ludici in contesti non ludici" (Deterding et al. 2011) e in modo inspiegabilmente rapido, adottata. A detta dei cosiddetti esperti, la prova irrefutabile dell'originalità del fenomeno è la sua *natura digitale*: per molti la ludicizzazione è imprescindibile dall'elemento

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<sup>80</sup> Il ciclo dell'*hype* (in originale, *hype cycle*) è un diagramma ideato dalla società di ricerca Gartner per rappresentare lo sviluppo, adozione e applicazione sociale di nuove tecnologie, prodotti o concetti (NdT).



tecnologico. Nello specifico, la ludicizzazione esprimerebbe la logica operativa delle culture online, dei videogame e del neo-illuminismo iper-individualistico di stampo californiano. Sotto questa luce, la ludicizzazione parrebbe una versione revisionata dell'*ubiquitous gaming*<sup>81</sup>, ma senza fucili mitragliatori, iper-violenza, boss di fine livello e pozze di sangue virtuali. La ludicizzazione del secondo millennio promette di trasformare profondamente la nostra società e dare vita a qualcosa di completamente nuovo: una società ludica a"ascinata dai giochi, sedotta dal giocare e ossessionata dai giocattoli. Questo "nuovo mondo ludico" sarebbe alimentato, a livello socio-economico, dal successo popolare di giochi pervasivi, condivisi dalle masse, in un contesto globale in cui le di"erenze locali scompaiono in un'immensa comunità di giocatori. Questo fenomeno giocoso avrebbe dato vita a un'economia ludica capace di generare profitti stratosferici per gli sviluppatori e per i fornitori di servizi. Paradossalmente, l'esito necessario di questo prorompente processo sarebbe l'eliminazione del lavoro e la sua sostituzione con "pratiche giocose". Tutto questo, secondo gli esperti, avrebbe avuto luogo nel 2011.

Mi permetto di dissentire. Se ci rivolgessimo ad altri esperti, per esempio quelli del Diciottesimo secolo, scopriremmo che il fenomeno ha origini più antiche. La vera, grande rivoluzione ludica risale al 1751, nel bel mezzo del cosiddetto "il secolo del gioco" (*Spielesaeculum*, Daniel Bernoulli, 1751). Questa espressione<sup>82</sup> indica un processo di ludificazione pan-europeo basato sull'ampia di"usione di giochi e di comportamenti ludici a vari livelli sociali. Un gioco di carte chiamato L'Hombre, le cui origini sono riconducibili alla Spagna del Quattordicesimo secolo, ha conosciuto un successo enorme quando la regina Maria Teresa, moglie di Luigi XIV, ha cominciato a giocarlo regolarmente con altri cortigiani. Nel giro di pochi anni, L'Hombre è diventato il passatempo ludico più di"uso nelle più importanti nazioni europee, dove è stato adottato con minime variazioni<sup>83</sup>. Per un segmento della società non necessariamente aristocratica, il gioco è diventato una sorta di lingua franca, una moneta sociale e culturale valida in tutta Europa. Viaggiatori incalliti e appassionati giocatori come Mozart, Laurence Sterne, Giacomo Casanova, Henry Swinburne e Johann Wolfgang von Goethe potevano contare su una comunità in quasi ogni città europea. Questo non deve sorprenderci: i giochi di carte sono un e cace strumento di

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<sup>81</sup> Il termine indica un'applicazione particolare dell'*ubiquitous computing* (in italiano: computazione ubiqua) altrimenti noto come *ubicomp*, un modello post-desktop di interazione uomo-macchina in cui l'elaborazione delle informazioni è interamente integrata all'interno di oggetti e attività di tutti i giorni. Il gioco ubiquo (o pervasivo) prevede l'utilizzo di dispositivi portatili o indossabili quali sensori, smartphone e telecamere, in ambienti concreti e digitali.

<sup>82</sup> Originariamente riferita alla città di Vienna da Bernoulli, ma applicabile alle principali capitali europee.

<sup>83</sup> L'Hombre è noto come Ombre in Gran Bretagna, Lumber in Austria e Lomber in Germania (NdT).

socializzazione, divertimento e interazione. Le istruzioni venivano rapidamente tradotte nelle principali lingue europee. Il mercato dei libri di giochi era particolarmente florido. Le guide all'intrattenimento erano assai popolari tra il pubblico, a prescindere dalla classe sociale dei giocatori. È il caso di "Passatempi piacevoli con giochi incantevoli e gioiosi da praticare in società" (Bauer 2006, p. 383), un autentico best-seller. Metodi e pratiche ludiche hanno profondamente influenzato la musica, il teatro, le pratiche religiose, l'architettura, la produzione di mobili e persino gli stili di vita. Il verso "*Sposi, amici, al ballo, al gioco, alle mine date foco!*" tratto dalle Nozze di Figaro mozartiane divenne un vero e proprio imperativo sociale, uno slogan, un modello per differenti segmenti della società. La ludicizzazione degli anni Cinquanta del Diciottesimo secolo ha profondamente alterato una società barocca fondata su regole, trasformandola in una società pre-rivoluzionaria di natura Rococò, una società disposta a sperimentare nuove soluzioni, eccessi, provocazioni, asimmetrie e situazioni imprevedibili: una società ludica ispirata da nuovi giochi, sedotta dal gioco e ossessionata da particolari giocattoli. Questo "nuovo mondo ludico" si fondava, a livello socio-economico, su una tipologia di giochi pervasivi come l'Hombre, il biliardo, *Jeu de mail*<sup>84</sup> e molti altri, condivisi dalle masse, in un contesto globale in cui le differenze locali sono scomparse in un'immensa comunità di giocatori. Questo fenomeno giocoso ha prodotto una vasta economia ludica che, a sua volta, ha generato profitti stratosferici per gli sviluppatori e i servizi di servizi, per lo meno, dopo le regolamentazioni legali e finanziarie alla minaccia di scomunica ai giocatori del lotto lanciata da Papa Benedetto XIII, superata dall'atteggiamento più conciliante di Papa Clemente XII e infine Pio VI nel 1785. Il risultato? Una profonda integrazione tra la sfera ludica e quella economica.

## Giochi nuovi per una nuova società

Nel 1751, Daniel Bernoulli ha perfettamente colto lo spirito dei tempi annunciando l'avvento del secolo ludico: "Una frase esprime l'essenza della nostra era: la stampa e i giochi hanno democratizzato la nostra cultura" (Bauer 2006, p. 377). Il verdetto di Bernoulli sono il frutto di una lunga osservazione sul campo. Etnografo ante-litteram, Bernoulli ha osservato le profonde trasformazioni sociali di città come Vienna, Parigi, Roma, Londra, L'Aia e Napoli. La nuova cultura ludica a cui accenna il matematico svizzero era un fenomeno pan-europeo favorito dalla diffusione di giochi e

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<sup>84</sup> Il Jeu de mail (noto anche come jeu de maille) era un gioco che si praticava all'aperto, sui prati, con stecche, palle da biliardo, bersagli e buche. Le sue origini risalgono, secondo gli storici, al Quindicesimo secolo. Predecessore del croquet, del polo e del golf, il gioco ha conosciuto un'ampia diffusione a Napoli, dove è stato ribattezzato Pallamaglio (NdT).

atteggiamenti ludici presso tutti gli strati sociali. Le origini di L'Hombre, Faro<sup>85</sup>, Brusquembille<sup>86</sup>, Mariáš<sup>87</sup> e Brišcula<sup>88</sup> sono eterogenee, ma la loro adozione è stata rapidissima. In alcuni casi, questi giochi sono stati modificati e rinominati nei rispettivi contesti locali, ma la loro popolarità resta fuori discussione. Altrettanto indiscutibile è l'ascesa del lotto e delle lotterie, che diventano rapidamente una fonte di introiti (per pochi) e un problema economico (per molti). I giochi d'azzardo o *jeux de contrepartie*, come il summenzionato Faro o Hasard<sup>89</sup>, sono stati temporaneamente censurati, proibiti, resi illegali.

Il Diciottesimo secolo vede inoltre l'ascesa dei cosiddetti *Appartements pour les Jeux*, sale gioco appositamente create nelle abitazioni dell'aristocrazia e della borghesia. Un fenomeno correlato è l'avvento del mobilio ludico, creato appositamente per mostrare - o *nascondere* - i nuovi giochi. Un capolavoro di falegnameria dell'*ancien régime* europeo è il cabinet creato da David Roentgen (1743 - 1807) dotato di cassettoni segreti nei quali potevano essere nascosti dei mazzi di carte. Muovendo delle leve nascoste era inoltre possibile trasformare il tavolino in un tavolo da gioco, una scrivania, uno sca"ale, una *poudreuse* (un compartimento per il trucco), un leggio o un mobile per nascondere lettere d'amore o disegni pornografici (Koeppel, 2012). Le gambe potevano inoltre essere rimosse per piegare il tavolo e facilitarne il trasporto (cfr. Fig. 1).

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<sup>85</sup> Noto anche come Pharaoh, il gioco di carte ha origini francesi e ha conosciuto un'enorme popolarità nel Diciassettesimo secolo: Tra i suoi estimatori spiccano Casanova, Wyatt Earp e John "Doc" Holliday. Simile al poker, a cui è spesso paragonato, esso richiede un mazzo di carte e può essere giocato da un numero variabile di partecipanti. (NdT)

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<sup>87</sup> Gioco di carte inventato nell'allora Cecoslovacchia per tre giocatori, che ha influenzato molti altri giochi, come l'Ulti, il passatempo preferito degli ungheresi. (NdT)

<sup>88</sup> Il nome originale della briscola, un popolare gioco di carte le cui origini sono rintracciabili nei Paesi bassi di fine Cinquecento che conosce un'enorme popolarità in Italia dopo la sua introduzione da parte dei francesi. (NdT)

<sup>89</sup> Noto anche come Hazard, Hasard era un gioco d'azzardo che richiedeva l'utilizzo di due dadi. Praticato già nel Quattordicesimo secolo (è citato nei Racconti di Canterbury di Geoffrey Chaucer), Hasard esplose a livello sociale nel Diciassettesimo e Diciottesimo secolo, specie in Inghilterra (dov'è stato ideato) e negli Stati Uniti, dove viene ribattezzato Craps. (NdT)



Fig. 1: Tavolo meccanico prodotto da David Roentgen e Abraham Roentgen nel 1769. Prodotto in Neuwied, Germania, il tavolo da gioco con sportelli a scomparsa include legno di quercia, mogano, acero e alberi da frutta parzialmente tinti, feltro e accessori in pelle, ferro, acciaio dorato e ottone. Collezione Sotheby's London. Autore: FA2010, 2011, Wikimedia.

A questo proposito, è impossibile non citare la famiglia Roentgen: il figlio David (1743 - 1807) e il padre Abraham erano ebanisti, falegnami e costruttori di grande talento. Oltre ad aver prodotto alcuni dei migliori esempi di mobili del Diciottesimo secolo, i Roentgen hanno inventato sofisticati mobili ludici che presentano sorprendenti analogie concettuali con i computer portatili del Ventunesimo secolo e con i sistemi multifunzionali dei moderni laptop. Prodotti nel laboratorio di Neuwied, questi esemplari erano splendidamente lavorati a mano con ricchi intarsi e decorazioni. I tavoli da gioco erano dotati di cassetti segreti che ospitavano mazzi di carte, la dama o gli scacchi. Un

compartimento estraibile si trasformava in una tavola del backgammon. La passione e competenza di Roentgen nella costruzione di mobili dotati di dispositivi meccanici e comparti segreti non aveva eguali in Europa. I suoi straordinari oggetti di design esercitavano un forte appeal su una clientela innamorata dello stile Rococò. Il mix bizzarro di elementi high-tech ed eleganza senza tempo spiegano l'enorme successo di queste stazioni multimediali ante-litteram. Questi tavoli da gioco meccanici avevano contribuito a rendere il gioco mobile una vera e propria mani di massa. Si noti che la portabilità di questi tavoli era a sua volta inseparabile dall'accresciuta mobilità degli europei, che si spostavano con maggior facilità rispetto al passato per motivi che includono il miglioramento delle condizioni di vita, la di"usione di mezzi di trasporto privati e individuali, nonché l'ascesa del proto-turismo di massa. Una seconda ragione dietro al successo del mobilio ludico è il desiderio di"uso a ogni livello della società di promuovere lo spirito giocoso, l'eccellenza tecnica e un nuovo tipo di socializzazione.

## La globalizzazione del gioco

Il fenomeno che oggi chiamiamo "Globalizzazione" sarebbe stato definito "Europeanizzazione" attorno alla seconda metà del Diciottesimo secolo. Il gioco ha svolto un ruolo fondamentale di collante transnazionale. Durante l'era del Rococò, i giochi erano considerati un medium importante. Insieme alla letteratura, all'opera e al teatro, hanno formato la spina dorsale della cultura, dai monti Urali fino all'Oceano Atlantico. La già menzionata arte del mobilio ludicizzato dei Roentgen non era una peculiarità regionale, ma un fenomeno di design pan-europeo che vantava estimatori del calibro di Caterina II di Russia, Re Federico Guglielmo II di Prussia, Maria Antonietta e Luigi XVI, per i quali divennero *ébéniste-mechanicien du Roi et de la Reine*, ossia ebenista-meccanico del Re e della regina. Come si spiega la ludicizzazione della società del Diciottesimo secolo? I fattori chiave sono l'incrementata disponibilità di giochi, dei canali di distribuzione pan-europei, ma soprattutto la forza "democratizzante" del gioco, un lubrificante sociale che trascendeva le classi. Fenomeno trasversale, il gioco ignorava gerarchie e confini. Per questa ragione, la proposta di Bernoulli di ribattezzare il Diciottesimo secolo il "Secolo del gioco" non appare sorprendente. Cosa avrebbe scritto Bernoulli se avesse potuto assistere alla seconda ondata di ludicizzazione che ha travolto un altro secolo, il Ventunesimo? Si potrebbe infatti a"ermare che l'epoca attuale sta attraversando un momento di trasformazione sociale, economica, e culturale incentivata dalla di"usione di giochi, dall'emergere di canali di distribuzione globali e dalla crescente popolarità dei videogame tra di"erenti gruppi e classi sociali. Oggi i giochi non sono limitati a un fascia d'età, a un'etnia, a un sesso o a una sottocultura in particolare. I giochi sono diventati un linguaggio globale.

## Cambiamenti legali, religiosi ed etici

In vari momenti, la pratica ludica e l'etica della giocosità sono state al centro di un intenso dibattito. Nell'Europa Centrale, tuttavia, è solamente nel Diciottesimo secolo che si verifica una radicale rottura con i valori cristiani tradizionali che hanno negato ogni valore sociale ed etico al gioco. Gli studiosi e i clerici si sono interrogati sulla compatibilità tra il gioco e il dogma religioso. La Grande e Completa Enciclopedia di tutte le Scienze e Arti di Zedler, per esempio, solleva una questione spinosa: "Come possono il giudizio equilibrato e la prudenza divina condividere qualcosa con le lotterie?" (Zedler, 1732, Vol. 18, S. 563).

Cautela e rischio, infatti, sono valori contrapposti e dunque incompatibili. Sul piano teorico e teologico, la questione è rimasta sostanzialmente irrisolta. L'ascesa sociale del gioco è semmai riconducibile a fattori di carattere economico e pragmatico.

Il successo della ludicizzazione e l'inevitabile emergenza di quella che Dragona, in questo volume, ha chiamato *contro-ludicizzazione* e che, altrove ho definito *anti-ludicizzazione* (2014), sono fenomeni tutt'altro che estranei al Diciottesimo secolo. A una decade di distanza dalla decisione di Maria Teresa di legalizzare il gioco del lotto nel regno asburgico, il fenomeno ha conosciuto un successo enorme a Vienna e Salisburgo, al punto da angustiare gli intellettuali dell'epoca, che lamentavano addirittura una *Spielpest*, ossia un'epidemia del gioco (Bauer 2006, 386). Nel 1770 l'arcivescovo di Salisburgo ordina l'interruzione delle lotterie municipali: fenomeni di corruzione senza precedenti avevano infatti compromesso il gioco. Ma chiusa una porta, se ne spalanca un'altra. La comunità di giocatori di Salisburgo si sposta a Vienna o Mannheim, in Germania, per continuare a giocare. Analogamente, una serie di regolamentazioni imposte alle lotterie di Braunschweig (nel 1771 e 1768 rispettivamente) non hanno sortito grandi effetti. Tali vincoli hanno limitato la diffusione delle lotterie locali, ma non hanno ridotto le attività d'azzardo a livello europeo. L'unico effetto delle leggi imposte dalle autorità è stato quello di reindirizzare i flussi e gli spostamenti da una città all'altra o, in alcuni casi, da una nazione all'altra.

Nella seconda decade del Ventunesimo secolo, stiamo assistendo a un fenomeno simile. Nonostante regolamentazioni rigorose, i giocatori hanno a loro disposizione numerose opportunità per giocare: a casa, su internet, in stati, nazioni e città che presentano leggi meno stringenti. In effetti, sembra che non sia cambiato molto dai tempi del Rococò...

Doris Lessing ha paragonato l'epoca attuale alla seconda metà del Diciottesimo secolo, catturando le analogie che le accomunano con un'osservazione fulminante: "Questa nazione diventa ogni giorno sempre più simile al Diciottesimo secolo, piena

di ladri e avventurieri, furfanti e moralisti ipocriti che non perdono occasione per fare la predica” (cit. in Fielding 1992, p. 762).

## Big Business

Il cambio di paradigma ludico è stato reso possibile non solo da mutate condizioni sociali e culturali, ma anche economiche. Almeno sulla carta, l'ascesa del ludico prometteva di arricchire governi, intere classi sociali (leggi: aristocrazia e borghesia) nonché il clero. Il patron genovese Benedetto Gentile ha abilmente trasformato il *giuoco del seminario*, un meccanismo di selezione dei candidati per i membri dei Serenissimi Collegi in un *giuoco del lotto*. In tutti i casi, dall'elezione politica al gioco aleatorio per profitti personali, le regole prevedevano semplicemente la selezione di cinque membri da un gruppo di novanta. Nel primo caso, si formava la camera e il senato, nel secondo uno dei fortunati vincitori veniva determinato a caso. La trasformazione della politica in business e viceversa, delle sale del lotto negli uffici del senato, esemplificano alcuni aspetti della ludicizzazione e della sua controparte dialettica, la de-ludicizzazione.

I meccanismi di finanziamento collettivi moderni, altrimenti noti come *crowdfunding*<sup>90</sup>, che presentano formati aperti e forme giocose sono un altro esempio di pratiche finanziarie impregnate di ludicità. Ma il *crowdfunding* non è stato inventato nel Ventunesimo secolo: le sue origini possono essere rintracciate nelle lotterie reali del Re d'Inghilterra, che si era trovato di fronte alla necessità di raccogliere un milione di sterline nel 1694:

Quando il Re aveva bisogno di racimolare una cospicua somma di denaro - per finanziare una campagna militare o per altri scopi - il Parlamento passava il mese di gennaio esaminando possibili strategie per ottenere rapidamente il finanziamento necessario. A un certo punto, un membro del parlamento aveva suggerito di istituire una lotteria nazionale con l'obiettivo di raccogliere un milione di sterline. Come avviene oggi per molte campagne di *crowdfunding*, i risultati superano largamente gli obiettivi prefissati. La lotteria si dimostra un... Reale successo. Non a caso, essa diventa presto modello e paradigma per iniziative simili. Lotterie commerciali istituite nelle città di Amsterdam, Utrecht e Genova dimostrano che la ludicizzazione del settore finanziario costituiva una reale possibilità per dare vita a progetti e a "ari di ogni tipo.

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<sup>90</sup> Noto come finanziamento collettivo in italiano, il *crowdfunding* (dall'inglese *crowd*, folla e *funding*, finanziamento) è un processo collaborativo di un gruppo di persone, spesso disperse geograficamente, che utilizza i propri fondi in comune per sostenere gli sforzi di persone e organizzazioni. È una pratica di micro finanziamento dal basso che mobilita persone e risorse. (NdT)

La crescente popolarità dei giochi d'azzardo è uno dei fattori chiave del boom economico del Diciottesimo secolo, che ha coinciso con l'introduzione delle lotterie nazionali da parte degli Stati. Essa prefigura il gusto del rischio e la volatilità dei mercati finanziari attuali. La prima lotteria austriaca, chiamata "Lotto di Genova" risale al 1751, istituita per volontà dell'Imperatrice Maria Teresa. Tuttavia, il figlio Giuseppe II, un riformatore, aveva revocato le concessioni o"erte dalla madre, vietando il gioco. A due decenni di distanza dall'introduzione del lotto con il beneplacito di Maria Teresa, Il Duca Carlo I istituisce una lotteria nella città tedesca di Braunschweig, ma il figlio Carlo Guglielmo Ferdinando di Brunswick-Wolfenbüttel pone un veto, appellandosi a "questioni morali" e denunciando "l'intrinseca natura corruttrice del gioco d'azzardo". In Italia, le lotterie conoscono una rapida di"usione in intere regioni, Piemonte in testa, e nelle città di Venezia, Milano, Napoli e perfino nello Stato Pontificio. Non è stato tuttavia facile per il Vaticano accettare l'ascesa del gioco d'azzardo. Nel 1728, Papa Benedetto XIII paventa il ricorso alla scomunica per tutti i praticanti del lotto. Tre anni dopo, Papa Clemente XII rivaluta il gioco, esigendo tuttavia che i guadagni ottenuti venissero o"erti alle donne nubili. Dal 1785, sotto Pio VI, i profitti finiscono in un'archivio nazionale e quindi o"erti al Papa che, a propria discrezione, poteva spenderli per opere di pietà o per finalità pubbliche, come la bonifica delle paludi pontine. Da una posizione di totale negazione si passa a più conciliante, fondata sul principio che il *fine* (per esempio, la summenzionata bonifica) *giustifica i mezzi* (lotto e azzardo).

Il progressivo allargamento delle concessioni papali in materia di lotterie esemplifica la trasformazione ideologica di un'intera società in materia ludica. In una prima fase, il l'egemonia dominante combatte l'ascesa del gioco sfruttando una retorica che enfatizza la presunta immoralità del gioco, vietando le pratiche ludiche emergenti e/o minacciando di scomunicare praticanti e appassionati. In una seconda fase, di fronte all'evidente incapacità di arginare un fenomeno dilagante, viene raggiunto un compromesso tra due paradigmi incommensurabili. Il compromesso presenta implicazioni essenzialmente economiche, per esempio, l'invito a donare i guadagni ottenuti dai peccatori ad altri peccatori. L'ultima fase consiste nel declino e successiva scomparsa del vecchio paradigma anti-ludico ed è caratterizzata dal tentativo di capitalizzare trasformazioni sociali inarrestabili, il che spiega il tentativo del Papato di sfruttare i guadagni ottenuti con il lotto per sanare le paludi pontine.

## Conclusion

La tesi di questo saggio è che la ludicizzazione non è un fenomeno esclusivo delle culture digitali. Al contrario, essa presenta precursori illustri. Un esempio di ludicizzazione *avant la lettre* è evidente nell'ascesa del Rococò nel Diciottesimo secolo. Caratteristico di questo stile e periodo storico è la cosiddetta



*Spielversessenheit* ovvero mania del gioco, che accompagna l'ascesa del gioco d'azzardo, la produzione di mobili ludico, l'architettura giocosa, la legislazione in materia ludica, l'emergere di nuove abitudini sociali segnate dalla mobilità e dal gusto dell'avventura. Questi fenomeni hanno spinto il matematico svizzero Bernoulli a parlare di un vero e proprio "Secolo del gioco". La ludicizzazione della società può allora essere concepita come un evento storico basato su sotto-strutture sociali che mostrano una particolare predilezione per la giocosità, ma non va dimenticato che in ogni fase, forze divergenti o contrarie (*de-ludicizzazione*) contro-bilanciano il trend pro-ludico.  
Oggi come ieri.

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# engl. Manuskripttext zu “Sposi, Amici, al Ballo, al Gioco!”

(Dies ist der unveröffentlichte Manuskript Text, aus dem der italienische Aufsatz entstand, der dann bei Edizioni Unicopli, Milano 2016 erschien.)

The public discussion about gamification is based upon the assumption that the permeation of our society with methods, metaphors and attributes of games is a brand new phenomenon. Scholars like Ian Bogost (2011), Zac Fitz-Walter (2012)<sup>91</sup>, Andrzej Marczewski (2013)<sup>92</sup> tell us that the term „gamification“ has been introduced in 2002 by British programmer Nick Pelling. Joost Raessens reframed and rephrased the concept in 2006 when he spoke about the „ludification of culture“ (Raessens 2006). But it was only a few years ago that gamification turned into a concept that was widely applied and discussed in academic circles (Deterding et al. 2011, Werbach & Hunter 2012), popular fantasies (McGonigal 2011, Zichermann 2011) and journalistic reportage. Gamification reached a top position in Gartner’s hype cycle charts and became the buzzword for marketing, politics and economy with little more common ground of understanding than just the rather vague „game design elements in non-gaming contexts“ definition (Deterding et al. 2011) - that almost everybody immediately subscribed to. Another implied prerogative that increased admission readiness for 21st century gamification was the proposition that gamification is exclusively rooted in digital technology, computer games and a Californian-style, highly subjective neo-enlightenment. Gamification looks like a revised version of ubiquitous gaming, but without the guns, the gore, the villains and the bloodstains.

The ludification of the 2010s promises to transform our society into something completely new: a ludic society that is fueled by games, seduced by play and obsessed with toys. The socio-technical and economic basis for such a society is said to be

- ubiquitous availability of massively shared new games,
- the collapse of regional differences and the amalgamation into one big playing community,

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<sup>91</sup> <http://zefcan.com/2013/01/a-brief-history-of-gamification/>

<sup>92</sup> <http://www.lulu.com/shop/andrzej-marczewski/gamification-a-simple-introduction/ebook/product-20671386.html>

- exorbitant profits for game-makers and providers of gaming activities, and
- the subsequent substitution of work and labour by games and play.

And all of this happened around the year of 2011.

The European societies of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, however, felt that all of this happened around the year of 1751. They also thought that they were living in a century that they described as “the century of play” (Spielesaeculum: Daniel Bernoulli 1751). The gaming culture and the ludification of culture was a pan-European phenomenon based on widely distributed types of games and ludic behaviour. L’Hombre, e.g., a game of cards that was originally developed in Spain, then picked up by Maria Theresia, the wife of Louis XIV, was within a few years played in all European countries with a few local variations only. This made it possible for a new travelling social class that extended beyond aristocracy to engage in gaming as a European lingua franca. Frequent travellers such as Mozart, Laurence Sterne, Giacomo Casanova, Henry Swinburne and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe could expect to find a community of game lovers in almost every city in Europe that they could share experiences and social skills with. Instructions for social practice and game-based behaviour, like the mid-18th century “Pleasant Pastime with enchanting and joyful Games to be played in Society” (Bauer 2006, 383)<sup>93</sup> were translated into most of the European languages and became popular amongst people of different social classes (Bauer 2006, 383). Methods from gaming transformed music, theatre, religious practice, architecture, furniture design and lifestyle. Mozart’s “al Ballo, al Gioco!” from *Le Nozze di Figaro* became a social imperative and a formula that described social practice of a wide range of social groups.

The ludification of the 1750s transformed rule-based baroque society into a pre-revolutionary Rococo society that was fond of experiment, excess, provocation, asymmetry and unpredictabilities: a ludic society that was inspired by new games, seduced by play and obsessed with ludic objects. The socio-technical and economic basis for such a society was

- ubiquitous availability of massively shared new games like L’Hombre, Jeu de mail, Billard and others,
- the collapse of regional differences and the amalgamation into one big playing community,

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<sup>93</sup> Translation by the author, German original: “Angenehmer Zeitvertreib lustiger Scherz-Spiele in Compagnien”. (anonymous 1757. Frankfurt and Leipzig, quoted by Bauer 2006: 383)

- exorbitant profits for game-makers and providers of play (following the legal and financial regulations that happened after Pope Benedict XIII's threat of excommunication for lotto players and the subsequent lotto-friendly attitude of Pope Clement XII and finally Pius VI in 1785), and
- the commingling of games with economy

## 1. New Games for a New Society

In 1751 Daniel Bernoulli tried to catch the *Zeitgeist* of his century by saying: “The century that we live in could be subsumed in the history books as: Free Spirits’ Journal and the Century of Play“ (Bauer 2006, 377)<sup>94</sup>. Bernoulli expressed an observation about the gamification of lifestyle that was based on observations in Vienna, but was valid for the main European capitals like Paris, Rome, London, Den Haag, Rome and Naples. The gaming culture was a pan-European phenomenon based on widely distributed types of games and game rules. *L’Hombre*, *Pharo*, *Brusquembille*, *Mariáš*, *Brišcula* and many more originated in different regions, but they were soon to be played all over European countries with minor local variations and sometimes with varying titles.<sup>95</sup> Lotteries could be found everywhere and became a source of income for some and a serious economic problem for others. Hazardous games or *jeux de contrepartie*, such as the *Pharo* game or *Hasard* were temporarily banned and forbidden to be played.

The 18th century was also the time when *Appartements pour les Jeux*<sup>96</sup>, dedicated play rooms, were introduced in the houses of the aristocracy as well as in houses of the bourgeoisie. Special furniture to display well-designed games or to hide such games from being visible all the time were designed, produced and sold Europe-wide. A masterpiece of European ancien régime cabinetmaking is a gaming table by David Roentgen that has hidden levers and drawers and can in an instance be changed into a gaming table, a writing desk, a *poudreuse* (make-up compartment), a bookrest, a lectern and a hiding place for love letters or pornographic depictions. (Koepe 2012) The table legs could be unmounted and the cabinet could be folded and safely transported for journeys or voyages (Fig. 1).

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<sup>94</sup> Translation by the author, German original: “Das gegenwärtige Jahrhundert könnte man in den Geschichtsbüchern nicht besser, als unter dem Titel: Das Freygeister=Journal und Spielsaeculum nennen”.

<sup>95</sup> In Spain the game was called “Juego del tresillo” and there was the Spanish set of cards used lacking the eights and nines.

<sup>96</sup> See Salomon Kleiners “Apartment pour le Jeu” (orthography as in the original) from the first half of 18th century (Lachmayer 2006, 94).

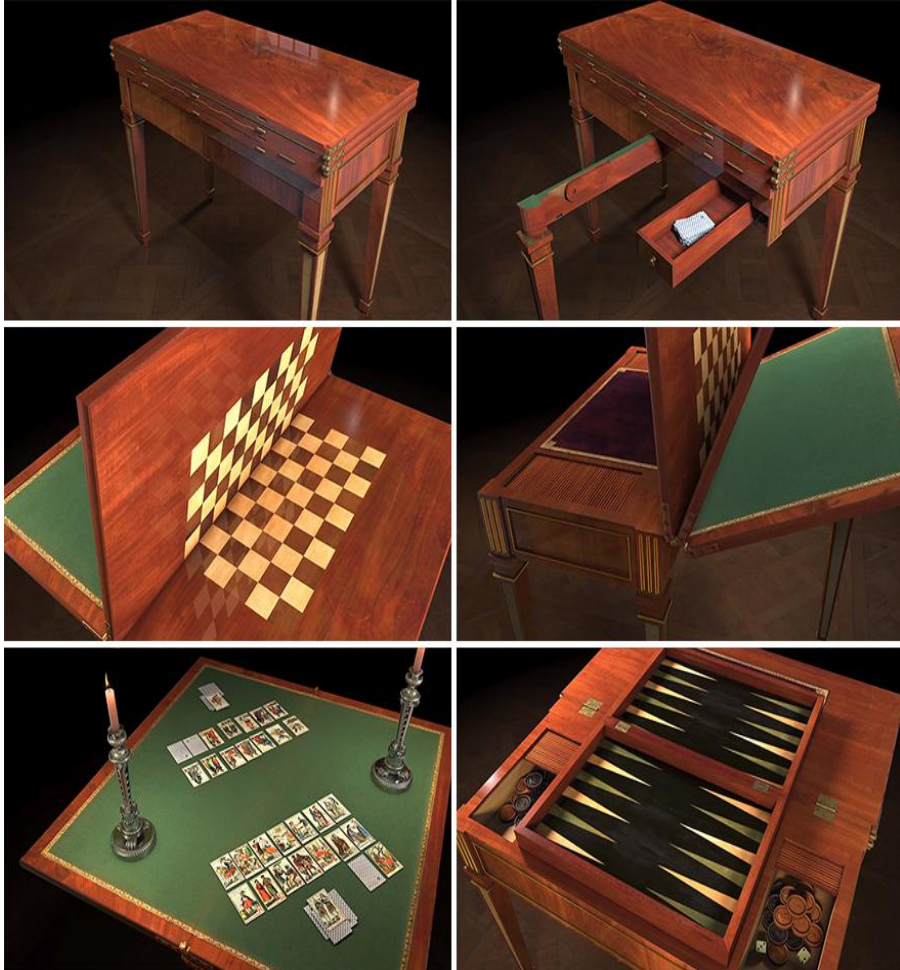


Fig. 1: Mechanical gaming table, ca. 1780–83 by David Roentgen, produced in Neuwied/ Germany. Partially stained oak, mahogany, maple, and fruitwood, felt, partially tooled and gilded leather, iron and steel fittings, brass (78.5 cm) (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York)

David Roentgen (1743 - 1807) and his father Abraham were extraordinarily successful cabinet makers, and were not only designers and producers of 18th century game furniture, but also inventors of mechanically sophisticated and playful furniture that has surprising conceptual analogies to contemporary laptop computers and to gamified multi-functional systems for handheld and mobile devices. Made in the family workshop in Neuwied, the pieces are finely crafted both inside and out. The gaming table consists of drawers for cards and chess with a concealed spring-driven backgammon. It were the outstanding design and the unique gadget features of the

Roentgen furniture that made them so attractive for a rich Rococo clientele. A bizarre mix of ingenious high-tech features and the mystery of hidden, yet undiscovered possibilities created demand for these early multimedia stations. Mobile gaming was a feature of the mechanical gaming table. One purpose for being foldable and portable was of course to use the piece of furniture on journeys. Another purpose was to turn it into a networking device that would communicate playfulness, technical excellence and an open, pan-European spirit to courts and individuals abroad.

## 2. Globalisation of Gaming

What we call globalisation today would have been called europeanisation in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Games became one of the most important media in Rococo times, and together with literature, opera and theatre formed the backbone of cultural communication from the Ural to the Atlantic. The aforementioned gamified furniture of the Roentgens, e.g. was not a regional curiosity, it was a commodity, a cultural object and a high-tech gadget that was equally cherished by Katharina II from Russia, King Frederick William II of Prussia, Marie-Antoinette and Louis XVI for whom he became „Ebeniste Mecanicien du Roi et de la Reine“ (the Royal cabinet maker for mechanical furniture).

The way gamification changed peoples' lifestyle in the mid-18th century happened via increased availability of games, trans-European distribution channels, and an acceptance for playfulness that transcended class and social group. It is for this reason that Bernoulli's proposition to call the 18th century the "Century of Play" makes a lot of sense. Having said so, Bernoulli was not able to see how another wave of gamification would change another century: the 21st century is about to repeat the games craze of the 18th century. Today we see ubiquitous availability of digital games, trans-planetary distribution channels, and an acceptance of computer games that transcends class and social group, and games do not any longer belong to an age group, ethnicity, gender or subculture.

## 3. Legal Changes, Religious and Ethical Amendments

The practice of gaming and the ethics of playfulness have been debated throughout history. In central Europe it was however the 18<sup>th</sup> century and particularly the second half of this century that shows a clear break with traditional Christian values that promoted a strict rejection of gaming. Scholars and sermonists tried to develop theories of whether playing games was in God's favour or not. Zedler's Great and Complete Encyclopedia of all Sciences and Arts questions whether "God's government and precaution has anything in common with the lotteries" (Zedler, 1732,

Vol. 18, S. 563)<sup>97</sup>. In the end, however, the answers to these questions remained speculative<sup>98</sup> and it was rather for economic and pragmatic reasons that amendments in the regulations had to be made. Gamification craze and counter-gamification attempts (Dragona 2014) or even anti-gamification (Fuchs 2014) strategies changed in quick succession. 10 years after Maria Theresia's permission to play the lotteries in the Habsburg empire a gambling craze caught the population of Vienna and Salzburg, that was also talked about as "Spielpest" or gambling plague (Bauer 2006, 386). Yet in 1770, Schrattenbach, the archbishop of Salzburg, had to close down all lotteries due to a corruption scandal. The gambling community immediately moved to Vienna or Mannheim in Germany to continue playing. Similarly permission and prohibition of lotteries in Braunschweig (1771 and 1768) did not influence European gambling activities as a whole, they just redirected players to other places. In our decade we encounter a similar phenomenon. However strict anti-gambling laws are and however well-supervised they might be, those who want to gamble can do so: at home, on the Internet, in states with different legal regulations. It looks as if not very much has changed since the days of Rococo.

Doris Lessing once stated that our decade resembles the second half of the 18th century in a way that she described with these words: "This country becomes every day more like the eighteenth century, full of thieves and adventurers, rogues and a robust, unhypercritical savagery side-by-side with people lecturing others on morality" (Fielding 1992, 762).

## 4. Big Business

One of the drivers for a change in the appreciation of playfulness was the palpable possibility of economic benefits that large scale gaming industries would bring to the respective stakeholders of governments, aristocracy, bourgeoisie and the clerus. Lotteries have been sources of income since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. The Genoese patrician Benedetto Gentile cleverly transformed the *giuoco del seminario*, a mechanism of choice of candidates for the "membri dei Serenissimi Collegi" into a lottery game: *giuoco del lotto*. In each case - political election and aleatoric game for personal profit - the rule system was simply to pick 5 out of 90. In the former case the chamber and the senate were selected, in the latter one the lucky winners were determined by chance.

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<sup>97</sup> transl. Fuchs, orig. in German: „...ob Gottes Vorsicht und Regierung mit Lotterien zu thun habe“

<sup>98</sup> A theory presented in Zedler's encyclopedia was that "when the chances for good luck in the lotteries were set, god would not a give the best lot to one and an inferior lot to the other player; but rather guide the hands of the individual players so that he could take care of the outcome of the game in the very moment it was played." transl. Fuchs, orig. in German: „bey Austheilung des Lotterien-Glücks nicht ... einem ein gutes, dem andern ein mittelmäßiges, dem dritten ein leer Looß zufällt, vor sich würcken lasse; sondern die Hand mit einer gantz besondern Vorsorge ... unmittelbar im Spiel habe.“



Such transformations from politics to enterprise and vice versa, from the lottery halls to the senate buildings and back again are exactly what gamification and its dialectic counterpart of degamification are about.

Modern crowdfunding with its open-ended and playful form can be seen as another example of a gamified financial mode of operation. Crowdfunding was not invented in the 21st century. It has predecessors in financing strategies such as the big royal lottery of the King of England, who was faced with the problem of raising a million Pound Sterling in 1694: “When the King was in need of the large sum of money in cash, the parliament spent the whole of January to look for possible funding sources. A member of parliament came up with the idea to set up a lottery with an expected profit of a million Pound Sterling.”<sup>99</sup> As it happens today with successful crowdfunding projects the expectations have been exceeded then. The lottery was a success. Commercial lotteries in Amsterdam, Utrecht and Genoa demonstrated that the gamification of the financial sector was a real possibility for future enterprises.

On a large scale the popularisation of chance processes as determinants for financial benefits happened during the 18<sup>th</sup> century with lottery organisations set up by state entrepreneurs and commercial investors. The first Austrian Lottery, called “Lotto di Genova“ happened in 1751 with permission of the empress Maria Theresia. Her son Joseph II, a reformer, later withdrew his mother’s concessions and prohibited gaming wherever he could. Some 20 years after Maria Theresia’s permission of lotto, Duke Karl I installed a lottery in the German city of Braunschweig, but his son Karl Wilhelm Ferdinand stopped the project due to alleged “moral problems” and also in order “to protect his citizens”. In Italy lotteries have been set up in Piedmont, Venice, Milan, Naples and even in the pontifical state. It was however not a straight way for the Vatican to accept gambling and lotteries. In the year of 1728 Pope Benedict XIII still threatened excommunication for those who participate in the game of lotto. Three years later Pope Clement XII readmitted lotto if the benefits were given to unmarried women as dowry. Since 1785 under Pius VI, the profits were put into a *depositeria general*, at the free disposal of the Pope who, at his discretion, spent it on works of piety or of public use, such as the reclamation of the Pontine marshes.

The stepwise development of papal concessions in regard to lotteries are characteristic for changes in ideology and its accompanying legal regulations. In a first step the old system protects the out-dated paradigmatic imperative (gambling is immoral) by threatening or prohibiting any activities related to the new paradigm (excommunication for gamblers). In a second step attempts are made to create a compromise between incommensurable paradigms. (You may well gamble and be a

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<sup>99</sup> transl. Fuchs, orig.: „denn als der König eine gute Summe baren Geldes eilfertig bedurfte und das Parlament den ganzen Jenner damit zubrachte (zu überlegen), wo solches herzunehmen, gab einer den Vorschlag, eine Lotterie von einer Million Pfund Sterling anzurichten“.

sinner, but give the money to other sinners at least.) The third step – and this is the stage before the old paradigm is dismissed altogether – is a cynical and pragmatic attempt to take advantage of the situation, no matter whether this is right or wrong. (Lets take the money and reclaim the Pontine marshes.)

## Conclusion

The hypothesis is that gamification is not exclusively linked to Digital Cultures and that processes that can with good reason be compared to and called gamification *avant la lettre* are constituted by human playfulness in the context of early historic and economic settings. In particular Rococo “*Spielversessenheit*” (game craze), decadent and profit-making games of hazard, games furniture and playful architecture, legal procedures on gaming, ludic lifestyle and the mobility of games during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century are strong and consistent indications for Bernoulli’s statement that the the Rococo period can rightly be called the “Century of Play.

The gamification of a society might be understood as a historical event that is based on socio-economic substructures that allow for an increasing appreciation of playfulness, yet processes of both revaluation and devaluation of gaming go hand in hand in the ludification of a culture at a certain time in history.

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# “Ruinensehnsucht” - Longing for Decay in Computer Games

(erschienen in: Ashley Brown & Rafael Bidarra (Hrsg.) *ToDiGRA, Transactions of the Digital Games Research Association*, Vol. 3, No. 2, S. 37-56, ETC Press Carnegie Mellon, Pittsburgh/ MA)

## Abstract

There is no technical reason and no quality inherent to the medium of computer games that would require corrosion, dust, and ruins. Pixels do not corrode and 3D geometry is not affected by physical decay. Yet if we look at contemporary computer games we find an abundance of ruined buildings, of mould and of all forms of decay of organic matter and inorganic materials. It would be too easy to explain this fact by an attempt to increase realism, because some of these games clearly feature more decay than reality could ever produce. There must be a longing of designers and players to immerse themselves within an environment of disintegrating, decaying objects. The author investigates the longing for decay along four threads that are informed by computer games history, art history, psychoanalytic reasoning and the concept of transmedia megatext.

## Keywords

ruins, digital dust, creative games, computer games history, psychoanalysis, philosophy of games, pathos formula, transmedia megatext.

## Digital Dust

Some of the most interesting of recent computer games celebrate the beauty of ruins and invite us to get immersed into landscapes of ruins from antiquity to space age. The ruins are set in post-nuclear war environments (Metro 2033)<sup>100</sup>, sites of

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<sup>100</sup> by Deep Silver (2013)

archaeological excavations and discovery (*Tomb Raider*)<sup>101</sup>, technological disaster areas (*Fallout*<sup>102</sup>, *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.*<sup>103</sup>), medieval environments (*Assassins's Creed*)<sup>104</sup>, industrial wreckage (*UnrealTournament*)<sup>105</sup>, mythological places that are known for the buildings they once contained (*Ruins*)<sup>106</sup>, or even completely fictional places (*Journey*)<sup>107</sup>.

There is a rich body of research in art history about the meaning and form of ruins, e.g. (Ginsberg 2002; Böhme 1989; Dubin 2010; Wu Hung 2012). In Game Studies however, only a few papers on the topic have been published (Fraser 2015; Vella 2010; Martin 2001). Ruins are mentioned in Hans Joachim Backe's and Espen Aarseth's text on *zombieism* (Backe & Aarseth 2013: 4) and in Tanya Krzywinska's *Zombies in Gamespace* that she published in the book with the uncanny title "Autopsies of the living dead in videogames" (Krzywinska 2008). Both aforementioned texts discuss ruins as some kind of staging for dramatic or ludic content and do not credit ruins as a central object of the game – or even propose that the ruins could at times carry more importance than player characters or rule systems. Emma Fraser's critical approach draws on Walter Benjamin's reflections and tries to attribute the critical power of ruins "to unsettle, even to haunt the dream worlds of contemporary capitalism" (Fraser 2005). Daniel Vella thoroughly points out spatial features of representations of ruins and connotes those with the player experience.

As far as I know little has been published about the aspect of "longing for decay" and of the mediatic and game-historic aspects of ruins in ludic 3D environments. One might speak of a longing for decay to describe a phenomenon that consists of a strong affective tie to disintegrating objects. Alluding to German romanticism and in particular to a specific style of painting that has been made popular by Caspar David Friedrich, the appropriate term would be "Ruinensehnsucht". The German word "Sehnsucht" is hard to translate. "Sehnsucht" is different from "desire" as it is less directed towards gratification, and it is not identical with "longing" as it carries a melancholic connotation that longing need not have. The notion of "Sucht" or addiction is contained within "Sehnsucht".<sup>108</sup> We can get used to or even be addicted by this particular longing. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century touristic visits to ancient ruins turned

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<sup>101</sup> by Eidos (1996)

<sup>102</sup> by Interplay Entertainment (1997)

<sup>103</sup> by GSC Game World (2008)

<sup>104</sup> by Ubisoft (2007)

<sup>105</sup> by Epic Games (1999)

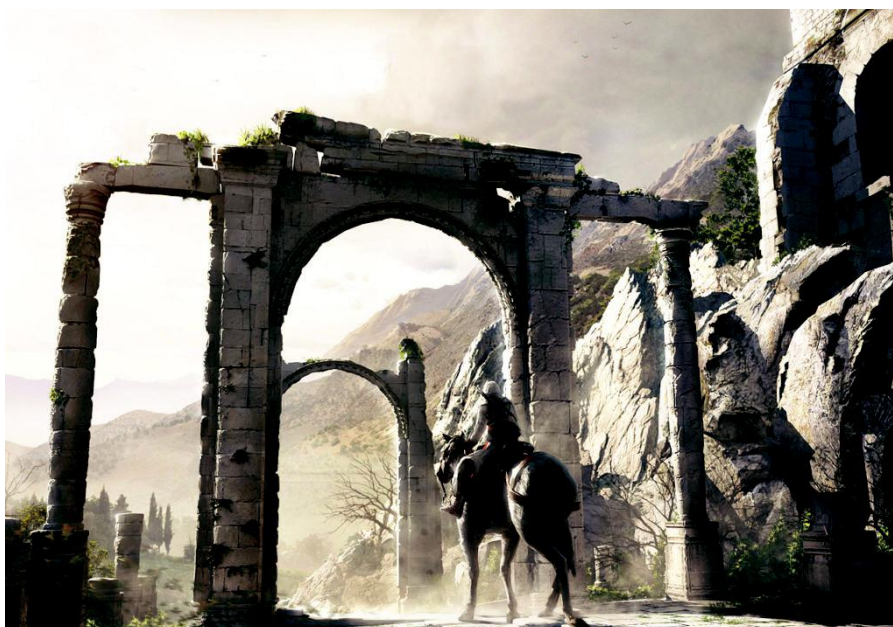
<sup>106</sup> by Cardboard Computer (2011)

<sup>107</sup> by thatgamecompany (2012)

<sup>108</sup> I owe Joseph P. Lawrence thanks for a hint on the etymology of "Sehnsucht" that he made me aware of at the *Apocalypse* conference in Oxford in 2013.

into obsessive admiration of decayed sites in Rome, Palermo or Athens for some, and nowadays urban explorers develop intensive practices to visit decayed spaces in modern cities and industrial wastelands.

If there was a place and time of perfection, where neither rust nor moss, no decay or disasters, and no demolition or ruin was ever seen, this would have to be a fictional world – in our decade probably a computer simulation of a perfect world.



There is no technical or conceptual reason that would make designers of such a world implement decay. There would be no reason for metal to rust, for stone to break and crumble, and for wood to moulder away. Yet if we look at contemporary games we will find an abundance of ruins, of cracks in concrete walls and of corrosion on metal. It would be too easy to explain this fact by stating, that decay just looks realistic in virtual environments, because some of these environments clearly feature more decay than reality could ever produce. There must be a longing of the designers and of the players to immerse themselves within an environment of disintegrating, decaying objects, full of dust, fog, rubble and acid rain.

It is obviously not only the locations and the sites in which these computer games are staged, but also the player's viewpoint, atmospheric lighting, dust and a preference for a certain type of landscape, vegetation, textures, and material that constitute an aesthetic framework for "Ruinensehnsucht", the longing for decay. Such a longing, if

expressed in an artistic medium like games, painting, architecture or poetry can be described as the aesthetic form of a longing for ruins. Hartmut Böhme, a German philosopher and cultural studies researcher uses this notion when he speculates about the dialectics of our fascination with the decline of cities and the decay of historical buildings. In his publication *Die Ästhetik der Ruinen* (Böhme 1989) he dates the starting point for an aesthetics of ruins back to the year 1337.<sup>109</sup> That is when Petrarca, walking on Mont Ventoux with a friend, got involved in the conversation about “*tempi passati*”, times gone. Petrarca described the landscape of ruins that he was looking down upon as a “book of memories” and noted that it is by writing about the ruins that he could counter the permanent decay of these buildings in disintegration. The text, or more generally the artwork provides us with hope for “*renewatio*”, the reconstitution of heroic times. Poetry from this point in time on would play with ruins as signifiers for *renewatio*, but also use them as a theatre of memories and point towards power, eternity, deity and indestructibility. In the 16th century the arts of painting and architecture discovered ruins for their purposes. Ruin painting (Giorgione, e.g.) and the construction of artificial ruins became a means to demonstrate historical knowledge and humanistic education. The first artificial ruin is said to have been erected in 1530 in the Pesaro palace gardens. Hartmut Böhme points out that building a ruin next to a functional building can not be interpreted as mere contemplation about transience and eternity, but needs to be seen as a statement of power. The ruin next to the functional palace of a sovereign is clearly demonstrating power and presence *ex negativo*. Ruins might signify momentariness, and they can signify the opposite of that: eternity. “This other form to refer ruins to temporal stability consists of building ruins,” says Böhme. “The grottas, artificial ruins or paintings of ruins, that used to be integrated into the dukes’ palaces and into the spectacular garden landscapes, lend themselves to a discourse of power - not of melancholia.” (Böhme 1989: 297)<sup>110</sup>

It is no surprise then that Albert Speer, Hitler’s favourite architect and planner discovered and described the “value of ruins”<sup>111</sup> (Speer 2005) in what he called a theory. Speer suggested that a good building could become even better, once it has fallen apart. It would then remind the successors of the builders on the glory the perished buildings once had. Böhme’s suspicion that “German imitations of Italian Renaissance palaces are hardly a *memento mori*, but a conscious and illusionistic staging of ruins, that is contrasted by the obvious power of the ruling sovereign”

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<sup>109</sup> Cynthia Finlayson corrected me in erroneously believing Hartmut Böhme that first pictorial representations of ruins date back to the 16th century. She convincingly pointed out that Böhme and I were wrong. Pictures of ruins actually date back to antique Rome.

<sup>110</sup> transl. by the author. German original in Böhme (1989) “*Die Ästhetik der Ruinen*”

<sup>111</sup> transl. by the author. In the German original text it says “*Ruinenwert Theorie*”

(Böhme 1989: 302) needs to be seen in the light of more recent ruin buildings. Furthermore Böhme's idea can also help understand ruin buildings that are not made of stone and wood, but rather built in 3D environments, computer simulations and games.

The most recent and technologically most advanced construction of artificial ruins happens in the realm of computer games. Film, photography, architecture and literature have, of course, featured ruined buildings, but what we can see now in digital games is far beyond what former media have accomplished. The ruins in games provoke an affective intensity that has been made possible by technological innovation, immersive spatiality and mediatic referentiality.

I suggest to explore four different threads to explain why there are so many ruins in today's computer games. These lines of investigation are informed by  
media history of computer games,  
history of the visual arts,  
psychoanalysis, and  
transmedia megatext.

## History of Decay in Computer Games

In early computer games the visuals were restricted by technological limitations like screen resolution, memory space, and processing power of the consoles. As a consequence the display of visually complex objects like animals, humans or spaceships had to reduce complexity to a high degree. *Spacewar!*'s spaceships were displayed as triangles and *Pac-Man* monsters consisted of 16 by 16 pixels with a colour selected from a 256 bit colour space. This left little space for textural detail or atmospheric backgrounds and would make the display of reflections, "imperfections" in geometry or processes of decay almost impossible.<sup>112</sup> The resulting aesthetics of

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<sup>112</sup> My colleague Chris Bateman has a point when he states that there have been ruins before high-end graphic cards have been introduced. I have to admit, that there are "... numerous examples of ruins from the 8-bit era. For a start, Mike Singleton's Tolkien-inspired *The Lords of Midnight* (Beyond 1984) has ruins dotted around the landscape, and is one of the first videogames to do so. There is also potentially an argument for *Gift from the Gods* (Denton Designs 1984) qualifying: although the catacombs in this game are lacking in 'digital dust'. I suspect only because of the technical limitations, and there is a definite sense of ruin about them. There's also Paul O'Malley's *Arac* (Addictive 1986), also known as *Spiderbot* in some territories, which has a hi-tech zone within an overgrown outer area that suggests something of the new within the ancient, although it is not necessarily a world that fits into your general case here. But most clearly there is *Sacred Armour of Antirad* (Palace 1986), which is a post-apocalyptic game in which the ruins of the older civilisation lie among verdant locations, in



coarse pixelation and glossy, naïve squareness was rather a product of technical constraints than a deliberate artistic decision. So much more surprising it is that even after the constraints were removed, a look and feel of Lego Worlds persisted, with a few modern games like *The Sims* (Maxis Entertainment 2000). These games represent a messy world as a clean virtual environment. Idealized objects are rendered noise-free to the screens. The general trend however was an increase in visual and aural artefacts that could be named “digital dust”. It took games history some 30 years to proceed from the simplicity of early 60’s games to the games of fog, rust and dust of the 21st century.

By comparing versions of games that had undergone the evolution from a first version to a series of more advanced versions (*Unreal Tournament*, *UT2003*, *UT2004*, *Unreal3* or the like) one often finds an increase in special effects and procedural dust that make the games of the more recent past look “older” and more worn out than the earlier versions. The tendency is also visible in avatar skins, haircuts and dresses. *Tomb Raider* (1996, 1997, etc. until 2012 cont.) is an example of such a transformation. Whereas the early *Lara Croft* looked like a soft skinned doll in a clean toy shop, the more recent one comes with a considerable amount of bruises, scars, skin impurities and an unkempt “out of bed” hairstyle. T-shirts of avatars that once looked as if they were nicely ironed, nowadays have to be covered with mud, bloodstains and sweat.

Even ludic nature became more corroded than it once was. Trees have to have moss on the bark, the feet on the ground have to trace dust tracks and the air needs to be filled with fog and smoke. The technical reason for this transformation lies in the fact that fog is render-intensive and dust or pollution effects require a higher processing power than a clean and perfect world rendering. Only with advanced video cards did it become possible to generate hyper-realistic fog in the distance, to blur the view when diving in muddy water or to create smoke trails and realistic rain. It may sound paradoxical, but in order to create an imperfect world you need to have a perfect computer. A perfect world is easy to be generated.

My point here is that it is due to technological advances and to progress in graphics cards performance that nature could take over a role as an active part of the game and that ruins enlivened by natural processes of decay could turn into actors of gameplay. “The landscape is not only something seen and read,” observes Paul Martin. “Landscape [...] is therefore an element of the game that is capable of doing work in

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the same manner as *Arac*. Whereas in *Arac*, some interpretation is needed, *Antirad* is unequivocally an example that fits your pattern. The longing for ruins goes back right to the dawn of the videogame industry!” (Chris Bateman in an email dated 13 April 2016) The punctuation and italicisation has been changed by the author.

relation to the game's story in the same way that we conventionally think of characters doing work. However, while characters work in the representational mode of stories and messages, landscape works primarily through embodiment and interaction.” (Martin 2001: 4) Paul Martin seems to see the ability of landscape to work as a feature that is enabled by a particular design approach, like the one of Todd Howard, Ken Rolston and Mark Nelson, game designers of *Bethesda Softworks* (2006). I would add that designers as the ones mentioned draw from a portfolio of industry standards and graphic card innovations that allow them to transform landscape in a way that Paul Martin describes so fittingly: “Landscape, in other words, is not a backdrop but the main attraction. The hero is a necessary means of interpreting the landscape.” (Martin 2001: 4) In the same lines one might say that advanced games technology enables ruins to become the main attraction. But beyond that the ruin also becomes the main actor. In many contemporary post-apocalyptic games the hero is just a necessary means of interpreting ruins, the construction of which is now made possible by recent improvements in computer technology. These improvements have expanded the canvas that game designers work on when it comes to conveying narrative and creating gameplay challenges. If we looked at it this way, we could propose that the history of decay in computer games is the journey from imagined decay to perceived decay. In other words: Whilst decay in earlier games was largely based on the imagination of the player, recent games exhibit fully rendered and exaggerated decay, which both shapes narratives and ludic frameworks.

## Visualisations of Ruins

There have been times when the depiction of ruins became common painterly practice. French and Italian Rococo were such periods, German Romanticism definitely was, and the 21st Century seems to have entered a similar phase with computer games like *Fallout*, *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.*, *Half-Life 2* or *Metro 2033* - to just name a few. Ruins in Rococo, Romanticism and Pre-Raphaelite painting could stay side by side with recent visualisations of ruins in computer games in regard to the level of sophistication of lighting, perspective, metaphor and allegory. On one hand there is this level of metaphor and meaning, but there are also formal aspects: the composition of the work of art, perspective, position of the viewer, position of the observer relative to the ruin in the image, colours, shadows and light. Caspar David Friedrich's paintings introduced an observer's perspective that looks at the object of the painting across the shoulders of a person in the painting. This mode of looking at an object with the viewer's avatar in the painting has rightly been called a “Third Person Shooter Perspective”.<sup>113</sup> The avatars Friedrich introduces, like the “wanderer” in *Der*

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<sup>113</sup> cf. David Hancock's “Romanticism and Computer Games” (PhD dissertation University of Salford, in progress).

*Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer* (1817) or himself in *Auf dem Segler* (1818-19) pull the observer into the painting and create at the same time a strange distance to the depicted landscape.

There is also - very much like in computer games - a separating, enforced discontinuity in between foreground and background. In most games the skybox is a means of separating navigable space from a remote background that cannot be entered by the players of the game. The skybox uses a flat texture (or a series of overlapping textures) surrounding the game world while being completely detached from the navigable geometry, which creates a perfect space of illusion. In Friedrich's paintings it is valleys, mountain ridges or forests that create a perceptual barrier in between perfect nature and the human observing this perfection.



The buildings that turned ruins are always idealised and not at all realistic depictions of buildings that broke down. They contain certain elements of ruins like columns and arches, but these elements are arbitrarily repeated and intentionally isolated from the less appealing aspects of decay. In *Westfassade der Ruine Eldena mit Backhaus und Scheune* (1806) Caspar David Friedrich depicts his favourite ruin, the ruin of Eldena as an idealised structure of gothic arches. These arches reappear in Friedrich's paintings of natural monuments, like the Rügen chalk cliffs, where the cliffs are presented to us in an arch-shaped form. Again, computer games pick up this preference for aesthetically idealised forms of ruins and have us enjoy the arches and the columns and pillars as if we were watching 19th century romantic paintings. *Assassin's Creed* is a romantic computer game by virtue of its formal arrangement of ruins, but also in regard to the context: Knights and swords were the company romantic painters would have liked to mingle with, not unlike computer game designers and players of such games. The spatial set-up of players vis-à-vis ruined buildings suggest an involvement and an attunement to a situation, that Steffen P.

Walz describes as “aesthetic and sensual experiences triggered by atmospheres. [...]his category also includes gazing at landscapes“ (Walz 2010: 31). The theory of space in architecture and spatial considerations in game design have to be considered as interacting factors “Toward a Ludic Architecture” (Walz 2010).

## Psychology of the Longing for Decay

Freud’s notion of death drive seems to be a key concept in understanding why we long for ruins and why we cannot be satisfied with constructive processes or rock-solid perennial objects - in life and in computer games. “There is so much death in games”, states Emily Flynn-Jones (2015: 50) and continues: “As a player I am constantly playing with the possibility of death.” Flynn-Jones is trying to “illuminate dark patterns in our gameplay”, and refers to Freud’s “Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920) in the fourth chapter (Flynn-Jones 2015) of the publication “The Dark Side of Game Play” (Mortenson, Linderoth & Brown eds.) For Sigmund Freud, however, death was not a matter of computer games.

Freud’s introduction of the notion of a death drive (“Todestrieb”) in his 1920’s publication “Jenseits des Lustprinzips” presents the drive as an anthropological constant that turns us from peaceful and constructive to destructive. The proposition that the death drive opposes *eros* did not go down undisputed in the psychoanalytical community of these days. Wilhelm Reich amongst others would have preferred to analyse destructive behaviour as lead by a corrupted form of life drive and not by a proposed death drive that could explain fascination with war, death or ruins. The attempt of Reich, to prove that Freud was wrong led to serious confrontation in the International Psychoanalytic Association (IPV) and culminated in Reich’s repulsion from the association in 1934. Freud’s concept of the death drive was based on a proposed antagonism between organic growth and development on one hand and static regression on the other. “The death drive”, said Freud, “strives towards a reestablishment of the anorganic state of livelessness, of stasis and death.” (Freud 1975: 213) He concluded that neurotic behaviour and repetition compulsion would have to be understood as governed by the death drive. In 1938 Freud published *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* where he insisted on holding the death drive responsible for mass destruction and war. Freud’s opponents once more warned from assuming that such a drive would be an integral part of the psyche, yet 20 years later some form of a death drive, then labelled *thanatos* or death instinct, was once more discussed as a possibility. Melanie Klein as well as Jacques Lacan reinstalled the notion of a death drive. “Those who try to exclude the death drive from their theories, misunderstand psychoanalysis,” states the philosopher and psychotherapist. (Lacan 1991: 185) He corrects Freud however in positioning death drives in the symbolic. “It is not a

question of biology,” he says and distinguishes the drive clearly from biologically based instincts that would - according to Freud - aim to direct living, organic structures towards an inanimate state. Slavoj Žižek follows Lacan in proposing that the death drive does not refer to literal death, but to death within the symbolic order instead. “We reject language, conceptualization and categorization, but the subject still persists.” (Žižek 2006: 61) He calls an existence under such conditions “living death” and those who continue living after refuting the symbolic order “the undead”. The repetitiveness of the process of killing elements of the symbolic order was actually something that Freud already pointed out.

Freud observed how repetition is a method of dealing with traumatic experiences, and his description of the “Fort-Da” game his grandson used to play, became crucial for the psychological understanding of the dialectics of destruction and creation. “I eventually realized that it was a game and that the only use he made of any of his toys was to play ‘gone’ with them. One day I made an observation which confirmed my view. The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied around it. It never occurred to him to pull it along the floor behind him, for instance, and play at its being a carriage. What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skillfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared ...” (Freud 1975: 225)<sup>114</sup>. We know from the practice of playing computer games that repetition is essential to gaming. Some argue that players identify avatars with real people and that they imitate life, both physically and psychologically, with computer games. Computer games could then be a way of dealing with trauma. It could well be that one of the psychological aspects of playing with ruins is what Sigmund Freud's theory describes as the trauma of repeatedly reliving creation and destruction via play to get relieve from this circle.

## Transmedia Megatext

As in painting, ruins in computer games often originate from historical buildings or from mediated forms of ruins. Game designers might have been inspired by ruins from movies, paintings, drawings or stories that influenced the design of the in-game ruins. In some cases there might be a direct reference to a non-game object, like a historic ruin. In other cases the reference aims at a wider concept of ruins and decay. The ruin in the videogame would then pick up a “pathos formula” (Warburg 2000) or it would refer to a “megatext” (Segal 1986) and become an “element of the corpus [of a megatext]” (Bateman 2011: 156). The megatext would in this case be constituted by an ensemble of paintings of ruins, stories about ruins, and music in attunement with

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<sup>114</sup> transl. by the author.

decay and ruins. Reaching much further than what Charles Segal described in his account of the themes and tales of Greek myths, the “Longing for Decay”-megatext crosses the borders of various media and refers to a huge corpus of ruins in film, literature, poetry, music and games. To borrow a phrase that Henry Jenkins used for transmedia objects, also ruins have formerly been “enshrined in stain glass windows or tapestries, told through printed words or sung by bards and poets” (Jenkins 2003: 3). Today, one might add, the ruins have been ported to computer games as well. This process is somewhat related to what Henry Jenkins calls transmedia storytelling. “Let's face it: we have entered an era of media convergence that makes the flow of content across multiple media channels almost inevitable. The move toward digital effects in film and the improved quality of video game graphics means that it is becoming much more realistic to lower production costs by sharing assets across media.” It might however not only be for financial reasons, that game designers “steal” from other media, it seems to be a tradition in storytelling that is older than digital media. “For most of human history, it would be taken for granted that a great story would take many different forms, enshrined in stain glass windows or tapestries, told through printed words or sung by bards and poets, or enacted by traveling performers.” (Jenkins 2003: 3) No wonder that a story that was strong enough to inspire Andrej Tarkovski in 1978 to build his film *Stalker*<sup>115</sup> upon it, crossed media once more for a mediatic reincarnation as the *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* computer game. The game's ruins and its *tristesse* landscape are reminiscent of those of the film (as the latter are reminiscent of the novels') but they are not identical replicas. In using transmedia storytelling for the construction of ruins we are offered the possibility to refer to different systems of reference. The ruins in the game *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.* might remind us of Tarkovski's film, they might also evoke memories and fear about nuclear disaster or they might make us think of game related features like sunbeam projection, edge detection algorithms and the like. I do not follow Henry Jenkins' suggestion that an instance of a transmedia storytelling chain can be enjoyed without knowing about the other instances. Different to Jenkins I think that the full experience of transmedia storytelling lies in the multiplicity of connotations and that any work of art can be best enjoyed by accessing the full range of references. In regard to computer game ruins, I suggest that one will have the best experience of an in-game ruin by contextualizing it to the history of artificial ruins in architecture, by contextualising it to key work from the history of painting and by contextualising them to a multitude of ruins in literature, film, television, sculpture, politics, etc.

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<sup>115</sup> Andrej Tarkovski, *Stalker*, Movie, 1978.



## Conclusion

A ruin is much more than just a certain type of building that has been put together from stones and bricks. Ruins are associated with cultural connotations, architectonic references, hopes and anxiety of a psychological nature, mediatic representations, myths and mysteries. Ruins in computer games carry all of those points of reference in the backpack. They often originate from memories and depictions of historical buildings or from mediated forms of architectonic decay. It is for the very reason of the multi-faceted nature of ruins that a multimodal analysis of ruins and decay in computer games has been undertaken in this article.

In regard to the history of computer games an analysis of technologies available for displaying decay shows that a visually convincing representation of ruins is dependent upon rendering qualities that modern graphics cards could only achieve from the 1990's on.

The history of German romanticism as a particular moment in the history of the visual arts has been analysed in regard to the iconographic similarities of paintings by artists such as Carl David Friedrich and dystopian or nostalgic computer game environments that we encounter in *Half-Life 2*, *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.*, *Fallout*, *Assassin's Creed* etc.

Psychoanalytic theory offers the concept of the “death drive” to account for a fascination with death, destruction, decay and the beauty of ruins. The death drive is, however, a frequently disputed and controversial model.

An attempt to name the process of appropriation, creative deconstruction and cross-media transfer of ruins from one medium to another leads to the problem of properly describing this process. The notion of “transmedia storytelling” has been introduced by Henry Jenkins (2003; 2008) with the idea of transmedia storytelling being able to open up one fictional world for multiple media within the same franchise. The

multireferential nature of ruins in games is often not limited to one single franchise. Jenkins' notion of transmedia storytelling would have to be interpreted broadly to still make sense in this context. "Intertextuality" would be another label that describes the aspect of sharing elements amongst a number of texts when analysing it with the toolset of comparative literature studies. This notion, however, falls short in regard to the element of pathos that is at the core of transmedia ruin representations. Aby Warburg's "pathos formula" (Warburg 2000) might help here, but does once more not capture all aspects of what the author is trying to describe. The working suggestion that has been made here is to call the beast "transmedia megatext" and position the process with one foot in Segal's territory of the "megatext" (Segal 1986; Bateman 2011) and with the other foot in Jenkins' "transmedia storytelling". This is obviously a fragile solution that needs to be worked on.

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## Ludography

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Bethesda Softworks (2008) *Fallout 3*

Bethesda Softworks, Todd Howard, Ken Rolston & Mark Nelson (2006) *The Elder Scrolls IV: Oblivion*

Beyond (1984) *Lords of Midnight*  
Cardboard Computer, Jake Elliott (2011) *Ruins*  
Deep Silver (2013) *Metro 2033*  
Denton Designs (1984) *Gods*  
Eidos Interactive, Toby Gard (1996) *Tomb Raider*  
Epic Games & Digital Extremes (1999) *Unreal Tournament*  
GSC Game World (2007) *S.T.A.L.K.E.R.*  
Maxis Entertainment (2000) *The Sims*  
Namco (1980) *Pac-Man*  
Palace (1986) *Sacred Armour of Antirad*  
Steve Russell (1962) *Spacewar!*  
Ubisoft (2014) *Assassin's Creed*  
Valve Corporation (2004) *Half-Life 2*

# Nordic game subcultures: between LARPerS and avant-garde

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## Abstract

This article is about structural resemblances, linguistic and rhetoric similarities and media-strategic as well as tactical operations, that Nordic LARPerS and 20th century avant-garde artists share. Many of the 20th century avant-garde movements and subcultural formations started from a shared collective experience and then branches out into refined, diversified and individualized forms of expression. Futurism, DADA and Fluxus, Punk, Emo and Goth did originally constitute a dress code, a toolset, a jargon, a mission statement and a territorial assignment within the cities they choose as the center of their activities. Manifestos defined what a Futurist, Dadaist or Punk would most probably think and say, and how he or she would say it. A similar observation can be made for the communities that engage with live action role playing games (LARPerS) in the Nordic countries. The Turku manifesto and the Dogma 99 manifesto influenced directly and indirectly how the Nordic LARPerS subculture framed itself and presented itself to the world. The initiating, collective experiences of Cafe Voltaire, the Wuppertal art galleries, SOHO, and respective locations for Nordic LARPerS have been constitutive for the process of identity building and identity shaping for artists and gamers alike.

## Keywords

LARPerS, Avant-garde, Punk, Futurism, Art Manifesto

If a special flavour of gaming deserves to be called “a subculture” with all of the tangible and non-tangible assets of rebellious music and avant-garde rhetoric, dresscode, code of honour, cryptic messages, social politicking, commitment to the

agenda of a specific age group, and a rootedness in a well-defined territory, then the Nordic LARPs would certainly qualify.



Figure 1 – LARPs. Photo by Axel Schnepat.

This article is about structural resemblances, linguistic and rhetoric similarities and a joint set of tactical operations, that today's Nordic LARPs and 20th century avant-garde artists have in common. The proposition made here is not based on the genealogical assumption of one subculture having developed out of another subculture. What we want to point out here is rather that there is a distant resonance of structure, language and politics in between two movements that happened in different centuries and at different locations. The methodology used here can therefore not rely on spatio-temporal, historical consistency, but needs to compare the aesthetics of different subcultural movements. Such a comparison has to start on surface level and look at wordings rather than at words and their meaning. Such a comparison will also initially look at dress codes and not at a "system of fashion" (Barthes 1967) or an alleged "meaning of style" (Hebdige 1979). We hope however to be able to hint at a vicinity of attitudes, ideas and values that help detect relations beyond the borders of countries and centuries.

A LARP is a live action role playing game, and the games of that kind that have been developed and staged in Finland, Iceland, and the Scandinavian countries have created communities that strongly resemble 20th century avant-garde groups. The Larpers

present themselves to the world with a set of attitudes not unlike the ones that Futurists, Fluxus artists or DADAists cultivated to shock their contemporaries. The Nordic Larp communities also share the obsession with publishing manifestos and establishing master-apprentice relationships that the art movements of the first five decades of the last century had. A first look at “The Vow” of the Dogma 99 manifesto and the statements that can be found in the Turku Manifesto reveals similarities to the Futurist Manifesto from 1909 and consecutive manifestos from 20th century avant-gardes. Both Dogma 99 and the Turku manifesto have been written at a time when Nordic Larp was still in its infancy<sup>116</sup>. The manifestos have not only shaped the behaviour and consciousness of tens of thousands of Larpers, they have also created a community of young people that considers themselves a special group of people within society. Ironically the Turku manifesto ends with words that describe this group as something even bigger than a group and as powerful as a class in political economy:



Figure 2 –Larper. Photo by Axel Schnepapat.

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<sup>116</sup> Trenne Byar from 1994 is considered to be the first relevant Nordic Larp. (Montola & Stenros 2010:31 - 38)

“The simulationists and the eläytyjists have nothing to lose but their chains. But they have the whole world to win. TURKUIST ROLE-PLAYERS OF THE WORLD, UNITE!”<sup>117</sup>

It is obvious that the Turkuist role-players are by no means a class and even hardly a relevant social group. There is however good reason to describe them as a subculture in contemporary society along with other subcultures like Emos, Innocents, Post-Punks, Stilyagi and Goths. The manifestos that speak about the autonomy status and self-imposed rule system of larpers have a vague resemblance to a constitutional text, but they differ from legal documents or corporation mission statements by a rebellious undertone of opposition and provocation. The following observations on the subcultural character of Nordic Larpers are therefore based on an analysis of style of the Larpers’ vows and manifestos and on a historical comparison to manifestos from the history of 20th and 21st century avant-gardes. It is not so much the content that the manifestos try to communicate but the phrasing that tells us something about the respective subcultures.<sup>118</sup>

**Dogma 99:** Furthermore, I swear to regard myself as an artist, and any LARP I write as my »work«. (...) My highest goal is to develop the art and medium of live-action role-playing. This, I promise, will be done through all means available, and at the expense of good taste, all conventions and all popularity amongst the so- called LARPerS.

**DADA manifesto, 1918**<sup>119</sup>: We consider this to be the most valuable form of art: An art that is fully conscious of the thousand of problems that face our time; an art that dares to be thrown onto pathways directed by last week’s explosions; an art that reassembles its body that has been disassociated by the attacks of the former days.

**Dogma 99:** We seek to oppose the pitfalls of conventional LARP, the dominance of the mainstream genres, and the refusal of the general public...

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<sup>117</sup> An eläytyjists is a person who believes in immersion in Role Playing Games and who practices it instead of pretending and acting like on stage.

<sup>118</sup> Dylan Clark (2003) points out that one should not mix up the subcultures with the prophets and leaders of subcultural movements. In this respect the manifestos say probably more about the prophets than about the believers.

<sup>119</sup> German original: “Die höchste Kunst wird diejenige sein, die in ihren Bewußtseinsinhalten die tausendfachen Probleme der Zeit präsentiert, der man anmerkt, daß sie sich von den Explosionen der letzten Woche werfen ließ, die ihre Glieder immer wieder unter dem Stoß des letzten Tages zusammensucht.”

**A Slap in the Face of Public Taste, 1917**<sup>120</sup>: To feel an insurmountable hatred for the language existing before our time.

**The Manifesto of Futurist Music, 1910**: To combat categorically all historical reconstructions and traditional stage sets and to declare the stupidity of the contempt felt for contemporary dress<sup>121</sup>.

**Turku Manifesto, 1999**: The Turku School struggles for the immediate and long-term goals of the eläytyjisti and simulationist role-players, but presently it also stands for the future of all role-playing. In Norway the dramatists are trying to re-invent theatre, but there the word of the Turku School still brings hope to the oppressed simulationists.

**A Slap in the Face of Public Taste, 1917**: We alone are the face of our Time.

Through us the horn of time blows in the art of the world. The past is too tight. The Academy and Pushkin are less intelligible than hieroglyphics. Throw Pushkin, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, etc., etc. overboard from the Ship of Modernity.

It is also not by chance that the form of Dogma 99's Vow of Chastity with its 10 numbered proclamations corresponds to the 14 numbered statements of the filmmakers' Dogma Manifesto from 1995 and to the 11 provocative statements Marinetti proclaimed in his Founding Manifesto for Futurism.<sup>122</sup>

Erik Fatland and Lars Wingård, the authors of the Vow of Chastity and masterminds of Dogma 99, repeat a canon of statements that has become a convention within avant-garde manifesto writers. Futurists, Dadaists, Fluxus masterminds, Vienna "Aktionisten", Webartists, Game Artists, Critical Engineers and finally Nordic LARPerS All seem to share an attitude and a rhetoric ritual that is based on these rhetoric figures:

1. Proclaim that something that has not been considered art is art now. ("Nordic LARP" in the case of Dogma 99, "Noise" for Luigi Russolo and the futurists, "Radio" for the Kunstradio manifesto).
2. Tell the world that every form of your medium preceding your own attempts within this medium are to be regarded detestable, ("so-called LARPerS" for

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<sup>120</sup> David Burluk, Alexander Kruchenykh, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Victor Khlebnikov: A Slap in the Face of Public Taste, 1917.

<sup>121</sup> Balilla Pratella: The Manifesto of Futurist Music, 1910.

<sup>122</sup> Marinetti used the form of a numbered list of statements to suggest a clear logical structure of his thought, not unlike Wittgenstein did in his 1921 tractatus. In Marinetti's case at least the enumeration was a rhetoric manoeuvre, the numbered arguments do not follow a linear logical development.

Dogma 99; “Pushkin, Dostojewskij and Tolstoj” for the Russian Futurists; “La Gioconda” for Marinetti).

3. Use swearwords for your predecessors (“... the filthy slime of the books written by the countless Leonid Andreyevs” or “from the heights of skyscrapers we gaze at their insignificance!” for the Russian Futurists; “Fuck the Magic Circle!” for the AMAZE manifesto; “the [TURKU] school is struggling against the short-sighted, the conservative, and above all, the gamist and dramatist schools”, as the Turku manifesto put it.)
4. Construct a rationale why your own region or country is the most feasible place to create works of excellence. (Scandinavian “allmansrät” for Nordic Larpers as Montola and Stenros observe; Italy for Marinetti: “It is from Italy that we launch through the world this violently upsetting incendiary manifesto of ours”; the USA for Burljuk: “America is worthy of GREAT NEW ART“).
5. Develop a dresscode, a disguise or a costume that makes members of the movement immediately recognisable (various historic or futuristic costumes in the case of Nordic LARP; black coat and bowler hat for the Futurists; black polo neck for the existentialists; leather, torn t-shirts and rivet stud spikes for the Punks).

The aim of the manifestos seems on one hand an attempt to gather a crowd but on the other hand also to prove deviation from the norm and to gain recognition as a relevant phenomenon. Why would anyone bother about a bunch of Scandinavian youngsters having fun in the forests, if the very same youngsters were not to launch a manifesto, declare their otherness and curse 99% of the gaming community of having missed the point? Probably nobody.

It is therefore strategically important to publish a manifesto and declare oneself as arty, rebellious, non-conformist and dangerous. The result of such action is that the group switches opponents. It is not any longer the parents or the local forest authorities one has to quarrel with, but art critics, university lecturers and game studies journals.

## 1 — Art

Games subcultures share a desire with avant-garde subcultures to be considered as truly artistic. In the Turku manifesto the third paragraph is not only dedicated to state that role-playing can be an art form. The manifesto furthermore attempts to do the impossible: to define what art is. “Art can be broadly defined to be use of a medium with precision and individuality (which is creativity combined with personality). Thus it is possible to create art, as well as pointless entertainment, with RPGs”. Manifestos from Critical Engineers (2012), Game Designers (2011), Web Designers (1999) and



Radio producers<sup>123</sup> (1998) have told us that every conceivable medium can be declared art. The statement “Radio art is the use of radio as a medium for art” is quoted here to function as a template for future media declaring their art status. If every medium can be declared art, the question arises why it is worth mentioning it for a specific medium. It also raises the question why such a trivial statement should then be published as part of a manifesto. Or is it true what Hans Ulrich Reck suggests in his book on “The Myth of Media Art” (2007): It makes no sense at all to describe media as art, but one should rather talk of “art through media”.

## 2 — Arrogance

“Time and Space died yesterday. We already live in the absolute, because we have created eternal, omnipresent speed”<sup>124</sup>. In his 1909 manifesto Marinetti does not provide us with an explanation, why he believes that time and space might have died. It would actually create quite a lot of problems for Marinetti to explain how he could have created speed, if there is no time and space left, because speed is distance taken in a period of time. But that is not the problem. Marinetti fuels the effect of his lines with a rhetoric style and a mesmerising mix of arrogance, provocation and threat. The verbal style introduces a formal framework of assertions that is so strong that logic or inductive reasoning become almost obsolete. The statements of arrogance also protect the subcultural group from any comparative assessment. “The criticized and feared, acclaimed and admired Turku School is here to tell the world what role-playing is, how and why it should be done, and why everybody else is wrong.” A sentence like that prevents from others drawing conclusions, because it states that a conclusion has already been arrived at. This is methodologically hazardous to say the least. But then again: “Realization over Theorization!” as the net.art Manifesto proudly states<sup>125</sup>.

## 3 — Strong Language

The Game Design Manifesto “Controlled Invasion” that was first published in 2011 contains five statements. The fifth statement reads like this: “5 Fuck the magic circle. - we need game ethics!” This is a short sentence to request an unspecified ethical approach to game design, but the phrasing obviously addresses an enemy. The enemy is traditional game design based on the assumption that there is a situation that has been called the magic circle by Salen and Zimmerman (2007) and others. Gaming subcultures need to identify an enemy that they can agree upon in order to create some consistence within the group.

The enemy is therefore constructed *vis-à-vis* symbolic power (Bourdieu, 1993) of a strong opponent. For “Controlled Invasion” the enemy was traditional game design,

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<sup>123</sup> Radio Art Manifesto, 1998. [http:// kunstradio.at/THEORIE/index. html](http://kunstradio.at/THEORIE/index.html).

<sup>124</sup> Filippo Tommaso Marinetti in the 8th paragraph of the Futurist Manifesto (1909).

<sup>125</sup> Shulgin and Bookchin, 1999.

for Nordic Larpers it is the Anglo-American gaming industry. “The supreme demonstrations of the weaknesses of conventional LARP are the commercial products of the Anglo-American gaming industry. By aiming at a lowest common denominator, these publications achieve nothing beyond the infant stage”<sup>126</sup>. Strong language is indicative of subcultural rhetorics. As long as the verbally uttered disrespect targets just another subculture there is no reason to perceive the rebellious group as countercultural (Turner 2006). Countercultural action is characterized by a profound opposition to the values of a broader societal segment – and not just by disapproval or a specific subculture’s canon of music, fashion and life-style. Insofar the statement of “Fuck the magic circle” can hardly be seen as a countercultural exclamation. Society as a whole has hardly any issue with the concept of a magic circle. It is game studies scholars who cherish the notion and the “Controlled Invasion” invaded or tried to invade just another subculture and nothing more.



Figure 3. Picture made by the Nuremberg-Kulmbach-Connection, 20. September 2008, Author: NKC.

## 4 — Territorialism

Subcultures are often closely related to the subculture’s birthplace. Many of the 20th century avant-garde movements and subcultural formations started from a shared collective experience in a particular location and then branched out into refined, diversified and individualized forms of expression in different parts of the world. Futurism, DADA and Fluxus on one hand, and Punk, Emo, Innocent, and Goth-style on the other hand did originally constitute a dress code, a toolset, a jargon, a mission statement and a territorial assignment within the cities, where Futurists, Punks, Hippies or Dadaists would most probably be found. The initiating collective experiences of Woodstock, Cabaret Voltaire, the Wuppertal art galleries, Camden, and respective locations for each of the subcultural movements was constitutive for the process of identity building and identity shaping. But for some reason the

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<sup>126</sup> The Turku Manifesto, 1999.

subcultural group identifies the location where the founding fathers had met in the first place with the location where their followers will meet.

Everybody knows that there are punks in Tokyo and Rome, in Helsinki and in provincial German towns, yet the myth of the Englishness of Punk is celebrated with the Union Jack, with Euro-English jargon and with a deep hatred of the royalties in Buckingham palace - wherever the punk would happen to live.

For Nordic Larp it is the Scandinavian region, Finland and Iceland, that is mistaken as an essential ingredient of Nordic Style larping. It would however be impossible to point out what difference it makes whether a larp is staged in Bavaria or in Turku, in Minnesota or in Peru. It also makes no difference whether the larpers themselves are proper Finns or Swedes or if they stem from another part of the world. There is a larp tourism nowadays that mixes and merges participants. There are also Nordic Larps in Palestine as one can read on nordiclarp.org<sup>127</sup> and the question must be posed whether we have Nordic Larp in Palestine there, or Palestinian Larp by Nordic players here. However one might turn it, it seems to make no sense to identify a subculture by the territory the founding fathers have been roaming in.



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<sup>127</sup> In August of 2012 the Larp “Till Death Do us Part” was organized as a cooperation between Norwegian and Palestian larp designers. It was the first bigger Palestian larp project and since then many projects happened in connection to the emerging Palestinian larp community. The latest addition is “Piiritystila — Halht Hisar”, a Palestian-Finnish larp. [http: II nordiclarp.org/tag/palestine](http://nordiclarp.org/tag/palestine).

Figure 4 – The oppressor’s camp in front of Helsinki’s main railway station.  
Screenshot from the visual material for Piiritystila – State of Siege – Halht Hisar.  
Montage by Joel Sammallahti, 2013

## 5 — Fashion

It is certainly true that the Nordic Larp community is hardly uniform in the fashion they follow. The Wild West look of “Once upon a Time” (July to August 2005) differed completely from the pseudo medieval “Trenne Byar” (July 1994) or the enclosed space opera of “Carolus Rex” (November 1999). The fashion that Larpers subscribe to is functional as it serves to support roles in the role playing game. On the other hand the costume is a projection surface for individual fantasies and dreams. In this respect it reaches beyond functionality. Larpers are sensitive to dresses, robes, make-up and hairstyle as any subculture is, but the driving force for their sensitivity seems to differ from what motivates punks or Hell’s Angels to dress up — and it also differs from the motivation of the futurists to dress up.

Angela McRobbie argues that punk fashion is driven by “creative defiance” (McRobbie 1999, p. 136). Dylan Clark speaks of “calculated anger” and the “potency through an ability to shock and dismay” (Clark 2003, p.2, p.1). This is hardly the main objective for Larpers to dress up. Also, Larpers can not be subsumed under one specific dress code. As has been mentioned above the codes range from medieval to futuristic. This is not different to fans or band members from The Clash differing in visual appearance from those of Siouxsie and the Banshees and the latter again differing from those of My Chemical Romance. The subcultural framing of identity is wide enough in both cases - Nordic Larpers and Punks - to cater for a wide range of sub-styles. All of these sub-groups have something in common, that links amongst the various stylistic variations. But even though the consistency within the subgroupings is strong and the differences amongst them are obvious there is a feeling to belong to the same metaverse. It makes therefore sense to describe the whole of Nordic Larpers as a subculture and not only those who subscribe to a sci-fi, medieval or fairy-tale aesthetic within the Larp community.

## Conclusion

In other words: specific subsections of the whole of playing humans, like Nordic Larpers, might be described as a gaming-subculture with shared codes and conventions about behaviour, jargon, music, dress, food and other aspects of life. What they attain is a temporary identity that is often constituted via strong opposition against the symbolic violence of a dominant group like the Anglo-American role playing community. The Larpers’ identity does however not manifest itself as a habitus in the way Bourdieu would describe an embodied adaption to a lasting scheme

of regulations and conventions (Bourdieu 1993). The arrangements that Larpers agree to may last for a day, a weekend, or a week at the longest. They attain a weekend-habitus, which is to say: not a habitus at all. The mode of transformation from a standard citizen to a spectacular follower of Larp- fashion is rather related to the carnivalesque (Bakhtin 1984) than to habitus. For a limited time the larpers attain a high level of identification with the group, a canon of do's and don'ts, and a methodological — if not a philosophical and ethical superstructure that keeps the group together. It is possible to conceive this superstructure as the constituent for a subcultural cohesion amongst Nordic Larpers. It is however impossible to call the whole of gamers a subculture within digital cultures, because gamers differ not only in one of the before mentioned aspects of social identity. Their multiplicity of jargons, musical preferences, dress codes or lack of such, social status and different political positions makes them a completely incoherent bunch and therefore unfit for constituting a subculture.

The initial proposition of this article, that tangible and non-tangible assets of fashion, music and avant-garde rhetoric, code of honour, cryptic messages, and some kind of in-group sociality would qualify Nordic Larpers as a subculture has to be put into perspective vis-à-vis the “classical subcultures” (Clark 2003, p.1), i.e., pre-1970s subcultures, whom David Clark sees as equipped with the potential for social change. These subcultures - early punk included here - that preceded the decline and commercialisation of punk, differ from the new subcultures like the ones of Nordic Larpers. As has been shown above the new subcultures share aspects of style, rhetorics, values and attitudes with the classical subcultures, but they differ in their relation to fashion and to their quest for social change. Beyond that Nordic Larpers lack continuity in their efforts to provoke, shock and dismay, and do therefore neither own habitus nor a potential for change – despite all of the formal similarities that exist between Nordic Larpers and punks, futurists and other 20th century avant-gardes.

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# Foul Play in Context

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## Abstract

*Faking results in games or refusing to take the game seriously might sound like the negation of playful experience, it can however also be understood as a way of creating a particular form of ludic experience. It is the context of play that makes an action of playing a playful activity or an act of breaking the rules. Different forms of cheating and of playing the spoilsport have to be differentiated. “Bona fide cheating” and “true cheating” (Salen and Zimmerman 2004) go hand in hand for social networking environments and Online Multiplayer Games. Interpassivity (Pfaller 2008) (Žižek 2007) in games can also be seen as a form of spoilsport practice (Fuchs 2008).*

*The author suggests that there are multiple systems of reference of playful experience at any given moment, and that these are not necessarily the ones suggested to be used by game designers or fellow players. By switching from one system of reference to another, the player, the spoilsport and the cardsharp are able to establish playfulness in a chosen context and thereby add to the range of accessible playful experience.*

Recent attempts to hack systems that contain private data on a large and international scale raise questions about what is fair and what is foul in politics. The hackers were in this instance not members of the mafia or of criminal gangs from eastern countries, but rather the guardians of law and order from the West. The NSA and their allies became known to have committed what once was considered foul play – and declared it as fair. The dispute about what is within the canon of rules and regulations and what is not, can be said to be a political problem that is rooted in power structures. Yet, observations about fair play in computer games and cheating in the very same games sheds light on a similar problem: How come that an action taken by a player is considered fair by some and foul by others. The questions to be answered here are:

What is foul play?

What does it mean to play fairly?

When is somebody cheating?



In regard to the first question asked, one can easily show that cheating is not just changing the mechanics of the game. Marking the back side of cards or manipulating a roulette wheel does not necessarily imply foul play. It could be that the parties participating in a game agreed to modify the wheel to create a new game that is governed by unconventional distribution of probabilities for the various numbers from zero to 36. As long as the modification is known to all of the players there is nothing wrong with the altered state of ludic settings. But what happens, if I am the only player in the game? Can I cheat in a game that I play against nobody else then myself? Think of a game like this: You toss a coin and if the side with the head is up, you win. If the coin falls down with the number up, you lose. If I decided to play this game with a coin that has two sides with a head, I would always win. But is this cheating? Not according to the previous definition because all of the players of the game (me and only me) are aware of the modification of the coin.

Can I cheat when playing against a computer? Research carried through by Mia Consalvo (2007) and by Julian Kücklich (2004) demonstrated that cheat codes, cheat webpages and a whole industry of cheating tricks, codes and devices is an integral part of gaming cultures. One of the players, Consalvo interviewed for her study on "Gaining Advantage" mentions that cheating via cheat codes involves "... wrongdoing. Someone has to be worse off because someone else took unfair advantage. ... You can only cheat another person" (Consalvo 2007, p. 92). The rationale to this argument is obviously that cheating hurts other people's feelings or their right to be treated fairly. If a machine has no feelings and no rights I guess there is no way of cheating on the computer.

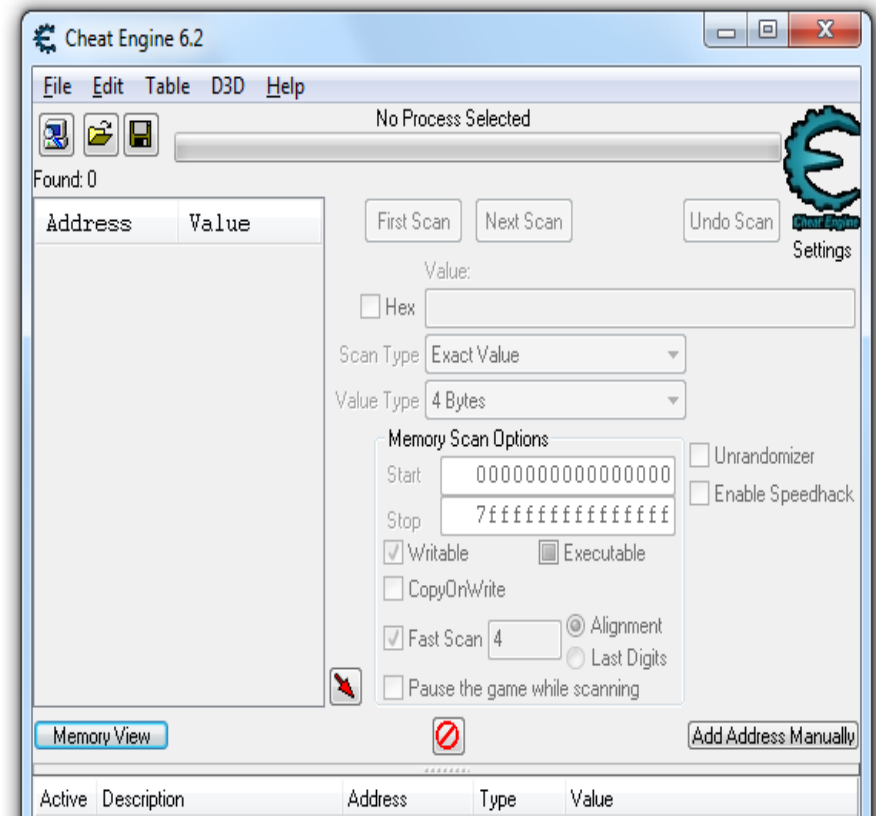


Fig.1: Screenshot from Cheat Engine 6.2, <http://cheat-engine.soft32.com>

With programmes like Cheat Engine that guarantees that you can always win, it is a miracle to me, whom one is supposed be cheating in the case of running the programme. The machine can obviously not be cheated. The player cannot cheat himself or herself. The user manual makes it quite clear to everybody that the player will always be happy with the results:

If you're tired of always losing at a certain computer game, then this is the program for you. Cheat Engine makes single-player games easier to play so you always win. It might turn out that the only way of explaining who is cheating here, is in assuming that the company who produces the cheat engine is cheating on its users. But that would be a cynical view of the software product and its designers.



Fig.2: Screenshot from Boyfriend Cheater

Similarly miraculous are cheating games that belong to the now popular category of kissing games. Boyfriend Cheater is a game that asks you to cheat on your avatar's boyfriend by "kissing" the companion to your right, whenever the boyfriend turns away to grab a glass of wine at the bar. The actions that the player can take are limited to clicking the boy next to the girl in the red dress. "Boyfriend Clicker" would be a more appropriate name for the game than "Boyfriend Cheater", because cheating involves some social convention on what is fair and what is not. Conventions however require recognition of being such by human beings. The cartoon characters can not recognize a situation as following the conventions or breaking the rules, they just perform according to the code. Obviously a code is not a convention and a convention is no code. The player of the game could cheat on a real boyfriend, but that would require kissing real boys or girls – and not cartoon boys. The act of cheating always needs to be relative to a system of reference. Such a system of reference could be the real world of boys and girls and drinks and parties, or it could be the simulated 2D environment of the Boyfriend Cheater application. Whether something is fair play or not can only be determined relative to the system of reference. It is not a portable property that can be taken from one system to the other. As a preliminary suggestion to define what is fair and what is foul (a cheat) we would like to suggest:

Fair play: Ludic actions according to rules and conventions **within a specific system of reference.**

Foul play: Ludic actions that break rules within or conventions **about a specific system of reference.**

Sometimes there are more than one system of reference and in these cases it only seems to make sense to speak of cheating as cheating within system A or cheating within system B. Players of Entropia Online know that Entropia prides itself of being the first “Real Cash Economy of Online Gaming”. If system A is the real cash economy than playing with greed and exclusively to make money is fair play within system A. In a system B that is governed by Huizingian renunciation of monetary interests, making money is clearly foul play. “(Play) is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it.“ (Huizinga 1949, p.13). In other words: the same set of actions can be considered fair in one case – and foul in the other.



Fig.3: Screenshot from Entropia Universe

Multiple systems of reference do not only exist in ludic context, but they constitute the postmodern condition in general. A political action can not any longer be deciphered as a statement that can be valued on a scale from 1 to 100 with fairness on top of the scale and mean intention on the bottom, but will have to be assessed vis-à-vis a set of rulers with different scales, units and polarities. The Chaos Computer Club’s hacking of the Apple iTouch system ranks high on the scale of hacker ethics and low on the Cupertino corporation’s scale of product integrity. One describes it as “The biometrics hacking team of the Chaos Computer Club (CCC) has successfully bypassed the biometric security of Apple’s TouchID using easy everyday means. All information must be free!“ The opponent curses the action as an attack on the clients’ safety and data security.

This is however more than antagonistic values of ruling class's values versus rebellious movement's values, because there are much more than two systems of reference at stake here. There is a system of reference for the elegance of hacking, a system for political appropriateness, a system of the protection of private profits, a system of pro-US versus anti-US politics and many more. It is therefore important to become aware of the full range of systems of reference that are contextualising the game – and at the type of players that play the game.

A ludo-typology of players encompasses the obsessive player, the casual player, the games addict, the social player, the professional player – but also the spoilsport and the cardsharp. Faking results in games or refusing to take the game seriously might sound like the negation of playful experience, it can however also be understood as a way of creating a particular form of the ludic experience.

## 1. Lusory Attitudes

The level of “lusory attitude” (Suits 1978, 2005, pp. 54–55) (Salen and Zimmerman 2004) that a spoilsport might demonstrate seems to be affected by the type of game played. In chess faking and cheating, or quitting the game altogether, is considered to show a very low level of lusory attitude. Many card games on the other hand almost require some cheating when played in certain social contexts. Spoilsport behaviour is not tolerated in bridge clubs. An online bridge site defines bridge-style sportsmanship as follows:

Friendly club atmosphere  
You must show a courteous attitude to everybody  
Ethics/ protected environment  
No robots - ever!

Somebody could qualify as a spoilsport in such an environment for being unfriendly and impolite, or by placing robots in the game. For the Unreal Tournament community neither friendliness nor courteousness are required, bots however are a must. Little is required to exit the magic circle in each of the environments. Other than Salen and Zimmerman suggest, the act of playing the spoilsport can be quite playful. Not only in hardcore computer games, but also in social networking environments, the level of involvement is a continuous matter of debate. Platforms like Facebook, Bebo, or MySpace encourage participants to engage with the content offered and to remain playing as long as possible. To check the level of lusory attitude and to increase involvement, opinions have to be polled all the time. New add-ons and minigames challenge the users to participate even further. For good reasons the alternatives “I will participate” and “I will not participate” are often accompanied by “I don't care” options. What looks like an offer to leave the game is however an attempt to create an in-game spoilsport alternative that allows spoilsports to stay in the game. Ticking a

checkbox of negligence is different from not replying to the question. In politics not taking any notice of an election differs from actively attending the polling station and marking the ballot paper. Selecting such an option is different from not selecting anything and might lead to intense forms of communication amongst voters, non-voters and “make belief” voters. Slavoj Žižek reminds us of the constraints of binary choices offered in a set of rules in political games: e.g. voting for a candidate. In a critical analysis of the setting of elections like one in the US state of Louisiana when ... during the election for governor for the State of Louisiana, the only alternative to the ex-KKK member David Duke was a corrupt Democrat, one saw on many cars a bumper-sticker which read, ‘Vote For A Crook -It's Important!’ Contained within the message of this sticker resides the ultimate paradox of democracy; that within the existing political order every campaign against corruption ends up being couped by the populist extreme Right. (Žižek 2009)

Contained within the sticker resides however also a piece of spoilsport playfulness, a strategy to break the rules in a situation where obedience in regard to the rules seems mandatory. The doctrine of the political game designers is: Make your choice! The spoilsport's subversive game is: What, if we didn't make a choice?

Being a spoilsport is common artistic practice and artists like Tracey Emin demonstrate that neglecting the rules can be a lot of fun. (Emin 1999) It can also be serious business, as the example of Marcel Duchamp proved, when he allegedly quit art-making for the sake of chess-playing. In 1923 Duchamp declared that chess “has all the beauty of art – and much more. It cannot be commercialized. Chess is much purer than art in its social position.” He was immediately interpreted by art critics as having renounced art for chess, which he actually never claimed. The spoilsport act of playing chess in an art context created a debate situated in an art context and thereby built a magic circle around Duchamp's activity which was seen by many as destructive of the art circle's magic. From a historical perspective however, it never was. Similarly Tracy Emin pretended to be the spoilsport with her “My Bed” piece, which won her the Turner price in the first instance - and some £ 150,000 for the bed thereafter. The provocation to exhibit a bed with dirty linen and seemingly not a painting or sculpture made her the spoilsport first and London's art world's most

cherished child then. The playful act of Tracy Emin's consisted in leaving the magic circle and re-entering it at the same time.



Fig.1: Tracy Emin: My Bed, Turner Prize winning installation, 1999

There is of course a certain risk contained in the strategy applied by Emin and others. The risk consists of to not being able to re-enter the circle one just left. Tracy Emin is clever enough to keep this risk very low. She does so by positioning clues to the art world and the art market. The bedlinen does not differ substantially from a painter's canvas and everyone familiar with the history of painting in the 20<sup>th</sup> century will

immediately recover Oldenburg's spoilsport masterpiece "Soft Bathtub—Ghost Version" (Oldenburg, 1966) or other sculptural Oldenburg pieces on canvas.



Fig.2: Claes Oldenburg: Soft Bathtub—Ghost Version, 1966

It is the way how artists show their spoilsport activities, rather than the fact of not following the rules that makes spoilsport strategies a driving force in the development



of the arts. Other than Huizinga's assumption that the spoilsport leaves the magic circle (Huizinga 1955), we would like to suggest that there is a playful mode of trespassing the rules, that reinitiates the magic circle in the very same moment it seems to have broken into pieces.

## 2. Magic, Enchantment and Enlightenment

The dialectics of magical enchantment and rational thinking were carried out on the intellectual battlefields in the age of enlightenment (Felderer and Strouhal 2007). It was quite characteristic for practitioner/ scientists like Johann Christian Wiegleb to comprise magic and modern sciences in one subject area. His "Onomatologia" from 1759 refers to "electricity", "the telescope", "dragons", and "sorcery" - all of them at the same level of discourse. In his chapter on illusion ("Blendwerk") he refers to a methodology of cheating for the sake of enlightenment, a process recently described as "Enlightenment by smoke and mirrors" ("Aufklärung durch Täuschung") (Hochadel 2004). For Wiegleb and his contemporaries magic would not reside in a circle that could be drawn around the "non-scientific", rather were science and magic two overlapping terrains of knowledge equally intensely explored by us to find out about phenomena surrounding us. The understanding of what we consider "magic" and "scientific" changed during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Peter Rawert points out that magic enchantment was no longer considered to be of either a diabolic or natural origin, but that legerdemain ("Taschenspielererei") gained the status of the most innovative, up to date, and enlightened magic (Rawert in: Felderer and Strouhal 2007). The new focus of interest was on "speed, cheating and the appropriate instruments required" for that. Superstition or religious connotations were definitely out in enlightened circles.

I would like to suggest that our mode of playing computer games has reached a quasi-enlightened level during this decade. It seems likely that we experience an enlightened playfulness by leaving and re-entering the magic circle as spoilsports with an attitude - or as cardsharps. The fundamentalistic believe in the game, the obedience to follow rules and the tabu to question them seems like a distant echoe from the past.

## 3. Interpassivity

Interactivity is at the core of gameplay in any conceivable computer game. It seems impossible to imagine how gameplay would work, if there was no interactivity between human and computer involved. But what happens if a gamer writes a script to enable his or her avatar to perform certain actions in the absence of the player? Game artists like Corrado Morgana of furtherfield find joy in running games in auto-execution mode and do not interact except for the minimal start command. Non-action as an activity, or interpassivity (Pfaller 2008) (Žižek 2007) in games can also be seen as a form of spoilsport practice (Fuchs 2008). The game artist who lets the game engine go on its own, rejects his responsibility to control the avatars, he does not get entangled into the quest of loss or win, and he rejects the basic rule of any game, which is: You have to play! The spoilsport does however not leave the arena

completely. He remains a voyeur, a spectator of an action he enjoys passively. In this regard the introduction of auto-executables, i.e. software agents physically detached from the players, and other modes of delegated play can be righteously called interpassive gaming. Pfaller and Žižek point out that the psychological aspect of interpassivity is grounded in our subjectivity. Pfaller and Žižek convincingly demonstrate how certain works of art seem to provide for their own reception. One cannot help feeling that these artworks enjoy themselves or that we enjoy through them (Van Oenen 2008). The mechanism described by Pfaller and Žižek can again be found in games and their modes of performance. It is not only Game Art, but everyday gamers' practice where interpassive phenomena can be observed. Delegated enjoyment and delegated fear are possible forms of letting go in First Person Shooters. We know that it can be fun to just camp in an MMORPG and watch others play through the eyes of an avatar. We have experienced delegated death fears when about to be shot and we know peer players who take some masochistic and interpassive delight in being fragged. But even less martial areas of disguise and simulation like the SecondLife environment will disclose interpassive delegation of love, lust and longing. If we can enjoy the outsourcing of enjoyment, we have to either declare this as a perverse, a hysteric, and a neurotic attitude in a Lacanian perspective (Van Oenen 2008), or analyse it as a spoilsport/ sportsman attitude of staying in the magic circle when pretending to leave it.

#### 4. Social dimensions of cheating and spoilsport behaviour

Cardsharps and cheaters make us pose another question: How does cheating contribute to the cohesion of the player community? In many forms of childrens' play the obvious possibility of cheating seems to create a strong link amongst players and serves as a special form of joyful entertainment. The game known in German as "Eins-zwei-drei! Dreh dich nicht um" would seem completely boring, if cheating was not a possibility. The playful experience of closing the eyes with the hands and expecting others to believe one would not look through the fingers involves a high degree of self-deception and mastering of a cultural technique of half-believe (Pfaller 2000). "Bona fide cheating" and "true cheating" (Salen and Zimmerman 2004) go hand in hand for social networking environments like SecondLife. We can find pretention, cheating, discovery and possible forms of punishment in SecondLife when we follow the conversations taking place.

The following hide and seek ritual is typical for SecondLife conversations and was recorded by the author at "France Pitoresque" on 15<sup>th</sup> December 2008:

[12:37] apache Kips: c'est toi Anne?  
[12:38] DavRodrigS Turbo: bonsoir Chavez... ;-)  
[12:39] fra Pelazzi: c'est vous Nirina?  
[12:39] melya Galaxy: coucou !!  
[12:39] beuzatom Orfan: coucou

[12:40] Chavez Warwillow: b bonsoir tous les monde

[12:40] fredenbois Allen: ho mais ta grandi nirina ,.\*? L O L ?\*.,

[12:40] Nirina Bing: oui c'st moi ;-)

The SecondLife users seem to be enjoying a certain level of hide and seek about their names or real identities, they widely accept cheating, yet seem to prefer certain forms of cheating. The question could to be asked here of whether financial exploitation in SecondLife needs to be named cheating, and why profit making in SecondLife is appreciated in one form and condemned in another. User agreements and informal codes would have to be compared to a practice of rule-breaking and rule-following.

## 5. Border-crossing between systems of reference

The author suggests that there are multiple systems of reference of playful experience at any given moment, and that those are not necessarily the ones suggested to be used by game designers or fellow players. What I mean here is that at a certain point during the game played, the player can legitimately create connotations to not only one, but many systems of reference: The system of historically grown rules of the game, the system of aesthetic value and acoustic beauty, the system of casually agreed modes of play, the system of technical constraints, the system of cultural context, the language the game's rules are expressed in, the system of amateurism or professional gambling, the system of academic research and the systems of ludology or narratology.

Any activity taken at any time differs in meaning, regarding on the system of reference we denote it in. A shot at an aim with a rocket launcher can be aesthetically pleasing, ethically embarrassing, economically fruitful, technically sophisticated, and rebellious in regard to the rules of the game. The very same action can therefore make you a hero in one system of reference and a villain in another. It also becomes apparent, that you might become a spoilsport in one system of reference and not in another. By deliberately switching from one system of reference to another, the player, the spoilsport and the cardsharp are able to establish playfulness in a chosen context and thereby add to the range of accessible playful experience. The cheaters, the spoilsports and the players in general will find themselves in a situation that has once been described as: "Fair is foul, and foul is fair: Hover through the fog and filthy air" (Shakespeare : Macbeth 1606)

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# GAMEN

(erschieden in: Heiko Christians, Matthias Bickenbach & Nikolaus Wegmann (Hrsg.): *Historisches Wörterbuch des Mediengebrauchs*. Böhlau 2014, S. 288-296.)

## ANEKDOTE

Ein österreichischer Schachmeister berichtete neulich zum Gaudium einer Runde von Schachsachverständigen, der ich als Kiebitz und Nichtfachmann beisaß, dass eine automatische Übersetzung eines Textes ins Deutsche als Resultat den Satz geliefert habe: „Die Schachspieler trafen sich im Wiener Café Museum um zu gamen.“<sup>128</sup> Das Gelächter der Anwesenden beruhte auf der Verwechslung einer intellektuell anspruchsvollen, anstrengenden Tätigkeit mit einer leichtfertig zur Schau gestellten Handlungsweise; und tatsächlich müsste die Übersetzung höchstwahrscheinlich korrigiert werden: Falls die Schachspieler sich zum Schachspielen getroffen haben, so ist ihre Beschäftigung als spielen zu bezeichnen und nicht als gamen. Gamen entspringt dem Jargon einer Jugendkultur, die spielerische Tätigkeiten mit einer Befindlichkeit des Spielenden verknüpft, die fern von der Verfassung ernsthaft am Schachbrett Versammelter liegt.

## ETYMOLOGIE

Es kann kaum der Mangel an passenden deutschen Wörtern sein, dass wir die spielerische Beschäftigung mit Computerspielen im Dt. als gamen bezeichnen. Es ist darüber hinaus auch keine anglizistisch motivierte und korrekte Lehnübersetzung, wenn wir „sie spielen“, mit „sie gamen“ übersetzen. Spielen sollte man ins Engl. mit to play übersetzen und die Tätigkeit des Spielens wird im Engl. – durch den Wortstamm ausgewiesen – deutlich vom Spiel (game) oder vom Spielzeug (toy) unterschieden.<sup>129</sup> Der Begriff des Gamen ist dem Jargon der Jugendlichen verpflichtet, von Journalisten, die ihn von diesen übernahmen, popularisiert worden und schließlich von der Werbesprache, die sich der Wortschöpfung der beiden vorher genannten Gruppen bediente, appropriiert worden.<sup>130</sup> Gamen scheint eine sorgenfreie und zeitgemäße Form spielerischer Aktivität zu sein. Gamen verweist aber jenseits der Referenz auf das Spiel auf einen Benutzungszusammenhang, der von

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<sup>128</sup> Die Unterhaltung fand im Wiener Café Museum am 6. Mai 2013 statt. Das Café Museum ist ein traditioneller Treffpunkt der Wiener Schachszenen.

<sup>129</sup> Vgl. (Art.) play. In: Harrap's German Dictionary, S. 284.

<sup>130</sup> Vgl. Greentube: In Game Advertising – Ein Umbruch im Marketing. Unter: <http://www.greentube.com/de/iga/> [aufgerufen am 24.09.2013].

leichtfertiger, entspannter, finanziell interesseloser und sozial eingebetteter Tätigkeit spricht.

Wenn man in einem Blogpost liest: „Er hatte kein spezifisches Wissen von Games, keinerlei Taktik oder Strategie – jedenfalls keine, die er hätte erklären können. Stattdessen gamte er auf einer rein instinktiven Ebene“<sup>131</sup>, so wird deutlich, dass gamen als eine kognitiv-motorisch durchgeführte, unbewusste Handlung verstanden wird, die von dem, was beispielsweise Schachspielen bedeutet, meilenweit entfernt ist. Im Umfeld des Begriffs gamen werden oft andere Tätigkeiten – oder Inaktivitäten – wie chillen, abhängen oder auch surfen (im Internet) angesprochen. Wesentlich dafür scheint wiederum zu sein, dass die Aktivitäten wie auch die Inaktivitäten sich als gemeinsam erfahrbar qualifizieren lassen. Die etymologischen Wurzeln des engl. game verweisen dann auch einerseits auf das altengl. „gamen“ für Spiel, Unterhaltung und Spaß und andererseits auf das got. „gaman“, das sich aus dem Kollektiv-Präfix „ga-“ und der Endung „-mann“ für Personen zusammensetzt. „Gaman“ bedeutet also „Personen, die zusammen sind“.<sup>132</sup> Nun mag es scheinen, als würde ein rebellisches „Mir ist langweilig, ich gehe gamen“, eine Ankündigung selbstaufgelegter Isolation sein. Doch gerade weil die meisten Spiele, die man eher als Gamer denn als Spieler betreibt, ein soziales Element einschließen, bedeutet das „Ich gehe gamen“ dann eher den Wechsel in eine andere, möglicherweise inspirierendere Sozialität: beispielsweise die Wälder von World of Warcraft oder die Siedlungen auf fernen Asteroidengürteln in Eve online.

## KONTEXTE

Subjekt des Gamens ist der Gamer – und nicht der Spieler. Die Dostojewskijsche Figur des willenlos dem Spiel ausgelieferten Spielsüchtigen deckt sich nicht mit dem Gamer, der stets auch etwas anderes als nur spielen kann. Dostojewskij beschreibt den Spielsüchtigen, als jemanden, der dem Automatismus des Spieles so stark ausgesetzt ist, dass er das soziale Umfeld völlig aus den Augen verliert. „Er war blaß, seine Augen glühten, die Hände zitterten; er setzte so viel er mit der Hand greifen konnte.“<sup>133</sup> Der Spielsüchtige ist das Gegenteil von cool, er ist uncool. Dem Gamer dagegen geht es nicht in erster Hinsicht um Gewinn oder Verlust, sondern um die Sichtbarkeit seiner Tätigkeit in einem sozialen Kontext. Nicht unähnlich ist der Gamer in dieser Hinsicht dem „eleganten Spieler“ wie Roger Caillois jenen nennt. „Als eleganten Spieler erkennt man allgemein denjenigen an, der es versteht, mit Distanz, Lässigkeit und zumindest dem Anschein nach kaltem Blut dem negativen Ausgang

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<sup>131</sup> Im engl. Original heißt es: „He had no specific knowlege of games, no tactical skills or strategy– at least none he was aware of. Instead he was gaming instinctively.“ Dies ist ein Kommentar von einem Poster mit dem Pseudonym „SxAxBxRxExS“ am 12. September 2013 um 14:06. Unter: <http://www.callofdutyzombies.com/forum/> [aufgerufen am 24.09.2013].

<sup>132</sup> Vgl. (Art.) game. In: Liberman: An Analytic Dictionary of English Etymology, S. 15.

<sup>133</sup> Dostojewskij: Der Spieler, S. 87.

der angestrengtesten Bemühungen oder auch dem Verlust eines maßlosen Einsatzes entgegenzustehen.<sup>134</sup> Wie der elegante Spieler ist auch der Gamer stets um seine Wirkung auf die ihn umgebenden Mitspieler und Zuschauer bedacht. Der Gamer spielt nicht nur für sich allein, und der elegante Spieler spielt eigentlich ausschließlich für die anderen. Gamen ist daher als eine soziale Tätigkeit zu verstehen.

Spieltypen lassen sich auf ihre Verwendbarkeit für den Gamer untersuchen: So sind die Casual Games, also unpräntiöse und einfach zu bedienende Computerspiele, die gratis oder für einen niedrigen Preis angeboten werden, dem Gamen dienlich, während Geschicklichkeitsspiele und Emulationen von Kartenspielen eher ein Spielen als ein Gamen zulassen. Zeitaufwendige und verantwortungslastige Genres wie Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing Games erfordern dem Spielziel verpflichtete Spieler und lassen ein Gamen beinahe nur als ‚korrumpierte Form‘ des Spielens zu.<sup>135</sup> Interesse an monetären Erfolgen sind ebenfalls als korrupt im Cailloisschen Sinne einzustufen. Ein Jugendlicher, der beispielsweise am Online Poker mit finanziellen Gewinnaussichten teilnimmt, ist kein Gamer sondern ein Gambler.

Es scheint, dass Gamer, Gambler und Spieler sich bezüglich der Motivation für ihre Tätigkeit unterscheiden. Dem Spieler geht es in erster Linie um die Freude am Spiel, er sieht sich im Spielzusammenhang als Kontrahent einer maschinellen Intelligenz, einer Gruppe von Gegenspielern oder eines Regelsystemes, in dem er sich geschickt zurechtzufinden versucht. Ludische Kommunikation und emotionale Intensitäten entfalten sich in erster Linie spielintern und nicht vis-à-vis einer Zuseherschaft. Spieler spielen für die Mitspieler oder für sich selbst und nicht für Zuschauer. Dennoch gibt es Momente des Spiels, in denen die Zuschauerschaft, also die beobachtenden Instanzen jenseits des ‚magischen Kreises‘ plötzlich ungeheure Bedeutung gewinnen und beinahe ins Zentrum des Interesses geraten.<sup>136</sup> Solche Momente sind der Applaus nach dem erzielten Treffer oder die Freude der Spielbeobachter über das Erreichen eines höheren Level. Doch diese Momente sind Ausnahmefälle. Wenn sich beispielsweise Fußballspieler nach einem erfolgreichen Torschuss dem Publikum zuwenden und im Jubel der Masse baden, so ist das Spiel unterbrochen. Es findet seine Fortsetzung erst, wenn der Spieler seine gegnerische Mannschaft wichtiger nimmt als die Massen auf den Tribünen. Dem Gamer hingegen ist das Publikum so wichtig wie die Mitspieler selbst. Eine Aussage der Art ‚Ihr langweilt mich, ich gehe jetzt gamen‘, ist nicht als Erklärung eines Selbstbeschäftigungsunterfangens zu verstehen, sondern vielmehr als Absage an den Unterhaltungswert der adressierten Personen und eine gleichzeitige Deklaration, dass nun eine interessantere Beschäftigung als die vorhergehende gefunden wurde. Die Voraussetzungen für das Gelingen solcher Selbstinszenierung sind das Verständnis des Gegenübers, was mit gamen eigentlich gemeint ist, und die Annahme, dass der Tätigkeit des Gamens ein hoher Wert zugemessen werden kann. Möglicherweise baut

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<sup>134</sup> Caillois: Die Spiele und die Menschen, S. 55. Vgl. ebd., S. 52–65.

<sup>135</sup> Vgl. ebd., S. 52–65.

<sup>136</sup> Vgl. Huizinga: Homo Ludens.



die Sprachhandlung auch auf eine Exklusivität des Zuganges zu den technisch-organisatorischen Grundlagen des Gamens, wie beispielsweise die Verfügung über eine Spielkonsole bestimmter Art oder über eine Online-Mitgliedschaft zu einem Multiplayer Spiel. Die Aussage „Ich gehe jetzt gamen“ wird in der Erwartung ausgesprochen, dass das Gegenüber von der Aussage beeindruckt oder sogar neidisch auf die Perspektive der Tätigkeit ist. Vergleicht man diese Situation mit einer entsprechenden Aussage eines Spielers, so wird man auf der Ebene der suggerierten Reaktionen zu anderen Effekten gelangen. Ein Spieler, der beabsichtigt, MENSCH ÄRGERE DICH NICHT zu spielen, wird mit der Aussage „Ich werde jetzt spielen gehen“ keinen Neid auslösen und auch an kein Sozialprestige appellieren können, das den Spieler als besonders qualifiziert oder privilegiert ausweist. Die Reaktion des Gegenübers wäre wahrscheinlich ein „Warum nicht“ oder „Viel Spaß“. Spielen wird als eine subjektiven Gewinn versprechende Handlung interpretiert, wohingegen das Gamens als ein sozialer Akt verstanden wird.

Nochmals anders gelagert sind die Interessen des Gamblers. Für den „gambling man“ ist es weder die Spielfreude, noch Sichtbarkeit als soziales und spielendes Individuum, sondern das rein private Interesse am Gewinn, das den Spielprozess motiviert. Obwohl es kurzzeitige Überlappungen der Interessenslage beim Gamer, Gambler und beim Spieler gibt, sind die Absichten der jeweiligen so grundverschieden, dass man davon ausgehen muss, dass der, der richtig spielt, nicht gamblet und dass der, der am Gamens ist, kaum in Verdacht gerät, zu gamblen oder im Schillerschen Sinne zu spielen. Spielen bedeutet hier, „in voller Bedeutung des Wortes Mensch zu sein“<sup>137</sup>. Das kann ein im Spiele versenkter Spieler – möglicherweise ein Gamer, dem es um Präzision und Darstellung geht – aber nicht.<sup>138</sup> Wolfgang Kayser weist darauf hin, dass im „echten Spielen“ der deutschen Romantiker die Beharrung auf dem Individuellen ersetzt wird durch ein Maske-Tragen, das es erfordert, „dass wir unsere Existenz aufgeben, um zu existieren.“<sup>139</sup> Dem modernen Gamer dient die Maske des Gamens dagegen zur Herstellung von Anerkennung und Platzierung in der Gruppe. Die Person des Gamers ist daher stets das physikalische Individuum, das nur vorspielt. Für den romantischen Spieler hingegen heißt „personare“ im ursprünglichen

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<sup>137</sup> Schiller: Sämtliche Werke, S. 358. Schillers emphatischer Begriff vom „Menschsein“ knüpft hier an ein Bildungs- und Kulturideal an, das er in den Briefen zur ästhetischen Erziehung auslegt.

<sup>138</sup> Verkürzt ließe sich sagen, dass der Schillersche Spieler an kultureller Wahrheit sich entwickeln will, während es dem Gamer nur um eine gruppenspezifische Anerkennung geht. Schillers Idee über das Spiel und das Kunstwerk war, dass Naturwirklichkeit sich in Kunstwahrheit wandeln müsse. Dem Gamer hingegen liegt wenig an der Wahrheit, es liegt ihm vielmehr am Herzen, dass sich persönlich erlebtes Vergnügen in sozial kommunizierbare Reputation umsetzen lässt

<sup>139</sup> Kayser: Kunst und Spiel, S. 39.

Sinne „durchtönen lassen“<sup>140</sup>. Der Spieler ist nicht endgültiges Ziel der Aufmerksamkeit.

## KONJUNKTUREN

Der Begriff des „Gamens“ ist relativ jung und es lässt sich nicht mit Sicherheit sagen, ob ein entspannter und sozial eingebetteter Gebrauch von Computerspielen in fünf oder zehn Jahren immer noch als gamen bezeichnet werden wird. Ubiquitäre Verwendung von Computern und Mobiltechnologien und die zunehmende Konvergenz von Spieltechnologien mit anderen Unterhaltungstechnologien und -medien lässt sogar vermuten, dass die Tage des jungen Begriffs gezählt sein könnten. Die provokative Kraft des Begriffs liegt schließlich im Verweis auf die Differenz der Computerspiele zu anderen Medien. Wenn diese Differenz jedoch im Zuge einer Medienkonvergenz oder einer generellen Gamifizierung allen Medialen fallen sollte, so ließe sich mit dem Verweis auf das Spezifische der Computerspiele wenig gewinnen. Gamen würde dann den Charakter eines Ressentiments oder einer nostalgischen Rückbesinnung annehmen. Gamifizierung (im engl. Wortlaut Gamification) ist der Prozess einer Durchdringung unserer Gesellschaft mit Methoden, Metaphern und Attributen der Computerspiele. Dieser Prozess, der einer totalen Ausrichtung verschiedener gesellschaftlicher Bereiche als spielbar gleichkommt, ist eine Veränderung der Normalitätsgrundlagen, die der amerikanische Politiker Al Gore mit dem Statement „Games are the New Normal!“<sup>141</sup> auf den Punkt gebracht hat. In einer total gamifizierten Gesellschaft, wäre gamen dann nur mehr ein anderes Wort für „irgendetwas tun“.

## GEGENBEGRIFFE

Zwei kategoriale Oppositionen scheinen dem Gamen entgegengesetzt: Der Ernst als dem Spiel hinderliche Haltung<sup>142</sup> oder als notwendiger und gleichzeitiger Gegenpol<sup>143</sup> und die Arbeit als eine in die politische Ökonomie eingeschriebene Differenz zum Spielerischen. George Batailles Blickwinkel auf ökonomische Strukturen<sup>144</sup> stützt sich auf die Untersuchungen Mauss<sup>145</sup>, der das Geschenk als eine Instanz genuin menschlicher Souveränität innerhalb wirtschaftlicher Zusammenhänge sieht. Für Bataille war Spiel eine Art von Opfer, die einem Geschenk nicht unähnlich ist. Eben

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<sup>140</sup> (Art.) persono. In: PONS – Latein-Deutsch online. Unter: <http://de.pons.com/%C3%BCbersetzung/latein-deutsch/persono> [aufgerufen am 27.05.2014].

<sup>141</sup> Tsai: Al Gore: ‚Games are the new Normal‘. Unter: [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charlestsai/al-gore-games-social-good\\_b\\_881017.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/charlestsai/al-gore-games-social-good_b_881017.html) [aufgerufen am 19.09.2013].

<sup>142</sup> Vgl. Kayser: Kunst und Spiel, S. 36.

<sup>143</sup> Vgl. Schiller: Sämtliche Werke, S. 376ff.

<sup>144</sup> Vgl. Bataille: Das theoretische Werk I: Die Aufhebung der Ökonomie.

<sup>145</sup> Vgl. Mauss: Die Gabe.

weil Spiel nicht ergebnisgebundenen Resultaten des Spielprozesses verhaftet ist, könne Spiel entfremdeter Arbeit entgegenstehen. Im Spiel und im Gamen zeigt sich seiner Ansicht nach die Hoffnung, dass aus der Herr/Knecht-Beziehung<sup>146</sup> des Arbeitsprozesses ein Fluchtweg zu finden sei, der die Beziehung von Kapital und Arbeit aus ihren Fesseln reißen könne. Bataille unterscheidet sich in dieser Hinsicht wesentlich von Adorno und Benjamin: Adorno sieht das Glücksspiel und das, was man heute als Gamen bezeichnen würde, als „Nachbild von unfreier Arbeit.“<sup>147</sup> Benjamin verglich die Aktionen des zwanghaften Spielers gar mit den Bedingungen entfremdeter Arbeit und spricht von der „Fron des Spielers.“<sup>148</sup> Wenn also für Benjamin und Adorno gamen und jobben – wie man heute sagen würde – auf dasselbe hinauslaufen, besteht für Bataille eine klare Gegensätzlichkeit von Spiel und Arbeit.

## PERSPEKTIVEN

Gerade weil gamen aus der Sprache der Populärkultur stammt und darüber hinaus ein Ausdruck des Jargon einer jugendlichen Benutzergruppe ist, erstreckt sich die Reichweite der Anwendbarkeit des Begriffs auf einen bestimmten Typus von Spielen, der von jungen Spielern bevorzugt wird. Mobile Games und Casual Games sind solche Spiele, denen man sich gamend zuwenden kann. Aber auch populäre First Person Shooter oder Open World Games wie GRAND THEFT AUTO oder DEAD ISLAND sind Spiele, mit denen sich Gamer die Zeit vertreiben können. Gerade wenn diese Spiele keine lineare Handlungsabfolge erfordern und Spieler sich zerstreuen und verirren können, werden sie ihre Tätigkeit als gamen bezeichnen wollen. Gamen ist in dieser Hinsicht den Zeitverkürzungsspielen nicht unähnlich.

In dem Aufsatz ÜBER DIE ÄLTESTEN ZEITVERKÜRZUNGSSPIELE<sup>149</sup> zeichnet Wieland ein Bild der Gamer des 19. Jhs. „Zeitverkürzungsspiele“ oder „Zeitkürzungsspiele“ verweisen auf Zeitverlust in einem emphatischen Sinne, der Zeitverschwendung und Zeitvertreib honoriert. Im GRIMMSCHEN WÖRTERBUCH steht Zeitkürzung noch für „kurtzweil“ und Unterhaltung, ein Begriff, der im Mittelhochdeutschen als „zît kürzel“ bekannt war.<sup>150</sup> Wielands Versuch, den Begriff des „Zeitkürzungsspiels“ einzuführen, war der Versuch, Spiel als Entspannung oder als bloße Unterhaltung salonfähig zu machen. Im Schillerschen und noch mehr im Goetheschen Verständnis galt spielerische Zeitkürzung allerdings bereits als bedenklich. Goethe ging es nicht um Unterhaltung und Gamen, sondern um ernsthaftes Spielen. In diesem Sinne bemerkte Goethe: „Der Deutsche ist überhaupt ernsthafter Natur und sein Ernst zeigt sich vorzüglich, wenn vom Spiele die Rede

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<sup>146</sup> Vgl. Hegel: Phänomenologie des Geistes, S. 145.

<sup>147</sup> Adorno: Ästhetische Theorie, S. 471.

<sup>148</sup> Benjamin: Über einige Motive bei Baudelaire. In: Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung, S. 73.

<sup>149</sup> Wieland: Über die ältesten Zeitkürzungsspiele. In: Ders. (Hrsg.): Wielands Werke.

<sup>150</sup> Vgl. (Art.) Zeitkürzung. In: Grimm online. Unter: <http://woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB/> [aufgerufen am 24.09.2013].

ist.<sup>151</sup> Tatsächlich entspricht der Spieler des deutschen Idealismus nicht dem Gamer. Ähnlich dem Gebrauch des Begriffes *gamen* ging es also im Gebrauch des Begriffs *Zeitkürzung* um die Beschreibung einer sozialen Handlung, die nicht als spielimmanent verstanden werden soll, sondern in den Kontext von respektablen Verhaltensweisen eingereiht werden kann. Spiele dagegen, die man mit Ernst betreibt, waren und sind offenbar heute als *Serious Games* dem *Gamen* und dem *Gamblen* entgegengesetzt.

## FORSCHUNG

Betrachtet man das *Gamen* als mehr als nur eine Marotte, die als vorübergehendes Jugendkulturphänomen den Jargon eines Jahrzehntes mitgeprägt hat, so stellen sich die folgenden Fragen: Was sind die Gründe dafür, dass immer größere Bevölkerungsanteile *gamen* und wie ist es zu erklären, dass eine spielerische Grundeinstellung gleichzeitig Finanzwelt, Politik, das Bildungswesen und den Gesundheitssektor durchdringen? Wie wird aus dem *Gamen* *Gamification*? Gibt es Formen nicht-systemkonformen *Gamens*? Sind Konsumverweigerung und *Gamen* miteinander vereinbar? Oder bedeutet *Gamen* in jedem Fall Konsument sein? Gibt es gar ein rebellisches *Gamen*? Wo könnte subversives *Gamen* sich entwickeln? Die subversive Note des *Gamens* könnte in Zusammenhängen zu Tage treten, in denen das Spiel zelebriert und zugleich relativiert wird. *Gamen* könnte als negative Affirmation des Spieles und des Spielbetriebes gesehen werden, möglicherweise aber auch als ein Gegenpol zur Spielindustrie. Es wundert deshalb nicht, wenn Theoretiker, die den politischen Hintergrund des *Gamens* untersuchen, zu Begriffsschöpfungen wie den „*Gamerz*“<sup>152</sup> für die *Gamer* gelangen und sich damit an einen Sprachduktus und orthographische Formen anlehnen, die der Graffiti-, Surf-, und Comic-Szene-Kultur entlehnt sind.

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# Weltentzug und Weltzerfall (World-withdrawal and world-decay)

## Heidegger's notions of withdrawal from the world and the decay of worlds in the times of computer games

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### World-withdrawal

This article investigates whether concepts of “world-withdrawal” and “world-decay” that German philosopher Martin Heidegger elaborated for traditional works of art in the 1930s have any currency for contemporary cultural artefacts like computer games. Heidegger’s terminology is so tempting to be applied to the player-game-world triangle as it seems to describe in a very literate way, and very close to “the things”, a situation that we can observe today when a gamer puts a computer monitor on a table, watches a world in front of his eyes and notices that the world he or she is watching has withdrawn. The world has decayed. Albert Hofstadter calls Heidegger’s method “the most concrete thinking and speaking about Being.” (Heidegger 1971: translator’s introduction on page xi) A statement such as “the work puts up a world” (stellt eine Welt auf) sounds as if a simple object - that we call world - is about to be put on its feet, like a monitor upon the table. For a gamer a world is in most cases first of all the entity of game levels in a video game and not a philosophical concept. The language of the phenomenological thinker works on two levels at the same time. It actually talks about palpable things and it talks about ideas as well. That is why Heidegger calls his

work the work of a poet (Dichter). In German a “Dichter” is a poet, somebody who condenses things.

A computer game is a visual, acoustic or textual artefact (“angefertigtes Ding”, Heidegger 1960: 10) that claims some relation to the real world outside the game-world. This relationship might be mimetic or constructed otherwise, yet it always refers to the world we live in at a certain point in time. The problem with the game is that it has been created at a certain moment, a certain decade, a historic context and with a certain place in mind, but at the moment we look at the game, listen to it or experience it spatially, the time and place of its origin have gone. Ubisoft’s recent game *Assassin’s Creed® Unity*, for example, is staged in Paris and takes place during the years following the revolution in 1789. But these years has long since gone and contemporary Paris definitely looks, smells and sounds completely different from what it did some 200 years ago.



Fig. 1: *Assassin’s Creed® Unity*. Screenshot © Ubisoft 2014

We try to understand a game with a spatio-temporal reference to a world that does not exist any more. The game has been withdrawn from the world it refers to and world has been withdrawn from the work.<sup>153</sup> In this respect the video game shares a problem

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<sup>153</sup> In a discussion with German philosopher and Heidegger specialist Markus Rautzenberg (Berlin, Barcomis’s Café on 21 November 2014) Rautzenberg suggested that Heidegger would not have thought that world has been withdrawn from the beforementioned computer game. The reason for that is that Heidegger sketched his examples of world-withdrawal from works of art that have been produced in the very moment they refer to. A computer game about the French Revolution has, however, not been designed in between 1789 and 1794 – the years *Assassin’s Creed®* is supposed to happen. I am thankful for Rautzenberg’s comment, but I would like to suggest that Heidegger’s concept of world-withdrawal makes



with a referential painting or with any work of art. Heidegger sarcastically remarks that “Hölderlin’s poems have been put into the soldiers’ rucksacks as has the shoe-shine set, and Beethoven’s quartets are stored in the publisher’s archive like potatoes in the cellar.” (Heidegger 1960: 9) The work of art therefore does not contain relevance that is unaffected by time, it is on the contrary the artist’s attempt to condense the specific truth of a historic moment within a work of art. In analogy a computer game is designed to contain a multitude of aspects of the world that it refers to: sounds, architecture, climate, garments, hairstyle, vegetation, movement patterns and many more. The game designer attempts to capture a historical setting as a whole and present it as a game. This is what Heidegger describes as “putting the particular truth of a historical period into the oeuvre”<sup>154</sup> (Heidegger 1960: 34).

“Looking at van Gogh’s shoes in the painting, we cannot say where these shoes have been standing. There is nothing about these shoes that would tell us to whom these shoes belong to and where they belong. There is nothing there except for a space without specific properties. Not even traces of soil are attached to these shoes, that might tell us which path they have been walked upon and what they have been used for.” (Heidegger 1960: 27)

Heidegger calls the work of art a “thing” (Ding). The shoes in a real world context would be best described as “tool” (Zeug). A work of art is a thing, like a stone, a dog, or “even God Himself” (Heidegger 1960: 12), as opposed to a “Zeug”. “Zeug” is usually translated as “tool” and sometimes as “product”. In German however, it also carries the connotation of “Zeuge” (witness) and of “erzeugen” (to create). The shoes that van Gogh depicted have been a tool to somebody else some time ago. For this person the shoes were an extension of the body and a tool that was used unconsciously. The shoes served a purpose and served the person and possessed their Being – “Zeug” - via this mode of usage. In analogy to that it makes sense to call computer games works of art and things, as they have been withdrawn from the world and turned into lifeless objects. As we will see later, some form of life – or “earth” – can be created from the objects that have been deprived of earth in the first place.

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also sense for work that is built upon distant times and places. A piece like Jacques-Louis David’s “Napoleon at the Saint-Bernard Pass“ has been painted in different versions in between 1801 and 1805, but never on location at the time of Napoleon’s crossing the alps in May 1800. I would like to suggest that firstly it is almost impossible to find work that is created completely on location and in time. Even Heidegger’s Ancient Greek temple at Paestum was not completely built where it has been erected. Van Gogh did not sit in front of the farmer’s shoes for each and every brushstroke Heidegger refers to. Secondly I think that insisting on a singularity of time-space of the act of creation and a worlding world around it, would create a completely artificial separation of authentic artworks and of second class pieces that has nothing to do with the quality and nature of the works of art.

<sup>154</sup> transl. by the author. German orig.: „die jeweilige Wahrheit eines Geschichtsabschnitts ins Werk zu setzen.“

Many contemporary computer games seem to work on the basis of *mimicry* and seem to catch a realistic socio-historic situation that the players can get immersed within. *Call of Duty* seems to drop us into World War II as if we were there, *Assassin's Creed® III* leaves us in between opposing parties in the battles of the American Civil War. The games are therefore highly suggestive of us interacting with a world, and do not tell us that this very world has been withdrawn and that the corresponding real-life world has decayed. In regard to the work of art Heidegger thought that the world that has been captured by a photographer or the landscape that has been painted by a painter suggests some worldliness, or even some life of its own. (Benjamin would have said that the auratic moment when the painting looks back at the observer is a moment of magic where the dead object seems to live for an instant.) But the world that we see in the work of art has stopped "worlding". This might sound ridiculously trivial,<sup>155</sup> but I think what Heidegger does not want to point out here is that we should be surprised that a deer on a painting cannot jump out of the frame and canvas. What he rather wants to tell us is that the observer is inclined to accept an illusion of worldliness within the artefact. This is the case for works of art and even more so for computer games. The etymological roots of the word "illusion" (lat. ludus, ludere) connect play with pretend and self-delusion. It is surprising though that we often accept a state of "half-belief" (Pfaller 2002) or of "as-if" when looking at artworks' worlds. In an analogy that links works of art to computer games, I'd suggest that we half-believe that game worlds are worlding and half-believe that game worlds are not worlding any more.

## World-decay

Heidegger clearly states that the decay of world can never be reversed.<sup>156</sup> The worlds that have decayed, have done so for good. When we visit the Greek temple today we cannot revive ancient Greek society, the polis, the people, the gods and half-gods. Neither in watching films nor in visiting the ancient sites and the temple will enable us to partake in a world that has once been worlding, but has stopped worlding now. The promises of tourist agencies and the suggestions of heritage organisations that we will "experience a stunning theatre of the 4th century BC - as it was right then" just by booking a fly-drive to a former Spartan city" is a lie. This is not a moral statement: I just follow Heidegger's suggestion that a work of art, like the theatre mentioned above, does not and cannot convey truth. In his 1955 essay "Über die Sixtina" he phrases the situation in regard to the relation of a painting and truth briefly and scarcely as: "the image errs." ("Das Bild irrt" Heidegger 1955) The reason for the

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<sup>155</sup> I am grateful for Chris Bateman's comment on my rather floppy comment on the triviality of such an assumption: "I can see why you would warn me that this 'might sound ridiculously trivial', but it doesn't at all - on the contrary, it dances close to something very relevant to my work in philosophy, namely the relationship between worlds (fictional or otherwise)." Chris Bateman, in an email from 8 June 2013

<sup>156</sup> „Allein, Weltentzug und Weltentwurf sind nie mehr rückgängig zu machen.“ (Heidegger 1960: 36)

aberration of the painting lies within its displacement (“Versetzung”) from the original place of production and from the world-decay of the artist’s world: the world of Raffael and the church of San Sisto in Piacenza that the painting was intended to be painted for. Heidegger commented upon the exhibition of Raffael’s Madonna in Dresden in the year of 1754. He opposed the idea of his contemporary Theodor Hetzer, who stated that the fact that the Madonna impressed everybody in Dresden was evidence that this work of art could be shown anywhere and that the painting has to be considered to be “at home” in every place of the world. For Hetzer masterpieces like Raffael’s Madonna were universal works of art that did not require a particular space or time to reveal absolute truth. Obviously, computer games like *Assassin’s Creed*® build upon universal intelligibility and inter-cultural, affective compatibility to guarantee global vendibility. Works of art that claim to be of an absolute nature must work independent of location and time. But according to Heidegger this says little about their truthfulness to the world they originated from. We cannot re-experience the French Revolution by playing *Assassin’s Creed*® *Unity*. All we can do is to get immersed in an environment that resembles the one it alludes to and we can get enthused (“uns begeistern” Heidegger 1960: 35) for a world that has long since decayed.

World-decay and world-withdrawal both contribute to the aberration we are bound to experience. We believe we see something that does not exist any longer as a consequence of world-decay. We believe we see something that does not exist where we think it should be as a consequence of world-withdrawal.

## Problem A: Where is the world in Tetris, and where is the world in abstract art?

One of the premises of my argument so far is that many contemporary computer games work on the basis of *mimicry*. This can be said for many games, but not necessarily for all computer games. Games like *Tetris*, or more recent examples like *Dyad*, have little reference to the physical world we live in and they are void of representation or mimesis. There have been attempts to decipher *Tetris* as a representation of conveyor belt factory labour or of transport logistics, but these explanations usually fall short in explaining what players experience when playing those games. Most of the players do not connote *Tetris* with working in a factory.<sup>157</sup> This poses the question of what the relationship of such games with the world is. If there is not a relationship with the physical world around us then the notion of world-withdrawal would make little sense. Heidegger’s observations on the work of art and its “Weltentzug” face a similar problem: What about abstract art? Heidegger has been criticized for always having referred to the traditional Fine Arts, architecture and

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<sup>157</sup> Some non-players do however: Cf. Theodor W. Adorno’s statement of play as „the afterimage of un-free labour“ in *Aesthetic Theory*. (Adorno 1970: 421)

poetry, but never to modern art (Wallenstein 2010). His explanation of “Weltentzug” takes the statue of Aegina by Nikolaus Gerhart from the 15<sup>th</sup> century as an example, a painting by van Gogh and rather vague and pathos-driven descriptions of Greek temples. Heidegger planned a sequel to the *Origin of the Work of Art* that was supposed to deal with the possibility of art in a technological world and to non-representative art in particular, but according to Wallenstein “this project failed to materialize since it was contrary to his own philosophical presuppositions” (Wallenstein 2010: 163). I think however, that even an abstract painting like a composition by Mondrian has a relationship to the world. This relationship might not be representative, but it can still capture elements of a historical situation with very specific gestural stereotypes, expressive motives, or a habitus of a group of people within society.

A painting by Mondrian suffers from “Weltentzug” and “Weltzerfall”, when the painting is taken from its original place and time of creation. The painting is, however, not unrelated to the world it was painted in. It carries a rich set of references to the past that can be seen and felt in the present. That is why we have a strange feeling of conflict between a strong expressive force and a historical distance when we look at a Mondrian or an abstract painting from the 1920s in a museum of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In analogy to that, I would argue that abstract computer games have a relation to the world that they have been created in: very much like abstract paintings they are not resistant to the ageing of this world. An abstract painting by Mondrian, Kandinsky or Klee is not an artistic statement of eternal truth, it ages just the way a representative painting does. In the very same way *Tetris*, when played and looked upon nowadays, has assumed a remoteness that is a consequence of former world-withdrawal.

## Problem B: Are all videogames withdrawn from the world?

In a discussion with British philosopher and game designer Chris Bateman<sup>158</sup> he made the point that my assumption that Heidegger’s proposition of art works relating to the world can be easily transferred to computer games is questionable.

“It seems that Heidegger says that art works have a direct relationship to the world they appear in, but in the moment of 'capture' these worlds-of-origin cease to be 'worlding'. I recall he mentions this in 'The Origin of the Work of Art' (...)

But I'm not sure how true it is that the fictional worlds of videogames are not worlding - this may be the case for, say, a retail game on a disc, but is it true for a MUD<sup>159</sup> or another kind of game with continuous renewal and revision of content? It seems to me there are kinds of videogame that are worlding (are capable of worlding? Not sure

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<sup>158</sup> E-mail from Chris Bateman, 8 June 2013

<sup>159</sup> A MUD is a Multi-User Dungeon.

how to word this!), and in particular my favourite example, the tabletop role-playing game. Worlding is the essential action of the play of such a game - at least as I (dimly) understand this term! - since the players are constantly discovering, inventing, revising, and creating the fictional world they are playing within.” (Bateman 2013)

Bateman has a point there. I would however argue that what Bateman calls “worlding” in regard to tabletop role-playing games or for MUDs is what I would refer to as setting forth and producing earth. I will explain these Heideggerian notions in more detail later, but I want to point out here that the continual process of “discovering, inventing and revising” that Bateman correctly attributes to MUD games does not take place in the world that the game designers referred to when they originally built the game, but to an instance of “earth”. If the MUD was based on a medieval story of knights and castles, the MUD players do not contribute to the medieval landscape, but to a physical reality they produce. This earth contains pens and papers, friends and neighbours and computers that are completely non-medieval. A closer look at mimetic computer games might explore the matter further.

The examples below reflect upon a specific historic situation in the country of Iraq in the year 2003. The images on the left show photographs from a war scenario, the images on the right show computer games content based on the photographs that has been built using 3D software.



Fig. 2: left: Ramadi/ Iraq, US soldiers with tank, photo © John Cantlie; right: Screenshot from Arma 2: Operation Arrowhead, Copyright ©2015 Bohemia Interactive. All Right Reserved. ARMA® and Bohemia Interactive® are trademarks of Bohemia Interactive.



Fig. 3: Ramadi/ Iraq, Militia in the Ta'meem district, photo © John Cantlie; right: Screenshot from Arma 2: Operation Arrowhead, Copyright ©2015 Bohemia Interactive. All Right Reserved. ARMA® and Bohemia Interactive® are trademarks of Bohemia Interactive.

The computer game suggests that the simulated world would be “worlding” (Welt weltet) but this is an illusion, in a very literal sense of the word. World does not world in the computer game. The game is characterized by its „having been“ (Gewesen sein). Heidegger tells us that the process of world-withdrawal and world-decay is irreversible. The game with all of its assets has lost its „standing to itself“ (Zu-sich-stehen). Therefore the computer game can only be encountered in the dimension of tradition and of conservation. The computer game establishes a relation to world (Welt) and to earth (Erde). This is constitutive of its work-being: Computer games put up a world (Aufstellung einer Welt), but not in the sense of attaching it somewhere, rather by erecting it (Errichten), in terms of dedication (Weißen) and praise (Rühmen). In the process of being put up the works lose their “springing-power” (Sprungkraft).

The power to spring up is a notion that Heidegger develops further in a reflection on Hölderlin’s “holy wildness”. Different from an inherently consistent development, springing-power would enable complex processes to “create” (schaffen und schöpfen) unpredictable outcomes. The fact that the work of art has lost its springing-power does however not imply that the work of art is dead or completely static. As we will see the production of earth creates a new dynamism that is driven by the physical environment and the product of its very physicality. Heidegger seems to hint here but does not say it *expressis verbis* that earth has some autopoietic and self-defined end or purpose (τέλος) that makes it almost an autonomous agent in the interplay of work, world and earth. (Zimmerman 1990: 122) There is a contradiction in Heidegger’s system when it comes to things. On the one hand he defines things as “what is without life in nature and in daily use”<sup>160</sup> (Heidegger 1960: 12), but on the other hand the mysterious

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<sup>160</sup> transl. by the author, German orig.: „das Leblose der Natur und des Gebrauches“ (Heidegger 1960: 12)

springing-power seems to transform things into entities that have willpower: „Colour glows and intends to do nothing but glow“.<sup>161</sup> (Heidegger 1960: 43) This is indeed a strange viewpoint for a phenomenologist.

## Problem C: Do computer games inform us about the world?

Computer games, like movies, often try to refer to the real world in a narrative manner. We know that Gérard Depardieu is not Georges Danton in the 1983 movie *Danton*. We also know that we are not in 1789 Paris when playing Ubisoft's *Assassin's Creed® Unity* game in the year of 2014. Yet without us believing that there is some information about the world the movie or the game is referring to, we would not want to watch or play them. There is an assumption that computer games inform us about the world. The world that they inform us about has however been abandoned and the movie and the game have been “ripped off” (entrissen) (Heidegger 1960: 36) their respective worlds and their essences. Heidegger's suggestion is that the work of art can therefore not inform about the world, but that it rather transforms the world. (Heidegger 1976: 36) The act of creating a film or a computer game is best understood in terms of formation and not of form. In Heidegger's terminology this leads to an understanding of the artwork as “trans-formation” rather than “in-formation”. (Heidegger 1976) When looking at the informational content of a computer game in this way, the popular discussions about political correctness of certain games or the violence of scenes staged within them has to be reframed: an action undertaken or observed in a game has connotative meaning, but no denotative meaning about the world it refers to – it transforms the real world. According to Espen Aarseth the meaning of the game is a ludeme – as Aarseth and others have called gameplay elements<sup>162</sup> – and not the physical word it is connotative of. We should therefore not conclude that properties or qualities such as violence, dirt, peacefulness or cleanliness can be mapped from the game to the world they might refer to – as some have argued (Anderson, Gentile & Buckley 2006).

## Destruction of worlds, production of earth

Computer games are both appearance and reality. The appearance is the aspect of the world that the game has been withdrawn from. Reality is what Huizinga calls “the

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<sup>161</sup> transl. by the author, German orig.: „Die Farbe leuchtet und will nur leuchten.“ (Heidegger 1960: 43)

<sup>162</sup> Espen Aarseth in an unpublished lecture on 11 April 2014 at AG-Games Workshop “Cutting Edges and Dead Ends”, in cooperation with Gamification Lab and the Centre for Digital Cultures at Leuphana University Lüneburg.

common world” and what Heidegger refers to as “earth”.<sup>163</sup> Frissen, de Mul and Raessens (2013) point out that Johan Huizinga’s attempt to separate sacred space of play and the rather profane world of everyday life was based on two ontologies that were mutually exclusive, the real and the virtual. Huizinga’s dilemma arose from the assumption that play would have to reside outside the common world. A demarcation line would have to protect the area of play from the common world. Functions and spaces to create this separation of play and common world have been described as play-grounds, gameboards, arenas or “toovercirkel” (Dutch for a circle where rituals of witchcraft have been performed) by Huizinga. Salen and Zimmerman (2003a, 2003b) simplified and translated Huizinga’s enumeration and named the demarcation line the “magic circle”. Huizinga is not responsible for the wording, but most likely for the idea and the conceptual implications created therefrom (Günzel 2012: 331). The reason for creating the concept of a magic circle was the attempt to avoid the embarrassing problems of the “common world” leaking into the “sacred earnest of play” (Huizinga 1950: 24) or even into the cosmos of “sacred play” (Raj and Dempsey 2012: 22).

It is clear from *Homo Ludens* (1938) that Huizinga wanted to create a clear distinction between what he called the “sphere of play” and the “common world”. He was certainly apprehensive about his ideas such as “free activity standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life” (Huizinga 1950: 17). There are a few sections in *Homo Ludens* where Huizinga struggles with his own concept. Is war of a playful nature? Huizinga says: “Modern Warfare has, on the face of it, lost all contact with play.” (Huizinga 1950: 210) On the same page he speaks about his “gnawing doubt whether war is really play.” He arrives at the conclusion at one point, that “war has not freed itself from the circle of witchcraft,” but leaves the reader in the dark, why this is “despite appearances to the contrary.” Considerations like these show Huizinga’s awareness that the materiality of the physical world was in a complex and ambiguous relationship with his idealistic “sphere of play”. I have developed elsewhere how Huizinga might have solved the conflict of a hermetic playsphere versus the common world, if he had rewritten *Homo Ludens*. (Fuchs 2014)

Heidegger did not fall into the trap of mutually exclusive ontologies for world and earth. He developed the concept of earth from the Greek notion of *physis*.<sup>164</sup> (Heidegger 1960: 38) But earth and physicality - or *Φύσις* - cannot be thought without world. „World is rooted in earth and earth permeates world.“ (Die Welt gründet sich auf die Erde und Erde durchdringt Welt. (Heidegger 1960: 46)) is how Heidegger describes the dialectics of earth and world. In a language that very much refers to spatial metaphors, he proposes that world cannot vanish from earth, and uses the word “entschweben” in the German text, that means both to float away and to evaporate.

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<sup>163</sup> There are differences between earth and reality - as we understand it -, but let’s for the moment say that modern physical reality and Heidegger’s earth are closely related.

<sup>164</sup> German orig.: „Dieses Herauskommen und Aufgehen selbst und im Ganzen nannten die Griechen frühzeitig die *Φύσις*.“ (Heidegger 1960: 38)



There is no antagonism between world and earth. World is neither an anti-earth nor the antithesis of earth. Heidegger observes that the work of art can instigate contention of world and earth, but he also says that the work-being of the work of art (*Werksein des Werkes*) consists in the impeachment of quarrel, or “Bestreitung des Streites” (Heidegger 1960: 47). Once more the German language provides the philosopher with the means to express his ambiguous position. “Bestreitung” means both disputing and defray, as in defray of livelihood.

Computer games seem to work in this respect as works of art do. They are mediators between world and earth. Games such as *Assassin’s Creed® Unity* put up worlds as the complex network of ideas, images, text and references that the French revolution is constituted of, but they are withdrawn from this world that has decayed. Yet, they start producing earth once the world has decayed. The production of earth happens when material things get involved and when fantasy and imagination get replaced by *physis* (Φύσις). A computer game could easily be misconceived as a completely fictional world,<sup>165</sup> but there are still DVDs and joysticks, consoles and mice, table desktops and fingerprints on touchscreens. There are also sounds of cooling fans, biscuit crumbs and coffee stains on keyboards that produce earth. For Heidegger production of earth happens when the work “pulls itself back” (“das Werk sich zurückzieht” Heidegger 1960: 42), when “the brightness and gloom of colour, the timbre of sound and the power of the word”<sup>166</sup> (ibid.) become significant.

On the one hand computer games present decayed worlds, as we have seen, yet on the other hand games are setting forth and produce earth (*Herstellung der Erde*) as the self-secluding (*das Sich-verschliessende*). This product, earth, is that special constituent in the games which adds itself to the world in order to complement the presentational achievement of the world by avoiding that the presented things become customary. Earth is secluded in its „unusualness“. Heidegger’s notion of earth is difficult to translate and probably rooted in ideas that made sense at the time, when he wrote “*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerks*” (1935/36). Already at that time, and even more so after the war, the notion of earth seems to be a high-risk term, if not a term that is impossible to be used. The notion of earth has been corrupted by Nazi ideology when they celebrated “blood and soil” (“*Blut und Boden*”) and threatened with scorched earth („*verbrannte Erde*”). For Heidegger earth refers to a notion of dense and semantically loaded materiality. He talks about the earthen mug that has been made from earth and that can be placed on earth – mediated through a table. In *Poetry, Language, Thought*, he says:

The potter makes the earthen jug out of earth that he has specially chosen and prepared for it. The jug consists of that earth. By virtue of what the jug consists of, it

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<sup>165</sup> For a radical deconstruction of the understanding of computer games as fictional worlds c.f. Eспен Aarseth’s lecture „Fictionality is Broken“ (Aarseth 2013)

<sup>166</sup> transl. by the author, German orig.: „das Leuchten und Dunkel der Farbe, der Klang des Tones, die Nennkraft des Wortes“ (Heidegger 1960: 42)

too can stand on the earth, either immediately or through the mediation of table and bench. What exists by such producing is what stands on its own, is self-supporting. When we take the jug as a made vessel, then surely we are apprehending it--so it seems--as a thing and never as a mere object. Or do we even now still take the jug as an object? Indeed. (Heidegger 1971: 165)

Heidegger's earth is a nostalgic attempt to find a counterpart to civilisation and human activity. "Earth is effortlessly indefatigable without purpose and goals."<sup>167</sup> (Heidegger 1960: 43) No wonder that Adorno, Heidegger's philosophical arch-enemy, polemicalised that those who talk about a nature that is untouched by man evoke the image of nature's destruction by industry. In "Dialektik der Aufklärung" Horkheimer and Adorno refer to a nature that is „without purpose and goals“ when they say:

Nature, that is conceived as an opposing remedy to society by the mechanisms of the ruling classes, pulls it into the calamities of this very society and sells the former off to the latter. Pictorial affirmations of the trees being green, the skies being blue and the clouds moving gently, turn nature into a cryptogram of industry chimneys and gasoline stations.<sup>168</sup> (Adorno and Horkheimer 1947: 157)

Adorno and Horkheimer address the culture industry directly with the aforementioned statement, but they have Heidegger in mind for holding some responsibility for such an ideological framing of nature – even though Heidegger used the term earth for what is usually called nature. For Adorno, Heidegger's interplay of earth and world and the impeachment of contradictions under the umbrella of the work of art belonged to what he detested as jargon of authenticity ("Jargon der Eigentlichkeit") (Adorno 1964)

In order to stick to Heidegger's notion of earth and earthen things for objects like works of art and computer games, one would have to extend the notion of materiality considerably. Maybe a „network of things“ might be one direction thoughts could be leading us to.

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<sup>167</sup> transl. by the author. German orig.: „Die Erde ist das zu nichts gedrängte Mühelose-Unermüdliche.“ (Heidegger 1960: 43)

<sup>168</sup> transl. by the author, German orig.: „Natur wird dadurch, daß der gesellschaftliche Herrschaftsmechanismus sie als heilsamen Gegensatz zur Gesellschaft erfaßt, in die unheilbare gerade hineingezogen und verschachert. Die bildliche Beteuerung, daß die Bäume grün sind, der Himmel blau und die Wolken ziehen, macht sie schon zu Kryptogrammen für Fabrikschornsteine und Gasolinstationen.“ (Adorno and Horkheimer 1947: 157)



Fig. 4: Gamers in front of a games-world that has been “put up”

## Conclusion

For computer games “Herstellung der Erde” or setting forth and producing earth is accomplished not in the game that works on the monitor screen, but in the network of actors and in the physicality of a gaming environment. To put it bluntly, when gamers create habitual modes of playing, surrounded by pizza-boxes, cola bottles, friendship rituals and a jargon of the gaming community, then earth is produced. At the same time world is withdrawn, because the objects that are played with are not any longer worlding. The objects, like tanks, solders and airplanes have been withdrawn from the world. The process of producing earth reinforces withdrawal from world, because the earthen environment increases consciousness about the game not to be mixed up with allegedly authentic worlds. What I want to suggest here is that a social setting that is abundant of what Heidegger calls earth, is counterproductive to illusion. When games produce earth they accelerate the process of becoming aware of the decay of worlds. The decay of worlds is under such circumstances not any longer an inhibiting factor for an understanding of the work and the world. On the contrary works of art and computer games might accomplish a deeper understanding about decayed worlds when realizing. that world-decay is an irreversible process. As Heidegger put it: “World-withdrawal and world-decay can never be undone.” (Heidegger 1971: 40) This need not lead towards disquiet and lament that “the image errs”. (Heidegger 1955) The image might tell us that what we see is not a worlding world. The image might truthfully report of its Being-withdrawn from the world.

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# Mouseology – Ludic Interfaces – Zero Interfaces

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“When destroying the mouse,  
Trembling cursor represents last statement of the mouse  
Motion of the mouse and the cursor are recorded simultaneously  
They will be replayed in parallel on your desktop.”  
(exonemo)

The destruction of a mouse is certainly a most radical act of interface modification. Exonemo, the Japanese duo made up of Sembo Kensuke and Yae Akaiwa, have developed a series of execution rituals for computer mice that presents the harmless little electronic device as a victim of some weird kind of “Techno-Aktionismus”. The shamanistic ritual of torturing electronic devices with hammers, drills, and feet or of drowning them in pools is reminiscent of voodoo practice where the lifeless needs to be killed in order to prove that it always was alive. Exonemo kill mice on stage as if they would want to suggest to the audience that there is some life in the wires, the capacitors and the printed circuits. Several experimental works ranging from sound and video processing, software programming, hardware circuit bending, and live performance have been developed by the artist-bricoleur couple from Japan. In a performance that took place during Coded-Cultures festival in Yokohama on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2009, one could spot post-animistic belief in the life of mice. Artists and audience did their best to destroy computer mice in various ways, some of them reminiscent of exorcism and pest-related hysteria. The artists who label themselves “mouse-art” pioneers, misinterpret on purpose what media art is about and what it is not about.

To paraphrase Hans Ulrich Reck in a statement on the myth of media art [Reck, 2002], we mistake Joseph Beuys by calling him a felt and grease artist, but we also mistake exonemo by calling them mouse artists. Exonemo is quite aware of that and their attempt to mislead us into some mouse-centered analysis should be defended through a mouseology that looks at mice from a mouseological - rather than a museological - viewpoint. We need to understand exonemo’s work as a rebellious attack on hardware and software technology and their work as a lasting commentary on our evolving relationship with technology - whether that be a sense of alienation or reconnection.

The “concept driven circuit tweakers”, a label for exonemo invented by Vicente Gutierrez [Gutierrez, 2010], have reanalyzed the contexts of computers and human-computer interfaces and investigates a new potential of computer technology.



Fig. 1: Danmatsu Mouse by exonemo (2007)

Exonemo's inviting DIY style and rising popularity have led these two rebel programmers to be often considered the new face of Japan's media art scene. Exonemo's DIY style and pop-appeal made them key figures in Japan's media art scene. The style and attitude exonemo cultivate so well is an international style that a network of friends share, that are connected in an effort of “people doing strange things with electricity”. More than 100 groups in cities like Tokyo, New York, Manchester, Linz and elsewhere form a network of “dorkbot” electro-shamans and produce such wonderful devices like the Danmatsu mouse or the “iLog” by Owl Project, founders of the Mancunian Dorkbot. As you might have guessed an iLog is an iPod made from wood. Or to be more precise the iLog Rustle that you see on the image below is of wood from the species Laburnum, a small poisonous tree with yellow flowers. The iLog reintroduces nature to electronics and even if the wood of the device only covers the electronics inside, it reunites forests with the urban

contemporary jungle with a similar tongue-in-cheek attitude that make the danmatsu mouse a post-natural, digital device with an animal spirit.



Fig. 2: iLog Rustle by Owl Project (Simon Blackmore, Antony Hall, Steve Symons) Manchester (2006)

Owl Project paraphrases the tacky advertisement talk of Apple, when they announce the little wooden tool on their webpage:

“Call it astonishing. Unbelievable. Impossible, even. Then pick it up and hold it in your hand.  
Take in the brilliant splinter-less wooden display. Run your thumb around the rose wood wheel. Your ears begin to perk up.  
That’s when everything becomes clear: It’s an iLog.”



## Ludic Interfaces versus Straight Interfaces

Many years before the Wii remote controller made a gaming audience refocus from content to interface, artists explored new forms of man – machine, machine – machine, and machine – woman interface configurations. Pieces like Jeffrey Shaw’s “The Legible City” (1988), Mary Flanagan’s “Giant Joystick” (2006), Leif Rumbke’s “Wargame” (2005), or Jess Kilby’s “Center of the Universe” (2007) are art games with unconventional interface concepts based on playfulness as the main design objective. We will call these interfaces “Ludic Interfaces” to distinguish them from technically engineered interfaces like the ASCII keyboard or the mouse. The installations, tools and concepts differ from traditionally engineered systems as they are often

- playful,
- rich in connotative power and surprise,
- custom-built, aware of regional and historic context,
- critical, and
- inviting co-creativity, user-generated or user-driven content (or radically oppose those possibilities).

Traditional interfaces of a type that is technically motivated and developed in a straightforward manner are often:

- effective,
- universally applicable,
- predictable,
- globally available, and
- unaffected by regional or historic context.

I will call technically engineered interfaces “straight interfaces”, to differentiate in between ludic and straight as two fundamentally different approaches towards human - computer interaction.

Ludic interfaces appropriate what they find in computer games, artistic experiment, interactive media, media conversion, social networks, and modding cultures to offer tools which are adaptive to cultural specificica and cultural change, and are sensitive to gender-related, age-related and ethnic specificities.



Fig. 3: Ludic Interface by Jess Kilby: Center of the Universe (2007)

Jess Kilby's RFID Tarot table consists of a hand-painted black table with letters and signs drawn upon it, and a white set of cards containing radio-frequency tags. The installation is an example for a ludic set-up where the interface contributes significantly to the magic of the game. Hidden information within the blank cards allows the RFID reader, a digital tarot reader automaton, to interpret information hidden from the human eye. Kilby's system interprets the information contained within the cards and displays videos of a frightening future. The game could certainly be implemented as a Flash simulation or be built for a 2D monitor display system, but without the materiality of the ludic interface, without the special lighting, and without the artist dressed in a fortune teller's dress the game would not work at all.



Fig. 4: Ludic Interface by Mary Flanagan: Giant Joystick (2006)

The same holds true for Mary Flanagan's "Giant Joystick". It is the interface with all its materiality, erotic connotations and haptic features which makes the ludic installation work so well.

## Ludic Potential versus Lusory Attitude

At first glance it seems that objects do not hold a potential for playful application per se. A wooden stick can be a toy. A stone can be a toy. A cunningly designed toy can be a toy – or it can not be a toy. It depends on whether the object is used playfully - or not. It is not a property of a stone or stick to be a toy, as anything can be played. It seems to be rather the application context, that makes an object a toy in a given situation and at a given moment. Take a handful of LEGO bricks as an example and drop them in a 1970ies European child's bedroom. Then take the same bricks and place them in an Egyptian temple in 2000 B.C. Finally try placing the LEGO bricks in front of a curator of a contemporary design museum in downtown Tokyo. What you will find, is that the bricks will be used as a toy in one of the cases and as a sacred object or a piece of design history in the other cases. It seems therefore reasonable to locate the ludicity not in the object itself, but in a potential user at a given time and space instead. It has been suggested by Salen and Zimmerman and others to assume that a "lusory attitude" [Salen and Zimmermann, 2004] is the main driver for playfulness vis-à-vis a toy or an object of any kind. But this approach is problematic. What is a toy, if objects are assigned ludic potential by the users? If a toy is an object that can be played, a stone is a toy as well. Taking a user-centered approach in the style of Salen and Zimmerman and extending their notion in the direction of intentionality one would have to say that an object becomes a toy, when users decide

to play with it. Does this imply that objects that are not played with, are disqualified from being called toys? That would indeed make the LEGO bricks in the design museum non-toys. A consequence of such an approach would be a split in the world of LEGO bricks, some of them being toys at a given time and others being non-toys. We seem to be caught in a dilemma! If we suggest that playfulness is owned by the object, we cannot explain how stones and sticks can become toys at times. If we suggest on the other hand that playfulness is constituted by the player's attitude, we declare everything on this planet as a potential toy. There seems to be a way out however.

What keeps us from saying that ludicity is constituted by a socio-historic setting, in other words that culture owns the property of playfulness, or that play is constituted within culture. That sounds like a resurrection of Huizinga's point. [Huizinga, 1955] We would however understand culture in a much smaller sense than Huizinga did. Not as an anthropologic constant, but as an instance of a set of cultures, that are coded and recoded at any time. Playfulness would from this point of view be an asset in a dynamic field of coded cultures. Playfulness would – as a consequence of that – also have different shapes and flavours according to the cultural codes it is embedded in. We would possibly have to sacrifice a notion of historically stable playfulness and have to replace it with a multitude of playfulnesses: Spartan playfulness, Roman or Carthagian playfulness, medieval playfulness, modern or postmodern playfulness, and the ludic attitude of our days.

To investigate more specifically about how play happens at any of the mentioned historical conditions, it seems worthwhile to look at the hardware and software connecting humans to a device or a built environment. These interfaces can be computer keyboards or skateboards – and sometimes both of them.



Fig. 5: Ludic Interface by Tobias Leingruber: Skatekeyboard (2010)

## The Interface is the Message

In order to understand the potential of interfaces for any human-machine interaction, it makes sense to look at games as a rich field of interaction set-ups and concepts. We conceive a game as a system of rules, a player, physical or virtual objects to play with, and a regional and historical context to be played in. When we try to find out, what's in a game, we might look for meaning on different levels of the game. We could find meaning in the rules and the development of moves within the rule-system. We could alternatively search for meaning in the role the player adopts in the game. In particular the player's position in a socio-historical context could be interpreted as the meaning of the game. Another approach is however to interpret the interface between man and machine, machine and machine, or woman and machine as the crucial element in the production of ludic experience and ludic meaning. I want to call these approaches

- ludo-centric,
- role-based,
- socio-historic, and
- interface-led.

Ludic interfaces lend themselves to shift focus from rules and roles to processes of deconstruction of rules, roles and socio-historic settings. For this reason game art often focuses on the interface – or, as I will demonstrate later, on an apparent lack of

interactivity within the interface provided. Both approaches, i.e. the deconstruction of interfaces or the destruction of meaningful interface functionality, are artistic strategies to criticize commercial interface design and to suggest provocative alternatives to middle of the road interface standards. Ludic interfaces and Zero interfaces contain artistic statements intended to oppose ideological concepts in HCI (human computer interaction) and to set free playfulness in the process of (wo)man-machine communication.

## Leaving the Magic Circle?

The level of “lusory attitude” [Salen and Zimmermann, 2004] that a game can provide seems to be enhanced by the interface used to play the game. A joystick glues the gamer’s hand to any space fighter action game, a steering wheel feels good in the hands of someone playing a car racing game. On the other hand a fire button might alienate a gamer from conducting eco-friendly simulations and a rocket launcher device seems to be of little help for Mattel’s “Barbie goes Shopping” game (- except in the case of extremely cynical gamers). The interface also sets up a tacit agreement on how to play and how not to play. A steering wheel device with a gas pedal connected to it imposes constraints upon the player’s actions. It clearly suggests to go right or left and to accelerate or decelerate. The setup does not encourage us to go up and down, because steering wheels are not designed to control Z-Axis moves. The interface is therefore as much of an inhibiting device as it is an enabling one. We are controlled by the interface’s constraints when we think that we are in control. Straight interfaces are ideological in this regard, as they contain implicit rules, where we least expect them. Ludic interfaces and game art pieces like the ones mentioned above point our attention towards the potentially wide range of interaction patterns that we are usually not invited to partake in. Ludic interfaces oppose the ideological aspect of straight interfaces by ridiculing their functionality or by opening up the field of possible interaction. In many cases ludic interfaces are built on the attitude of the trickster, the spoilsport or of the jester.

## Interpassivity

Interactivity is at the core of gameplay in any conceivable computer game. It seems impossible to imagine how gameplay would work, if there was no interactivity between human and computer involved. But what happens if a gamer writes a script to enable his or her avatar to perform certain actions in the absence of the player? The game artist who lets the game engine go on its own, rejects his responsibility to control the avatars, he does not get entangled into the quest of loss or win, and he rejects the basic rule of any game, which is: You have to play! The spoilsport does however not leave the arena completely. He remains a voyeur, a spectator of an action he enjoys passively. In this regard the introduction of auto-executables, i.e. software agents physically detached from the players, and other modes of delegated play can be righteously called interpassive gaming. Pfaller and Žižek point out that the

psychological aspect of interpassivity is grounded in our subjectivity. Pfaller and Žižek convincingly demonstrate how certain works of art seem to provide for their own reception. [Pfaller, 2000] One cannot help feeling that these artworks enjoy themselves or that we enjoy through them. [Van Oenen, 2008] The mechanism described by Pfaller and Žižek can again be found in games and their modes of performance. It is not only Game Art, but everyday gamers' practice where interpassive phenomena can be observed. Delegated enjoyment and delegated fear are possible forms of letting go in First Person Shooters. We know that it can be fun to just camp in an MMORPG and watch others play through the eyes of an avatar. We have experienced delegated death fears when about to be shot and we know peer players who take some masochistic interpassive delight in being fragged. But even less martial areas of disguise and simulation like the SecondLife environment will disclose interpassive delegation of love, lust and longing. [Fuchs, 2008]

## Artistic Interpassivity: Zero Interfaces

Leif Rumbke's "Wargame" restricts interface action to a "Stop the Game" command only - implemented as a nuclear fire button's binary single function. The interface in striking red and impressive size limits the player's interactivity to one single non-reversible command.

Conceptually related but functionally inverse is game art like Corrado Morgana's "CarnageHug". The game runs in auto-execution mode and does not allow for interactivity except for the minimal "Start" command. CarnageHug uses the UnrealTournament 2004 games engine, to set up and run a bizarre, self-playing spectacle. Morgana removed the weapons from the level and has the player pawns attack each other in a ridiculous massacre without player-based gameplay objectives or other constructive teleological human-player commitment. The game runs in a disinterested manner as far as winning and loosing the game is concerned. If we are prepared to follow Kant's suggestion that disinterest will open the door to understanding the faculties of the observed object, interpassive works like Morgana's CarnageHug therefore qualify as a works of art or at least focus our attention upon something outside the magic circle of normal gameplay.



Fig. 6: Corrado Morgana: CarnageHug. Auto-executable game (2007)

Morgana is a spoilsport in the traditional sense of the word, because he denies us the simple pleasure of man-machine interaction and intentionally shrinks the potential of the interface usability down to degree zero. The interface is a “Zero Interface” that mocks interactivity. Interfaces like those throw us back to a degree zero of playing. [Barthes, 1953] The installation however does not make us completely leave the magic circle of the game. We take part in a reinterpretation of boundaries of the magic circle. The tournament action as we know it is reterritorialized into the artistic arena. And almost at the same moment that we think of having left the magic circle of Unreal Tournament we find ourselves caught in the magic circle of the game called art. We keep watching and we keep being caught.

In cinema this phenomenon is best represented in machinima, the theatre of machinic artifacts. Machinima as the paradoxical attempt to watch gameplay without playing, is another popular non-sport where the spectator becomes spoilsport and traitor on the game’s premises. Machinima puts the recipient into the voyeur’s seat and keeps oscillating between cinema and game experience without fully committing to any of them. It is "meditative inaction" - as Christiane Paul rightly calls it - that ridicules interaction in games [Paul, 2006].





Fig. 7: Mathias Fuchs: Borderline. Machinima (2009)

If we can enjoy the outsourcing of enjoyment, we have to either declare this as a perverse, a hysteric, and a neurotic attitude in a Lacanian perspective [trevor, 2010] [Van Oenen, 2008], or analyse it as a sophisticated spoilsport attitude of staying in the magic circle when pretending to leave it.

## Conclusion

Ludic Interfaces, Interface Destruction and Zero Interfaces are artistic strategies to play the spoilsport in an environment where “fair play” means nothing else than playing it straight. The ideological design philosophy of interface designers whose interfaces are

- effective,
- universally applicable,
- predictable,
- globally available, and
- unaffected by regional or historic context,

is challenged by Ludic Interfaces characterized of being

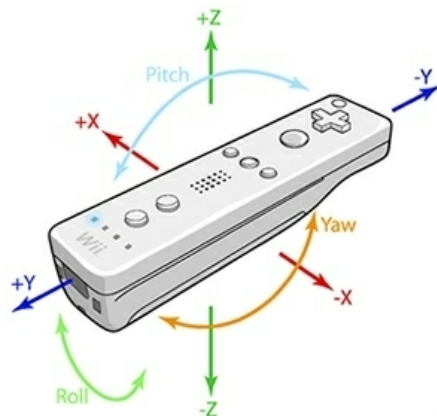
- playful,
- application specific
- rich in connotative power and surprise,
- custom-built, aware of regional and historic context,
- critical, and
- inviting co-creativity, user-generated or user-driven content (or radically opposing those possibilities).

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# Ludic interfaces. Driver and product of gamification

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The recent success of non-standard and playful interface devices like Wii Remote, Move, and Kinect is an indicator of a process that demonstrates that ludic interfaces might be the core driver for a transformation in the sector of video games cultures and beyond. Yet, ludic interfaces are drivers—as well as driven by social developments known as the ludification (Raessens, 2006; Fuchs & Strouhal, 2008), or the gamification of society (Schell, 2010; Bogost, 2010; Ionifides, 2011; Deterding, Khaled, Nacke, & Dixon, 2011). The interfaces hold up a mirror to social processes that are reflected within recent interface design. The changes we are about to see are of relevance to age and gender-related issues, to the attitude and the style of the gaming community, and to a gamification of non-gaming cultural groups and settings. Ludic interfaces demonstrate how playfulness is about to intrude systems, devices and relationships that were once governed by determinism, control, and straightforward teleological thinking.

It is not so much computer hardware or the computer's software, and to a disputable amount only the user, that determines direction and pace of gamification, but in the

first instance the interfaces that mediate in between human and machine. The interaction of (wo)man-machine systems is at the core of a “co-evolution” (Grunwald, 2002) of human-machine systems. Gamification processes that alter the mode of this very interaction between humans and machines are indicators—on a superstructure level—of how basic relations amongst humans are changing. It seems therefore not sufficient to study the effects of gamification on an object level by investigating images, sound, and the textuality of games, nor does it seem sufficiently encompassing to study playfulness as a subjective property of the player individual. We suggest studying gamification at the point where game and players meet: the interface.

Historically, this approach responds critically to earlier theoretical positions within Game Studies that grasped video games from an object-based viewpoint (the video game image, the video game text, the video game algorithm) (Aarseth, 1997; Bogost, 2006) or from a player-based viewpoint (types of players) (Juul, 2003; Strouhal & Fuchs, 2008; Newman, 2001). We suggest here that video games can best be understood by an analysis of the interface (Fuchs, Mañas & Russegger, 2011).

One of the questions that arise from such a methodological framing is about which instance in the game-interface-player system owns ludicity. Is it the game where playfulness resides? Is it the interface? Or is ludicity encapsulated within the player’s attitude? The questions posed here are of relevance for the young medium of computer games, they are however related to a discourse that is known as the expressionist-arousalist dispute in musical semantics. The old question of whether the musical piece owns an emotional quality that expresses the composer’s feelings or whether emotions aroused in the listener are owned by him, or herself, has been dealt with by musicologists like Davies (Davies, 1980, 1994) and Kivy (Kivy, 1980, 2002) amongst many others. The problem reappears dressed in new clothes within the medium of videogames. It would be too early for the assumption that we can unfold the discourse by proposing an expressionist or arousalist theory of ludicity. Games inhabit a media-specific context, that is different to the musical context. As a consequence a theory of gamification would have to embrace game-specific foundations to arrive at valid assumptions on what happens with games and what games are about to effect on non-gaming sectors of society.

## Gamification, ludification, unaware gaming and *Ludifizierung*

Johann Huizinga’s suggestion that play was an essential—if not a primary condition—for the development of culture, has been stated in prominent form as early as 1938

(Huizinga, 1938), and been rephrased and modified by Caillois (Caillois, 1958), Sutton-Smith (Sutton-Smith, 1997) and others. The notion of a “gamification” or “ludification” of our society became however popular less than a decade ago. The view of games as the lead medium that drives our social development has only emerged recently. Our society is not any longer mainly influenced by the products and decisions Hollywood makes or by the formats and content the television industry imposes upon us, but by innovation and ideology that stems from video and computer games. If one wanted to describe gamification as the penetration of our society with methods, metaphors, values and attributes of games—as I suggest here—then ludification would be the infiltration of society with play-related aspects, i.e. methods, metaphors and attributes of play. What is a ludic method? Let us for example assume that an airline has flights for sale. Let’s furthermore assume that these flights are not sold at a fixed price, but that the airline offers to sell the flights according to a pricing scheme that is regulated on the following basis: the earlier you buy the flight, the cheaper it is. The later you buy the flight the more expensive it gets. If you try to buy your flight too late, i.e. after all the other players in the game have already bought their flights, you cannot buy the flight at all. This is a rule-set that works as the basis for a method to exchange services against money, and it is a rule-set that fulfills all of the criteria for a game (the magic circle included, because the method only works inside the magic circle. You would not be able to buy potatoes on the basis of the airline’s ludic setting). That is what I would like to call a *ludic method*. A *ludic metaphor* is a literary figure of speech that is built upon connotations to the semantic field of games and play. If I call a non-mandatory university lecture that students can select at will, a “wildcard” module, I use the notion of the wildcard metaphorically and I create connotations to card games, poker, sports, aso. A game-related constituent, to finish with this, could be a pawn, a token, a dice, or the graphic layout of a board game. A *ludic attribute* would be the property of such a constituent, e.g. colour-code and typeface associated with a roulette table. If a spreadsheet that is used in work-related processes is adopting the attributes of game-related objects, and appropriates—to stick to the example—the look and feel of a roulette table, we might talk about the gamification of a software product. Accordingly we might talk about gamification of cultural processes or social activities. There is a massive amount of activities that are shaped according to gaming cliché or gaming tradition: university ranking tables, employee of the month contests, user-interfaces for company webpages, academic assessment regulations, aso. Jesse Schell goes as far as stating “...every second of your life you’re actually playing a game in some way” (Schell, 2010). Even if one does not want to follow him there, it will be possible to detect gamification at many occasions in the sense that Deterding, Khaled, Nacke, and Dixon define it. They talk of gamification as “the use of game design elements in non-game contexts” (Deterding, Khaled, Nacke & Dixon, 2011). This definition is assuming that a design process and an intended transfer of design elements take place when

gamification happens. I prefer to speak of the “penetration” of society or the “infiltration” of social sectors, to point out that ludification and gamification happen most often unconsciously and that they spread like wildfire. To paraphrase a statement of William S. Burroughs that he made on the nature of language, one might say that “Gamification is a virus”. Penetration, infiltration and viral behaviour are features that point out that gamification might not always be valued in a positive manner. Ian Bogost became provocative in that regard when he sarcastically stated in a Gamasutra feature: “I had been trying to ignore gamification, hoping it would go away, like an ill-placed pimple or an annoying party guest or a Katy Perry earworm” (Bogost, 2006). Of course Bogost knew that this pimple would not go away.

In the German-speaking academic world the notion of *Ludifizierung* has been used in a way that is not synonymous to ludification. Authors like Böhm place Ludifizierung in close vicinity to pedagogy. Their research is a dialectical investigation into “Pädagogisierung des Spiels” and “Ludifizierung der Pädagogik” (Böhm, 2007, p. 225). In other words, they observe the ludification of pedagogy just as one side of the coin that says on the other side: let us turn play into pedagogically relevant activity (*Serious Games* as it is called now). The reason why German theory is so much concerned with pedagogy when talking about ludification lies in the history of Game Studies there, that is heavily influenced by German idealism and in particular by Friedrich Schiller’s *Letters upon the Aesthetic Education of Man*. In the 15th letter he states: “For, to speak out once for all, man only plays when in the full meaning of the word he is a man, and he is only completely a man when he plays” (Schiller 1795, transl. Harvard Classics, Letter XV p. 9, 1909). For Schiller education was inextricably connected to play.

There is another notion introduced by Markus Montola, Annika Waern and others that holds a close relationship to gamification and stresses the fact that we do not always notice when we are gamified or when the software we use is gamified. This is the notion of *unaware gaming* (Montola & Waern, 2006). The authors suggest that we often play, even if we do not consider it as being involved in a game. This is an interesting counter-strike to the theoretical approach that proposes that gamification is consciously consumed. The concept of unaware gaming leaves it open whether the process of gamification leads towards increased usability and user-friendliness or whether gamification could under certain circumstances be considered as ideology.

## Ludicity is a Property of the Game

Much of the rhetorics the games industry uses is based on the assumption that there are applications or devices that are playful per se. *FarmVille* or other add-ons to

facebook and similar social media tell us that the application is fun to play. The smiling faces on the package of a *WiiRemote* controller want to tell us that by using the controller we will encounter a joyful playtime. Playfulness is marketed as a property of the game itself. The reification of playfulness as a property of an object is of course a seductive suggestion. It suggests that everybody can buy pleasant ludic experience by buying the object. But can an object of any kind be playful?

At first glance it seems that objects do not have a potential for playfulness *per se*. A wooden stick can be a toy. A stone can be a toy. A cunningly-designed toy can be a toy—or it can in praxi not be a toy. It depends on whether the object is used playfully or not. It is not a property of a stone or a stick to be a toy, as anything can be played with. It seems to be rather the application context that makes an object a toy in a given situation and at a given moment. Take a handful of LEGO bricks as an example and drop them in a 1970s European child's bedroom. Then take the same bricks and place them in an Egyptian temple in 2000 BC. Finally, try placing the LEGO bricks in front of the curator of a contemporary design museum in central Tokyo. What you will find is that the bricks will be used as a toy in one of the cases and as a sacred object or a piece of design history in the other cases. It seems that playfulness can never be owned by the object alone.

## Ludicity is owned by the game-designer and communicated via the game

It seems therefore reasonable to locate the ludicity not in the object itself, but in the intention of a designer who expresses his or her ludicity *via* an object, a piece of software, or a device. This model of understanding how ludicity comes into play is close to the concept of expressionist theory in music, where musicologists like Bouwsma (Bouwsma, 1950) and Meyer (Meyer, 1956, 1973) proposed a transfer mechanism of composers' emotions into musically communicated emotional patterns. Musical expressionist theory was criticized for not taking into account any misinterpretations or deliberate deconstructions of musical meaning and musically mediated emotions by the listener (Fuchs, 2010b). The same criticism would hold true for a ludologist, expressionist approach. Even if the game designer wants to convey joy to the player, the emotion felt could be sadness, frustration or anger instead. It is well known that America's Army did not succeed in delivering the message or the emotional bias intended to be received by all of the players (Wilson, 2008; Huntemann & Payne, 2010). Ludicity might be a designer's state at a certain time in the design process, but who tells us that this will be picked up by the user in the end? If a playful state is felt by the game designer, ludicity might be his, but we can not expect that the game is able to transfer the existential orientation or mental state.

## It's the player, who owns ludicity

Let us have a second look at the LEGO bricks mentioned above. It looks as if the very same bricks can carry a higher or lower degree of playfulness in different contexts and for different recipients. Therefore, it seems reasonable to locate the ludicity not in the object itself but in a potential user at a given time and space instead. It has been suggested by Salen and Zimmerman (Salen & Zimmermann, 2004), who themselves refer to Bernard Suits (Suits, 1978), that we can assume a *lusory attitude* as the main driver for playfulness *vis-à-vis* a toy or an object of any kind. In musical semantics a related approach is known as *arousalism*. According to that it is the recipient and not the performer or composer that creates and owns affects, emotions, and connotations. In its most radical form arousalists believe that the whole universe of feelings and ideas is constructed in the head of the listener, with no signifying based on the sign-signifier relationships intended by the author. In musical semantics this approach would find it difficult to explain why most of the listeners read similar emotions, and even musicologists that are often called arousalists, prefer to declare themselves as “almost-arousalists” like Jerrold Levinson (Fuchs, 2010b) or “weak arousalists” like Aaron Ridley (Beever, 1998).

In Game Studies, an arousal approach would be equally problematic. What is a toy if objects are assigned ludic potential exclusively by their user? If a toy is an object that can be played with, a stone is also a toy. By taking a user-centred approach in the style of Salen and Zimmerman and extending their notion in the direction of intentionality, one would have to say that an object becomes a toy when users decide to play with it. Does this imply that objects that are not played with cannot be called toys? That would indeed make the LEGO bricks in the design museum non-toys. A consequence of such an approach would be a split in the world of LEGO bricks, with some of them being toys at a given time and others being non-toys.

We seem to be caught in a dilemma! If we suggest that playfulness is owned by the object, we cannot explain how stones and sticks can sometimes become toys. If we suggest, on the other hand, that playfulness is constituted by the player's attitude, we declare that everything on this planet is a potential toy. There seems to be a way out, however.

## The interface is the ultimate ludic device

In order to understand the potential of interfaces for any human-machine interaction, it makes sense to look at games as a rich field of interaction set-ups and concepts. We



conceive a game as a system of rules, a player, physical or virtual objects to play with, and a regional and historical context to be played in. When we try to find out what's in a game, we might look for meaning on different levels of the game. We could find meaning in the rules and the development of moves within the rule system. We could alternatively search for meaning in the role the player adopts in the game. In particular, the player's position in a socio-historical context could be interpreted as the meaning of the game. However, another approach is to interpret the interface between man and machine, machine and machine, or woman and machine as the crucial element in the production of ludic experience and ludic meaning. We want to call these approaches:

- ludocentric,
- role-based,
- socio-historical, and
- interface-led (Fuchs, 2010a).

Ludic interfaces lend themselves to shifting focus from rules and roles to processes of the deconstruction of rules, roles and socio-historical settings. For this reason game art often focuses on the interface or on an apparent lack of interactivity within the interface provided. Both approaches, i.e. the deconstruction of interfaces and the destruction of meaningful interface functionality, are artistic strategies to criticize commercial interface design and to suggest provocative alternatives to middle-of-the-road interface standards. Ludic interfaces and zero interfaces contain artistic statements intended to oppose ideological concepts in HCI (human computer interaction) and to set free playfulness in the process of (wo)man-machine communication (Fuchs, 2010a).

It seems that interfaces always have a ludic potential because they are pivotal points between two systems. This seems to be the position where slack, to-and-fro or "Spiel" — as Gadamer calls it (Gadamer, 1977) — can take place. This is especially true with regard to computer-based interfaces. An essential quality of the digital medium is its ludic potential. Not only can it connect anything to anything, if the necessary interface protocol is developed, but it also makes everything that is translated into its language highly malleable. Ludic interfaces appropriate what today's computer games, artistic experiments, interactive media, media conversion, social networks and modding cultures have at offer. The new and innovative types of interfaces might influence how gender-related, age-related, and ethnically specific play can develop new forms and hopefully emancipate from mainstream commercial gaming.

## Conclusion

Our interest in the ownership of ludicity is motivated by the question of how gamification works, and by the related question of what instance in the human-interface-machine system is most vulnerable to infiltration by gamifying processes. Gamification spreads from entertainment to war, from war to work, and from work to the web, and back. The critical investigation of the potential ownership of ludicity by toys and games, or alternatively by the player has demonstrated that the interface in between game and gamer is most likely to be infected by the virus of gamification. It seems that a society is best prepared to be gamified if the lusory attitude of the whole society is on a high level. It is not the playfulness of the individual gamer or of a group of gamers that gets gamification going. By assigning lusory attitude to a social setting or a social group—and not to an individual player—one clearly escapes the dangers that the notion of lusory attitude holds when interpreted on an individual player level (Salen, Zimmermann, 2004). Salen and Zimmerman leave it open where the attitude comes from and hint—without stating it explicitly—that there might be an instinctive drive to play, not unlike Friedrich Schiller's *Spieltrieb* (Schiller, 1795). Schiller's concept of an instinctive drive is not far from Suit's, Salen's and Zimmerman's lusory attitude. Both suffer from the same problem: Where does the drive come from? Societies are historically constituted and therefore do not follow any preprogrammed drive. We will therefore have to find the mechanisms that make certain historical states of society or sociological settings receptive to play and receptive for gamification. A preparedness for connecting any social activity with game-related rules, behaviour and paraphernalia is the breeding ground for gamification on a wide scale.

As a consequence, societies with high lusory attitude will turn anything into games or into toys. This is where it becomes apparent that talking about Gamification is talking about core driving mechanisms of a society or predominant social groupings within. Gamification is a trend of dramatic changes that take effect on technology, work, war, sports, politics aso. Our hypothesis is that interfaces tend to turn into playful objects of their own, to successfully follow the trend of gamification. And in using these ludic interfaces, we increasingly turn work, war, sport and health into gamified processes.

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# Interpassives Spielen

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## Abstract

Es ist erstaunlich, dass Spielinteressierte Interesse daran finden können, anderen SpielerInnen beim Spielen zuzusehen, während sie selbst nicht spielen. Robert Pfaller beschreibt Verhalten dieser Art als „Interpassivität“ (Pfaller 2000) und beruft sich dabei auf Ideen Slavoj Žižeks zum interpassiven Subjekt (Žižek 1998). Im Falle des Let's Play- Phänomenes stellen sich folgende Fragen:

- Wie verhält sich die Betrachtung eines Computerspieles zur Durchführung eines solchen?
- Ist ein Let's Play Video eine Form delegierten Genießens?
- Kann man ein Computerspiel delegiert genießen ohne es zu spielen, oder ist die Betrachtung aus der Ferne eine Vorstufe, Verzögerung oder gar Verschiebung eines interaktiven Erlebnisses?
- Wie muss unser Verständnis von Spiel erweitert werden, wenn wir Let's Play Videos als „extended play“ (Tremmell und Gilbert 2014) verstehen wollen?

Der Beitrag versteht sich als eine kritische Fortentwicklung der Ideen zur Interpassivität, die für spielferne Bereiche von Pfaller (2000), Mannoni (1985) Mladen Dolar (2000), Žižek (1998) u.a. vorformuliert wurden.

## Keywords

playability, interpassivity, Minecraft, delegiertes Genießen, Passivität, Spielfreude, Spielbarkeit

Wenn es wahr ist, dass „playability“ (Spielbarkeit) zu den unverzichtbaren Konstitutiva eines Computerspiels gehört (Lindley 2002; Salen und Zimmerman 2004; Sánchez, Zea und Gutierrez 2009), dann muss man wohl akzeptieren, dass es ohne Spielbarkeit kein Spiel gibt. Man muss sich dann auch darüber wundern, wie Spielinteressierte Interesse daran finden können, anderen SpielerInnen beim Spielen zuzusehen, während sie selbst nicht spielen. Das Betrachten eines/einer anderen Spielers/SpielerIn genügt nicht den Voraussetzungen, die Spielbarkeit ausmachen. Sánchez beschreibt Spielbarkeit als „das Ausmaß zu dem bestimmte Spieler bestimmte Ziele erreichen können“, und fügt hinzu, dass dabei „Wirksamkeit, Zufriedenheit und Spaß“<sup>169</sup> in wesentlichem Zusammenhang stehen müssen.<sup>170</sup> Nun mangelt der Betrachtung eines Let’s Play-Videos jegliche Möglichkeit, die Spielziele zu erreichen. Von Wirksamkeit oder Effizienz im Sinne Sánchez’ kann schon gar keine Rede sein. Ja, selbst der Spaß und die Zufriedenheit kann angezweifelt werden, wenn man – wie der Autor – Jugendliche beobachtet hat, die sich den bisweilen recht langwierigen und oft auch langweiligen Beschreibungen eines komplexen Spielzusammenhanges ausliefern. Die Rezeption von oftmals langatmigen, dilettantisch vorgetragenen und ungeschickt ausformulierten Privatmythologien zu bestimmten Spielen und Spielsituationen kann unmöglich als unterhaltend eingestuft werden. An den Gesichtern der ZuseherInnen kann man ablesen, dass es um Spaß hier nicht geht.

Spielbarkeit wurde von verschiedenen AutorInnen mit Interaktivität in Verbindung gebracht. So verorten Katie Salen und Eric Zimmerman (2004) Spielbarkeit in der Form von Interaktivität, die sich auf vier verschiedenen Ebenen manifestiert und ausspielt:

- kognitive Interaktivität,
- funktionelle Interaktivität,
- explizite Interaktivität und
- „beyond-the-object-interactivity“

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<sup>169</sup> González Sánchez: „Playability represents the degree to which specified users can achieve specified goals with effectiveness, efficiency and specially satisfaction and fun in a playable context of use“. (Sánchez 2009, S. 357)

<sup>170</sup> Julian Kücklich und Marie Fellow verstehen Spielbarkeit ähnlich: „... playability as the “extent to which a certain game has the capability to provide enjoyment for a player over an extended period of time - what creates interest from the player, keeping her/him ‚glued‘ to the joystick“ (Kücklich und Fellow 2009, S. 5) Die Let’s Play-ZuseherInnen ‚kleben‘ nun allerdings ganz sicher nicht am Joystick.

Obwohl Salen und Zimmerman die kognitive Interaktivität auch in Spielen gegeben sehen (Salen und Zimmerman 2004, S. 59), funktioniert diese Form der Verbindung zwischen einem Werk und seinen BetrachterInnen am besten für statische Objekte wie Gemälde, Skulpturen oder Environments. Die vorgegebene schnelle Gangart eines Let's Play-Videos lässt keine Zeit zum (kognitiven) Interagieren. Das hat der/die aufgezeichnete SpielerIn ja bereits für die RezipientInnen besorgt. Die funktionelle Interaktivität ist im Falle des Let's Play-Videos ebenfalls nicht gegeben, da jede Form der Eingabe- und Interaktionselemente wie Joysticks, Screenbuttons oder Chat-Felder fehlen. Die explizite Interaktivität, die Salen und Zimmerman als „using the joystick to maneuver“ und „clicking the non-linear links of a hypertext“ (Salen und Zimmerman 2004, S. 60) bezeichnen, ist völlig unerreichbar. Im Let's Play-Video ist die Nichtlinearität ja gerade durch Linearität ersetzt. Das Video läuft ab und es läuft immer gleich ab. Schließlich könnte man noch fragen, ob denn der vierte Typus von Interaktivität, die sogenannte „beyond-the-object-interactivity“, zu finden sei. Salen und Zimmerman sehen diese Form der Interaktivität in extra-medialen Kurationsprozessen gegeben, die sie auf fragwürdige Weise dem Bereich der Interaktion einfangen wollen: „Will Superman come back to life? Does Kirk love Spock?“ (Salen und Zimmerman 2004, S. 60). Vera Marie Rodewald beleuchtet in ihrem Beitrag in diesem Band wie Inszenierungsformen, die die Fangemeinde als Ergänzung und Subtext zu Let's Play-Videos kreieren, eine Kommunikation zwischen den Fans und den Let's Play-MeisterInnen konstruieren. Ich sehe jedoch keinen Grund, dies als Interaktion mit dem jeweiligen konkreten Computerspiel zu betrachten, und gehe daher in der Folge davon aus, dass die Betrachtung eines Let's Play-Videos interaktionsfrei abläuft.

Was verleitet einen/eine Rezipienten/Rezipientin eines Videospiels dazu, das Spiel nicht interaktiv zu bedienen, sondern es passiv zu betrachten? Robert Pfaller beschreibt Verhalten dieser Art als „Interpassivität“ (Pfaller 2000), merkt allerdings an, dass diese Interpassivität nicht mit Passivität zu verwechseln sei, und beruft sich dabei auf Ideen Slavoj Žižeks zum interpassiven Subjekt (Žižek 1998). Pfaller erklärt interpassives Verhalten, zu dem man auch das Betrachten eines Let's Play-Videos zählen muss, als „delegiertes Genießen“. Psychologisch geht es dabei um die Übertragungsfähigkeit von libidinösen Prozessen (Lacan 1987), kulturtheoretisch geht es um die Kompetenz in einer Kulturtechnik, die es uns ermöglicht, Nichtaktivität als Aktivität erleben zu können - oder zumindest „halb daran zu glauben“, dass jene eine solche sein kann (Pfaller 2012, S. 15; Fuchs 2010, S. 206). Bekannt und belächelt ist „delegiertes Genießen“ bei Fußball sehenden Fernseh ZuschauerInnen, denen nichts ferner läge, als *in persona* einem Lederball nachzulaufen oder im Zusammenhang mit Kunstinstallationen, die das Publikum in Betrachtung aktionsgeladener Prozesse einfrieren (Fuchs 2000).



Im Falle des Let's Play-Video Phänomenes stellen sich folgende Fragen:

- Wie verhält sich die Betrachtung eines Computerspieles zur Durchführung eines Computerspieles?
- Ist Let's Play-Videobetrachtung in jedem Falle als interpassives Verhalten zu verstehen?
- Kann man ein Computerspiel delegiert genießen - ohne es zu spielen - oder ist die Betrachtung aus der Ferne eine Vorstufe, Verzögerung oder gar Verschiebung eines interaktiven Erlebnisses?
- Wie muss unser Verständnis von Spiel erweitert werden, wenn wir Let's Play Videos als „extended play“ (Trammell und Gilbert 2014) verstehen wollen?

Der Beitrag versteht sich als eine kritische Fortentwicklung der Ideen zur Interpassivität, die im Hinblick auf verschiedene Medien von Pfaller (2000; 2012), Mannoni (1985), Dolar (2000), Žižek (1999) u.a. vorformuliert wurden.

## Wie verhält sich die Betrachtung eines Computerspieles auf YouTube zur Ausführung eines solchen?

Das Betrachten eines Computerspieles verhält sich zum aktiven Spielen des Spieles wie die Fernsehbeobachtung eines Fußballspieles vom heimischen Sofa aus zum körperlichen Einsatz am Fußballplatz.

Dennoch sind nicht alle FernsehzuschauerInnen Couch-Potatoes oder de-emotionalisierte KatatonikerInnen. Delegiertes Mitspielen erlaubt ein Mitjubeln, Mitleiden, Mitfluchen und Mitlachen, das affektiv ununterscheidbar ist vom Jubeln, Leiden und Lachen eines/einer aktiven Fußballspielers/Fußballspielerin. Die Bandbreite des delegierten Spielens reicht vom einsamen heimischen Fernsehen über gemeinsame Fernsehabend bis hin zu Gruppenrezeptionen in Sportbars, Eckkneipen oder vor den Großbildschirmen des öffentlichen Raumes. Bezeichnend für die Nähe des delegierten Spielens zum aktiven körperlichen Fußballspiel ist die Teiladaption der Kleidung, der Frisuren und der Gesten der Fußballvorbilder, wie wir sie ebenso in öffentlichen Let's Play-Rezeptionen beobachten können. Die T-Shirts der AnhängerInnen der niederländischen Nationalmannschaft beispielsweise sind von der gleichen Farbe wie die Trikots des Oranje Teams - nicht weil die Fans in der Sportbar zur Mannschaft der Nationalspieler gehören, sondern weil sie eine Affektliasion zu

dieser signalisieren möchten. Tatsächlich lässt sich die Zweiteilung der Dresscodes in einer Sportbar, in der gerade ein Fußballspiel ausgetragen wird, als ein Mimikry-Spiel im cailloisschen Sinne verstehen (Caillois 1958). Die Stufenleiter der Identifikation mit der Realsituation des Fußballspieles von sehr fern über teilempathisch bis zur Beinahe-Identifikation entspricht den Interaktionsmodi, die Pfaller als interpassiv beschreibt, die man mit Fuchs als Social-Gaming (Fuchs 2011: 330)<sup>171</sup> verstehen kann<sup>172</sup> und die schließlich – im Falle der vollverkleideten, gestisch und mimisch involvierten FußballkneipenakteurInnen - ein cailloissches Mimikry -Spiel darstellen.

Nicht viel anders beim Let's Play-Video: Nicht alle, die sich ein kommentiertes Computerspiel auf YouTube ansehen, tun dies in der gleichen Weise. Einige verkürzen sich die Zeit damit, andere benützen es als Gelegenheit, mit FreundInnen und Fremden über das Spiel zu fachsimpeln, und wieder andere fühlen und fiebern dem Spielerlebnis nach als würden sie selbst spielen. Mein Vorschlag läuft daher darauf hinaus, in der Beschreibung der Let's Play-VideospielrezipientInnen drei Typen vorauszusetzen, die personell an Einzelpersonen gebunden sein können, aber nicht gebunden sein müssen. Eine Person mag beispielsweise am Montag ganz allein zuhause ein Let's Play Video ansehen und am Freitag dann in einem Club mit FreundInnen ein anderes Video im sozialen Umfeld genießen. Die drei Typen, die ich vorschlage zu untersuchen, sind:

Typ A: Rezeption in Situationen, die ein individuelles Betrachten ermöglichen (allein, zuhause, während einer Bahnfahrt, im Wartezimmer, an Flughäfen, am eigenen Arbeitsplatz etc.).

Typ B: Rezeption in nichtinszenierten Betrachtungsumgebungen (mit FreundInnen, Fremden oder Familienmitgliedern).

Typ C: Rezeption in inszenierten Betrachtungsumgebungen (mit einer größeren Gruppe von Sympathisanten auf Computerspiel-Messen, in Showrooms der Games Companies, in Video-Lounges, Jugendclubs etc.)

Es sollen an dieser Stelle ein paar vorläufig noch unbewiesene Vermutungen angestellt werden, die erklären könnten, welche Motivationen Let's Play-BetrachterInnen dazu bringen, eher zuzusehen, als selbst zu spielen.

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<sup>171</sup> Social Gaming bezeichnet Spielmodi, die unter Bedingungen hochgradiger Vernetzung stattfinden, wie beispielsweise WoW, Eve Online oder viele Casual Games.

<sup>172</sup> Rob Gallagher setzte dem Konzept des Social Gaming in einer bislang noch unveröffentlichten Arbeit den Begriff des „Asocial Gaming“ entgegen (Gallagher 2015).

Der Typ A bevorzugt es, eine/n andere/n (den/die *defacto*-SpielerIn, ProtagonistIn und MedienheldIn des Let's Play-Videos) ein Spiel genießen zu lassen, anstatt sich selbst der Lust oder dem Vergnügen zu unterziehen, das Spiel eigenhändig zu spielen. Pfaller bezeichnet diese freiwillige Abgabe eines genussvollen Erlebnisses als „delegiertes Genießen“. Der/die EndbetrachterIn genießt „durch einen anderen“ (Žižek 1998, o.P.).

Bisweilen betreibt Typ A im Let's Play aber auch etwas, das in der Sprache des 18. Jahrhunderts als „Zeitkürzungsspiel“ bezeichnet wurde (Wieland 1796). Der Begriff des „Zeitkürzungsspiels“ bezeichnete Unterhaltungen, die als Zeitvertreib uns die Zeit verkürzen sollten. Was heute möglicherweise als Zeitverlust oder Zeitverschwendung, beschrieben werden würde, hatte im 18. Jahrhundert noch die positive Konnotation der „kurzen Zeit“ – oder wie es im Grimmschen Wörterbuch genannt wurde, der „kurtzweil“. Letztere stand als Synonym für Unterhaltung und stammt vom mittelhochdeutschen Wort „zît kürzel“ ab. Bisweilen ist der Typ A auch von einem Selbstausbildungsinteresse motiviert. Die Videos informieren über Tricks, Strategien, verborgene Schätze und Gefahren sowie über Codes und Konventionen der Community. Dies ist etwa so interaktiv wie eine Frontalvorlesung auf der Universität oder ein Dokumentarfilm im Fernsehen. Da aber dennoch ein Genuss am Spielen festzustellen ist, auch wenn dieser Genuss an den/die Let's Play-MeisterIn delegiert ist, kann man durchaus von einem interpassiven Erlebnis sprechen.

Der Typ B scheint das Bedürfnis zu haben, das nicht interaktive Spiel-mit-dem-Spiel zu sozialisieren und dadurch wenigstens eine Para-Interaktivität neben der Interpassivität zu erzeugen. Möglicherweise ist dies die „beyond-the-object-interactivity“ von der Salen und Zimmerman sprechen (Salen und Zimmerman 2004, S. 60). Hier liegen also zwei Aktionsformen nebeneinander. Die Interpassivität, die sich in der Abgabe der Spielaktion an den/die FremdspielerIn einlöst, und die Para-Interaktivität. Letztere ist eine Interaktivität, die vom Interaktionsziel verschoben ist und auf ein zweites Ziel gerichtet wird, im Freudschen Sinne also eine wahrhaftige „Verschiebung“ darstellt (Freud 1939).

Für den Typ C schließlich entsteht ein völlig neues Spiel aus der Sozialisierung und Remedialisierung eines Rezeptionszusammenhanges, der wichtiger ist als das rezipierte mediale Objekt selbst. Das Spiel, das im Let's Play-Video betrachtet wird, ist nunmehr die unwichtigste Sache der Welt geworden. Viel wichtiger ist, welche SympathisantInnenen zur Let's Play-Party aufgetaucht sind, welche Musik dazu gespielt wird und welche Biersorte dazu getrunken wird. In gewisser Weise ähnelt das Let's Play-Szenario vom Typ C den notorischen „Tatort“-Abenden in deutschen Gastlokalen. Nicht allen, die daran teilnehmen, geht es um Provinzkrimis mit

wechselndem Schauplatz und unbekanntem SchauspielerInnen.<sup>173</sup> Viele kommen, um FreundInnen zu treffen, um Musik zu hören oder um ihre Lieblingsbiersorte zu trinken.

## Ist Let's Play-Videobetrachtung in jedem Falle als interpassives Verhalten zu verstehen?

Interpassivität, wie sie Pfaller beschreibt, liegt vor allem dann der Let's Play Verhaltensweise zugrunde, wenn BetrachterInnen sich wie der oben skizzierte Typ A verhalten. Die Flucht vor dem eigenen Genuss, also der Spielfreude, die nach Sánchez (2009) gerade das Wesen des Spieles ausmacht, wird im Let's Play zu einer Flucht ohne Entkommen. Die Flucht des/der Let's Play-Non-Players/Playerin ist also kein Weglaufen oder Vergessen des Spieles, sondern eine Verschiebung des Genusses an einen anderen, in der Diktion Pfallers ein „delegiertes Genießen“, im Freudschen Sinne eine veritable Perversion. Der/die Let's Play-BetrachterIn ist demnach der/die Perverse, der/die zu sich finden muss, indem er/sie nicht mehr länger zusieht, wie andere spielen, sondern endlich selbst zu spielen beginnt. Was die Psychoanalyse als pathologisches Verhalten klassifiziert, ist als pervers nur deshalb zu bezeichnen, weil das Triebziel der Freude am Spiel nicht direkt, sondern indirekt, am Wege einer Übertragung eben, geschieht. Das macht das Verfahren aber keineswegs suspekt oder anrühlich. Warum soll ich meine Triebziele (und warum sollen die Let's Play-ZuseherInnen ihre Triebziele) ausschließlich auf der Diletissima einlösen?

Žižek weist anhand verschiedener Beispiele nach, dass eine indirekte, delegierte Triebbefriedigung wesentlich angenehmer sein kann als die direkte. So befreit mich das Dosengelächter in Sitcom Komödien von der Anstrengung, selbst Lachen zu müssen und erfüllt mich doch mit dem befreienden Gefühl, dass dem Humor in der Komödie durch lautes Lachen Ausdruck verliehen wurde. Auch Lacan plädiert dafür, von einem „decentration“ des Subjektes, also einer Auslagerung bestimmter Subjektqualitäten zu sprechen. Der Lacansche Gedanke zielt darauf hin, dass die Empfindung körperlicher Integrität nicht unbedingt an der Haut enden muss, dass Mitleid, Hass, Liebe sich unter Umständen auch aus dem Körperzentrum (oder gar dem Kopf) entfernen können. Im Falle des Computerspieles wäre in diesem Sinne zu fragen, ob sich Spielbarkeit und Spielerlebnis dezentrieren lassen und, ob es ein Spielglück außerhalb des Körpers des Subjektes gibt. In anderen Worten steht die Frage zur

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<sup>173</sup> Die Verwunderung vieler ausländischer Gäste über die „Tatort“-Begeisterung stammt genau daher, dass die Gäste nicht verstehen können, was an diesen Fernsehfilmen lokaler Provenienz und mittelmäßiger Qualität eigentlich eine Nationalhysterie auszulösen im Stande ist (vgl. Fletcher 2014).

Disposition, ob es interpassives Spielen gibt, das den Akt des Spielens und das Glück am Spiel als delegierten Genuss auf den Anderen verschieben kann.

## Kann man ein Computerspiel delegiert genießen ohne es zu spielen, oder ist die Betrachtung aus der Ferne eine Vorstufe, Verzögerung oder Nachwirkung eines interaktiven und genussvollen Erlebnisses?

Ein möglicher Einwand gegen die Beschreibung von Let's Play-Konsum als Interpassivität wäre der Nachweis, dass Let's Play stets einem „Do Play“ vorausgeht oder auf ein solches folgt. Das ist in vielen Fällen wohl der Fall, wenn auch nicht in allen. Beobachtungen im Kreis von Minecraft SpielerInnen lassen mich vermuten, dass viele Spielbegeisterte zwischen Let's Play und *defacto*-Spiel hin- und herpendeln. Meine Testgruppe, die sich durchgängig aus 8- bis 12-jährigen Berliner Minecraft SpielerInnen und Let's PlayerInnen rekrutierte, gab als Grund für einen Wechsel von eigenem Spiel zu Let's Play Gründe wie diese an: „Auf die Dauer zu nervig“ (S., 10 Jahre), „der kennt coole Tricks, die ich lernen wollte“ (B., 11 Jahre) oder „Minecraft macht mir eigentlich keinen Spaß mehr, außer auf YouTube.“ (G., 12 Jahre). Für präludische und postludische Erfahrungen dieser Art kann man von einem Wechsel des Mediums sprechen, der passive Medialität gegen interaktive austauscht, oder umgekehrt aus interaktiver Beschäftigung mit dem Spiel in die Passivität des Betrachtens zurückfällt. Für Robert Pfaller sind die Begriffe der Interaktivität und deren falschem Gegenüber der Passivität jedoch nicht gegenseitig ausschließend. Interpassivität stellt die Auflösung interaktiver Handlungsweise in faktischer Passivität dar. Das ist keinesfalls wertend gemeint. Ein interpassiver Genuss ist kein feiger Rückzug aus heroischer Aktivität, er stellt vielmehr eine kulturtechnische List dar, Genuss einlösen zu können und sich gleichzeitig der Fron mechanisch zu erfüllender Handlungsaufforderungen widersetzen zu können. Let's PlayerInnen optimieren in gewisser Weise das Odysseus'sche Prinzip der freiwilligen Fesselung mit sirenenhaften Freuden in die schmerzfreie und dergestalt verbesserte Variante der Spielverweigerung mit kombiniertem Spielgenuss. Aufgrund dieser listigen Vorgangsweise erspart sich Let's Play daher auch die Notwendigkeit einer Nachbefriedigung durch „richtiges“ Spiel. Der Genuss wurde bereits im falschen eingelöst. Gerade weil diese als Kulturtechnik zu betrachtende Strategie gewählt wird, kann sie auch ersetzt werden. Let's Play ist keine Zwangshandlung, und wer heute spielen lässt, mag morgen vielleicht spielen.

## Wie muss unser Verständnis von Spiel erweitert werden, wenn wir Let's Play Videos als „extended play“ (Trammell & Gilbert 2014) verstehen wollen?

Offenbar gibt es einen lebhaften Grenzverkehr zwischen Spielen und Nichtspielen, Spielinwendigkeit und Spieldraußenwelt: Grand Theft Auto V-SpielerInnen hören im Spiel Radiostationen, deren Sendemasten und Übertragungstürme außerhalb des Spieles in der Realwelt liegen.<sup>174</sup> Minecraft-SpielerInnen erzeugen Spielwelten, die die Grenzen von Musik, Fernsehen und Konsum verwischen (vgl. Trammell und Gilbert 2014). Möglicherweise ist der oben angesprochene Grenzverkehr ein Binnenverkehr, weil es die Grenze zwischen Spiel und Nicht-Spiel nicht mehr gibt. Unsere Vorstellung von Spiel muss sich angesichts solcher transludischer Phänomene erweitern:

„Das Konzept des Spiels ist ein bewegliches Ziel. Spiel mäandert zwischen all den Medien, in denen wir es am wenigsten anzutreffen glauben. Dabei nimmt es die unterschiedlichsten Formen und Färbungen an. Was wir nun brauchen ist ein neues Vokabular und eine neue Herangehensweise an das Phänomen Spiel. Es geht nicht mehr länger, dass wir Spiel nur als eine Aktivität verstehen. Wenn wir das tun, übersehen wir, wie das Spiel selbst zu spielen beginnt und wie es mit uns spielt“ (Trammell und Gilbert 2014, S. 393)<sup>175</sup>.

In dem Moment, in dem wir uns allerdings eingestehen, dass wir Spielball so sehr sind als wir SpielerIn zu sein glauben, wird unsere Vorstellung von Aktivität, Interaktivität und Passivität hinfällig.

„Wer Spiel nur als eine Form der Interaktivität sieht, verkürzt es aus all seinem Reichtum in das nur scheinbar Gegenständliche“ (Trammell und Gilbert 2014, S. 394)<sup>176</sup>.

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<sup>174</sup> Vgl. Trammell und Gilbert: „The crossover works in the other direction as well, as players of Grand Theft Auto V listen to terrestrial radio stations and watch broadcast television within the game.“

<sup>175</sup> Übersetzung des Autors, Orig. im Englischen: „The concept of play is a moving target. Play meanders into the most unlikely of media, and in so doing takes on different forms and tonalities. A new vocabulary and approach to play is required to counter traditional understandings of play which reduce it to something we do, and neglect the ways in which play can take on a life of its own, and forget how it is always also acting upon us.“

<sup>176</sup> Übersetzung des Autors, Orig. im Englischen: „Approaches that see play only as a sort of interaction will forever reduce play at its most profound to the seemingly mundane“.

Folgt man dem Ansatz der oben genannten AutorInnen, so wird klar, dass Ansätze, die Spiel als Form der Interaktivität begreifen wollen, fehlschlagen müssen. Verhaltensweisen und Gebrauchsweisen wie die der Interpassivität, die sich im Let's Play-Video eine Spielweise ohne Spiel erobert haben, ließen sich – so gesehen – dann doch wieder als Spiel verstehen. Allerdings als ein Spiel im erweiterten Sinne: „Extended Play“ eben.

## Schlussfolgerungen

Es macht Sinn, Let's Play als eine Form der Interpassivität zu sehen und auf der Ebene der Spielbarkeit und des Spielgenusses von einem „delegierten Spiel“ zu reden. Dennoch sind Let's Play-Kontexte so vielfältig und auch so unterschiedlich, dass man zwischen den Gebrauchsformen des einsames Betrachtens, der sozial eingebundenen Rezeption und der inszenierten Aufführung unterscheiden muss. Die entsprechenden drei Typen von Let's Play-KonsumentInnen, die in diesem Aufsatz vorgeschlagen wurden, unterscheiden sich im Grade des performativen Engagements. Sie unterscheiden sich auch darin, wie weit sie sich von ihrer interpassiven Attitude distanzieren können. Paradoxaerweise beweisen alle drei Typen, dass ihre Entfernung vom Spiel im engeren Sinne eine Einbindung in das aufzeigt, was man als „Extended Play“ oder ein Spielen und Gespielt-Werden im weiteren Sinne bezeichnen kann.

Es ist nicht unwahrscheinlich, dass die hier vorgeschlagene Typologie der Let's Play-SpielerInnen nicht vollständig ist. Gerade im Kontext künstlerischer Einbettung und Umformung des „delegierten Genießens“ am Spiel ließen sich wohl Typen der „als-ob“-SpielerInnen entwickeln, die nicht nur bezüglich interpassiver Attitude, sondern auch bezüglich der Reflexivität des vorgegebenen Spielens unterscheiden. Vielleicht müsste man ProtagonistInnen dieser Art als FalschspielerInnen zweiter Ordnung bezeichnen, weil sie vorgeben, falsch zu spielen indem sie behaupten, andere spielen zu lassen, während sie auf der zweiten Ebene doch wieder wahrhaft spielen – wenn auch ein anderes Spiel.

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# Get Yourself a Life!

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## Abstract

The paper tries to identify various flavours of interpassivity in a fictional online-universe and offers a few speculations on interpassive joy and despair in a massively populated multi-user environment.

Second Life offers a range of unforeseen possibilities for interpassive delight. You can be made dancing, have somebody drink and get drunk for you, become virtually pregnant or enjoy others finding out about being so. There are many different flavours of interpassivity in Second Life: Artistic interpassivity, economic interpassivity, political interpassivity, sexual and erotic interpassivity, to only name a few. Erotic interpassivity in Second Life is frequently condemned of opening the floodgates to an ocean of sin. A closer look at the interpassively accessible Sodom and Gomorrah shows however that our avatars find themselves in Sunday schools more often than in Sodom - and in the G-Max more often than in Gomorrah. Economic interpassivity enables you to delegate financial success or loss. You want your Linden Dollars to be lost and won by someone else and can watch somebody else's *baisse* and *hausse* with little risk of suffering. Even more so it enables you to delegate the joy of gaining or losing money. Political interpassivity combines the best of Che Guevara-style excitement with the safe heaven of couch potatoism. There are indeed demonstrations in Second Life and politically correct online-rebels spend months worth of creativity to demonstrate against MacDonalds, destroy the Le Pen headquarters or save fractions of Virtual Rainforest. The alleged political action however suffers from an abundance of subjectivity and a simultaneous lack of focus on the object of action. The same holds true for artistic activity, erotic action, monetary transactions, and political activism in Second Life: The focus is on the feel-good factor and not on the do-good results. I will try to develop a suggestion based on Winnicott's notion of the "transitional object" in regard to interpassivity in Second Life.

## Erotic Interpassivity

There are high hopes amongst Second Life inhabitants and those who dare not go there, that flirts, seduction, and lust might be of a much more intense nature in virtual environments than in real life. The following chat shows how virtual flirting compares to conversations held in flesh and blood environments:

[4:17] Teleport completed from  
<http://slurl.com/secondlife/Seychelles/185/182/22>  
[4:17] Connecting to in-world Voice Chat...  
[4:17] Connected  
[4:19] Taylor Edenbaum: ladies first  
[4:20] Taylor Edenbaum: setz dich doch  
[4:21] Taylor Edenbaum: komm schon setz dich und nimm dir essen  
[4:21] Romeo Bergmann: Hallo Kinder, ist das Schwein schon fertiggebraten?  
[4:22] Ramona Laniss: wie setz ich mich?  
[4:22] Taylor Edenbaum: rechte maustaste auf bank  
[4:22] Romeo Bergmann: Na siehste, so geht das  
[4:23] Taylor Edenbaum: rechte maustaste auf die bank  
[4:23] Taylor Edenbaum: kommst du?  
[4:25] Taylor Edenbaum: und wo kommst du her  
[4:25] Ramona Laniss: kreis Unna  
[4:25] Taylor Edenbaum: aha  
[4:26] Ramona Laniss: oh kann das sein das ich dich höre höre was  
[4:26] Ramona Laniss: oh  
[4:26] Ramona Laniss: ja  
[4:27] Taylor Edenbaum: wie alt bist du denn?  
[4:27] Ramona Laniss: 35  
[4:28] Taylor Edenbaum: aha  
[4:28] Taylor Edenbaum: oh schon so spät ich muss leider gehen bb  
[4:29] Ramona Laniss: bye

It took the gentlemen whom I listened to in “Virtual Germany” only 12 seconds to find out, that the charming young lady called Ramona Laniss was 35 years old and from the Unna region, which obviously disqualified her as fit for further conversation: "... muss leider gehen." There are however thousands of girls and boys, women and men, out there, who dress-up, make-up and show up where the action is in Second Life. These places are the ones where erotic interactivity is hoped to be found and where interpassivity can be found. Why would one spend Linden Dollars as well as real currency to approach unreal toy companions, whom one will never touch, kiss or embrace. And why would one at the same time verbally behave as if one could touch, kiss or embrace such toys? Second Life users seem to resemble young children who

embrace a favourite toy as a substitute for the physically caring person. Donald Winnicott describes this apparently ambiguous behaviour, when he says:

When a mother (or carer) leaves an infant, they can easily become upset by the disappearance of their primary care-giver. To compensate and comfort for this sense of loss, they imbue some object with the attributes of the mother. This item is called a transitional object. [Winnicott, 1953]

In Second Life avatars can take the role of the transitional object. The object can be a substitute for human care-givers lost. Contemporary life-style in Western societies often enforces a lack of intimate contact and an isolation from physical partners. We work on desktop computers, we shop online, we try to entertain ourselves on the screen and we communicate with other humans via mobile phone. Most aspects of our lives are now mediated through electronics, where face-to-face, mouth-to-mouth, or hand-to hand communication was once prevailing. For the 21st century Western grown-up the outside world is separated from the inner reality of feelings and moods via a membrane of silicon devices. In “Affective Machines and Object Relations” Trevor Robert analyses the dialectics of outside world and inner reality in regard to the child’s development:

In this third intermediate area of experience, co-existing between inner reality and the outside world, the infant can still exercise its feelings of subjective omnipotence whilst trying out its newfound relationship with the object world of shared reality. Through creative play, initially with its first ‘not-me’ possession, or ‘transitional object’ (typically something soft, such as a blanket, a piece of cloth or a teddy bear), the infant can explore, and sometimes playfully deny, the separateness and relationships between self, mother (the breast) and the world. Paradoxically the child’s experience of this special object is as both ‘me’ and ‘not-me’. The transitional object never comes under magical or ‘omnipotent’ control like an internal object or fantasy, but nor is it outside the infant’s control like the real mother (or world). It is ‘always on the theoretical line between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived’, occupying an intermediate area ‘between the thumb and the teddy bear’, between ‘me’ and ‘not-me’, as a bridge between inner and outer worlds. [Trevor, 2009]

Winnicott describes the transitional object as typically soft, such as a blanket or soft toy, that is reminiscent of the mother’s warm arms and breast. By cuddling the object, they feel that they are cuddling the mother and thus feel comforted. Winnicott’s guess is that around 60% of children adopt such objects. My own guess is that 60% of so called grown-ups actively engaged in Second Life adopt transitional objects themselves.



Fig. 1: Transitional object found in Second Life: A not-me possession, “soft toy, that is reminiscent of the mother’s warm arms and breast” [Winnicott, 1953]

I need to say here, that I do not want to mock about holding transitional objects - be it a child or a grown-up who holds them dear. We all had our teddy bears, but then we also got rid of them at some point. If Second Life substitutes are transitional, they probably do what they are supposed to do. It becomes another matter however, if the transitional object turns into a life-long fixation.

## Academic interpassivity

The desire to have teaching and learning delegated to online lecturers and students fuels academic dreams of teaching without teachers. Second Life providers Linden

Labs are the property agent offering real estate to build campuses. They also deliver dreams about thousands of visiting students. For John Kirriemuir, who carried through a series of studies investigating how the Second Life environment is being used in UK universities, the rationality of delegated teaching is at least questionable:

Estimating the amount of time needed to develop in-world is difficult, as responses varied tremendously. Some academics spent relatively little time in constructing their site in-world, (...) However, others spent considerable time and effort, often cutting into their time outside contractual working hours. Ian Truelove from Leeds Metropolitan University reveals: "... if only I'd kept a log. At least 40 hours a week between myself and Graham Hibbert. Often a lot more. We've had the sims since April, so probably about 500 hours. The vast majority of that time was not in official work time, although Leeds Met have been very supportive, and allowed us to be flexible with our work time to develop the island. We have time allocated for research and scholarly activities, so some of the time fits into this. It is a form of entertainment for us, so we don't feel hard done by. It's better than watching TV." [Kirriemuir, 2007]

The time spent to find a more effective teaching environment could obviously have been spent on teaching in the first place. The academics concede however that the efforts have some similarity to entertainment.



Fig. 2: Academic activities in Second Life amongst projections of interpassive personae

It is also possible that in a time of dropping student numbers lecturers dream up student cohorts in virtual environments. These students are transitional objects compensating for the real students who disappeared for good.

## Political interpassivity

Not everything encountered in Second Life is as virtual as it might seem. Linden Dollars are a real monetary currency, social networking in Second Life facilitates real social interaction and the rules of the Virtual Environment are as real as the laws of any country or society. Second Life is neither unreal nor is it physically realistic. It is half-real - to use the notion of Jesper Juul [Juul, 2005]. Political action must grab the real part of the half- real if it does not want to be confused with science fiction. Political action would therefore have to focus on the concrete aspects of second Life, i.e. the legal structure of Second Life, the private ownership of the means of production, server technologies aso.

## Sexual interpassivity

For the uninitiated it seems pretty pointless to become pregnant in Second Life. Neither the joy of expecting a child nor the physical changes of the body can be felt, nor is there any implication in regard to relationships, family building or other modifications in perception, identity or social relationships. It comes therefore as a surprise that pregnancy simulation is announced as being desirable and that becoming-pregnant can even be sold. The programmer who goes by the name of “Lord Pepper” (Graf Pfeffer) claims that the results of his script are “jolly good fun. Frighten your boyfriend to death... For Sale L\$ 150.” An advert he set up in street poster size explains what kind of fun he has in mind, when he states:

Help I am pregnant and don't know who the father is.

Given a certain sense of humour this can possibly be exhilarating in real life, or on a “Bauertheater” stage, but how the joke translates into Second Life is unclear.



Fig. 3: Second Life fake pregnancy for sale

The make-believe of story-telling is so weak in populated synthetic environments like Second Life, that nobody would map the fictitious story into real life. Somebody who really rings the first life avatar of the woman being pregnant in Second Life, and asks her whether she is indeed pregnant, would have to be considered to be frighteningly naive. We know for sure, that whatever happens in Second Life need not happen or have happened in real life. One could argue that the audience in a burlesque theatre



or a cabaret would also never believe that the actress playing a pregnant woman is pregnant. In this sense one might consider Second Life as another form of theatre. Having said that, we have to acknowledge that make-believe in theatre allows us to look into a possible real world through the actors' acting. One of the reasons why we are excited in a theatre play is that we can make sense for our own lives or others' real lives by watching actors perform on a stage.

When we watch "Fröken Julie" by August Strindberg, we take the shaving razor she holds in her hand when she walks out of the door as a sign for a possible suicide. We are affected by that - not because of a fear that the actress might do some harm to herself -, but by the power of projecting the situation into a world of real people who could become completely desperate at certain moments of their lives. If however an avatar in Second Life says that she is rich or poor, wants to commit suicide or kill somebody else, we do not assume that this is relevant for real life. Why do certain mechanisms of affective projection work on a theatre stage and not in Second Life?

I would like to suggest that the manifestations of love, hate, admiration, or despair need a certain degree of uncertainty to trigger affective projection. Fröken Julie walks out of the door with the knife in her hand. She does not commit suicide on stage, but we assume that she might do so. In Second Life there is often no doubt about emotional states or bodily states. The fake pregnancy of the Second Life avatar, we mentioned earlier on, is unmistakably visualized by a growing tummy and the Script behind the body shape transformation runs without mercy and grace to perform what it is designed to perform. In theatre a playwright would have left some doubt about whether the character of the drama is really pregnant or not. In theatre, Strindberg left it open whether Fröken Julie will kill herself or not. This gives us space to think, to feel and to project our feelings upon affective targets in real life.

## Artistic interpassivity

Interactivity is at the core of gameplay in any conceivable computer game. It seems impossible to imagine how gameplay would work, if there was no interactivity between human and computer involved. But what happens if a gamer writes a script to enable his or her avatar to perform certain actions in the absence of the player? Game artists like Corrado Morgana find joy in running games in auto-execution mode and do not interact except for the minimal start command. The game art piece "Carnage Hug" by Morgana uses the UnrealTournament 2004 games engine, to set up and run a bizarre, self-playing spectacle. Morgana removed the weapons from the level and has the player pawns attack each other in a ridiculous massacre without game rules or other constructive teleological commitment. The game runs in a

disinterested manner as far as winning and loosing the game is concerned. If we are prepared to follow Kant's suggestion that disinterest will open the door to understanding the faculties of the observed object, interpassive works like Morgana's *CarnageHug* might easily qualify as a work of art or at least focus our attention upon something outside the magic circle of normal gameplay.



Fig. 4: Ljudmila: *id Tetris*. 2007

*id Tetris* is a browser based game by the game development studio Ljudmila. The classic Soviet puzzle game tetris had been reduced to a 1-dimensional farce of the 2D puzzle game. It is “meditative inaction” - as Christiane Paul rightly calls it - that ridicules interaction in games [Paul, 2006]. The mode the interaction seems to be corrupted by games like *CarnageHug* or *id Tetris*, and the level of agency the audience can enjoy is close to zero. The London based games show Zero Gamer obviously pulled strings in regard to Barthes's “Writing Degree Zero” [Barthes, 1953]. The games mentioned above lack any embellishment, thrill or flair. This is however not the only reason why they could be summarized as Zero Gamer games. The potential players find these games to be unplayed and unplayable. The game action paradoxically becomes something that has to be watched from outside the game. For the spectator the activity is taken out of interactivity.

Non-action as an activity, or interpassivity [Pfaller, 2000] [Zizek, 2007] in games can also be seen as a form of spoilsport practice [Fuchs, 2009]. The game artist who lets the game engine go on its own, rejects his responsibility to control the avatars, he does not get entangled into the quest of loss or win, and he rejects the basic rule of any game, which is: You have to play! The spoilsport does however not leave the arena completely. He remains a voyeur, a spectator of an action he enjoys passively. In this regard the introduction of auto-executables, i.e. software agents physically detached

from the players, and other modes of delegated play can be righteously called interpassive gaming. Pfaller and Zizek point out that the psychological aspect of interpassivity is grounded in our subjectivity. They convincingly demonstrate how certain works of art seem to provide for their own reception. One cannot help feeling that these artworks enjoy themselves or that we enjoy through them [Van Oenen, 2008].

The mechanism described by Pfaller and Zizek can again be found in games and their modes of performance. It is not only Game Art, but everyday gamers' practice where interpassive phenomena can be observed. Delegated enjoyment and delegated fear are possible forms of letting go in First Person Shooters. We know that it can be fun to just camp in an MMORPG and watch others play through the eyes of an avatar. We have experienced delegated death fears when about to be shot and we know peer players who take some masochistic and interpassive delight in being fragged. But even less martial areas of disguise and simulation like the Second Life environment will disclose interpassive delegation of love, lust and longing. If we can enjoy the outsourcing of enjoyment, we have to either declare this as a perverse, a hysteric, and a neurotic attitude in a Lacanian perspective [Van Oenen, 2008], or analyse it as a sozzphisticated spoilsport attitude of staying in the magic circle when pretending to leave it.

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# Social Games: Privacy and Security

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## Abstract

Recent online gaming developments and para-gaming environments i.e., the social software tools to communicate with fellow gamers, report, discuss and disseminate assets and experience, strongly resemble social media like Facebook or Twitter. It has therefore been suggested that games like World of Warcraft, Little Big Planet, The Godfather, or The Secret World should be called “social games.” Privacy and security is an issue in these social games, as the players of these games do often not realize that they inhabit environments that have real estate outside the safe borders of the Magic Circle. The games companies harvest information about the players in ways that are far from transparent. The author will present examples of data mining and harvesting of data within a playful environment, analyze code segments that implement data collection, and suggest methods of refusal, sabotage, or disclosure of breeches of contract.

## Keywords

social games, magic circle, scripting languages, digital footprint, computer forensics.

## 1 Digital Surveillance

Surveillance has been associated with punishment, with the notion of crime, and with torture or imprisonment. It has been described as adding to a disciplinary technique that penetrated modern society and became apparent in the structure of prisons, hospitals, schools and military organizations [1], [2]. Authors like Michel Foucault have focused on the institutional backbone of the modern national states to describe how discipline emerged as a new technological power [1]. In his analysis leisure,

entertainment or games play hardly more than a minor role. It seems that the “Magic Circle” that used to have ring-fenced play from all of society’s evil [3], has also kept surveillance out. There is of course and has always been cheating, hiding and penalties in games, but those were not considered criminal acts, camouflage or punishment in a Foucauldian sense. Recent developments in games technology, but also the social changes that stem from the phenomenal success of computer games challenge the concept of the magic circle [4], [5] and ask for an answer to the question of whether gaming can be seen as ordinary social practice that is influenced by power structure, economic system, mediatic transformations, and real world relevance in general [6].

It has been suggested that computer games that build upon a large number of online players and in particular games that are embedded in a framework of para-ludic activities like chats, memorabilia exchange, fanzines, gadget shops, and the like should be called “social games.” Such are World of Warcraft, Little Big Planet, Unreal Tournament, The Godfather, or The Secret World. Privacy and security is an issue in these social games, as the players of these games often do not realize that they inhabit environments that have real estate outside the safe borders of the Magic Circle. The games companies harvest information about the players in ways that are far from transparent. Data harvesting tools and technologies include the following: path tracking, eye tracking, heat maps, activity monitoring, non-game user information retrieval, and digital forensics. Data visualization toolkits like the one offered by Epic Megagames and less well-documented surveillanceware allows for the recording of location, time and speed of movement, appearance and dress code, aggressiveness, solidarity, social behaviour, anti-social behaviour, and many other session attributes.

## 2 Social Games Data Harvesting Technology

When playing online games the players leave traces on the terrain they wander about that are more accurate than footprints in the snow and certainly much longer lasting. It is of importance to game developers to track down where players used to walk. It is also important for game developers to know which possible paths are highly frequented and which ones are rarely used. Almost every modern game engine has built-in functions to record, store and transfer these paths to the central server, that have been taken by a player at a given time. Many game engines also offer tools to analyse huge sets of paths and to visualize the statistical data generated from these data sets. Alastair Hebson’s Unreal Visualisation Toolkit (UVT) allows users to record the paths that players make on a given Unreal map. The programmer’s company that aptly calls themselves Digital Footprints offers a data log mutator and a screen capture mutator. Mutators are add-ons to the game engine that perform special operations enhancing standard gameplay. If the implementation of the mutator

is not transparent to the user and if the programmer does not announce those special operations, no gamer would suspect that anything unusual takes place during gameplay. Whilst this is not a problem when used by games developers to create more interesting games, to optimize gameplay balance or to design terrain of high unpredictability, it poses a problem when used by parties with other interests. A marketing and advertising company can read whether in-game ads have been visited, it can observe whether certain content has been approached or what the mobility patterns of the players are. Players can therefore easily be classified as following certain consumer patterns, mobility modes or types of behaviour. The observation becomes even more useful when in-game eye tracking technology is used. Eye tracking is not at all easy in physical situations, but when the virtual eye is tracked in a computer game the accuracy of measurement is at a maximum. The data log mutator can record how long a player has been looking at an in-game ad, how often and how long he or she was focusing on an object or a detail belonging to that object. Games become a digital panopticon that outperform Bentham's invention: The ones that are under surveillance are not only deprived of facing their wardens, they do not even know that the wardens are looking at them. Surveillance algorithms become more powerful when they collect not only individual user data, but create complex statistical data. The location of an individual user is not of high interest for market analysis, a heatmap generated from the locations where millions of users walk through is of great interest. A heatmap can as a 2D graphical representation indicate behavioural patterns, preferences, gaps in the attention or knowledge of the user.

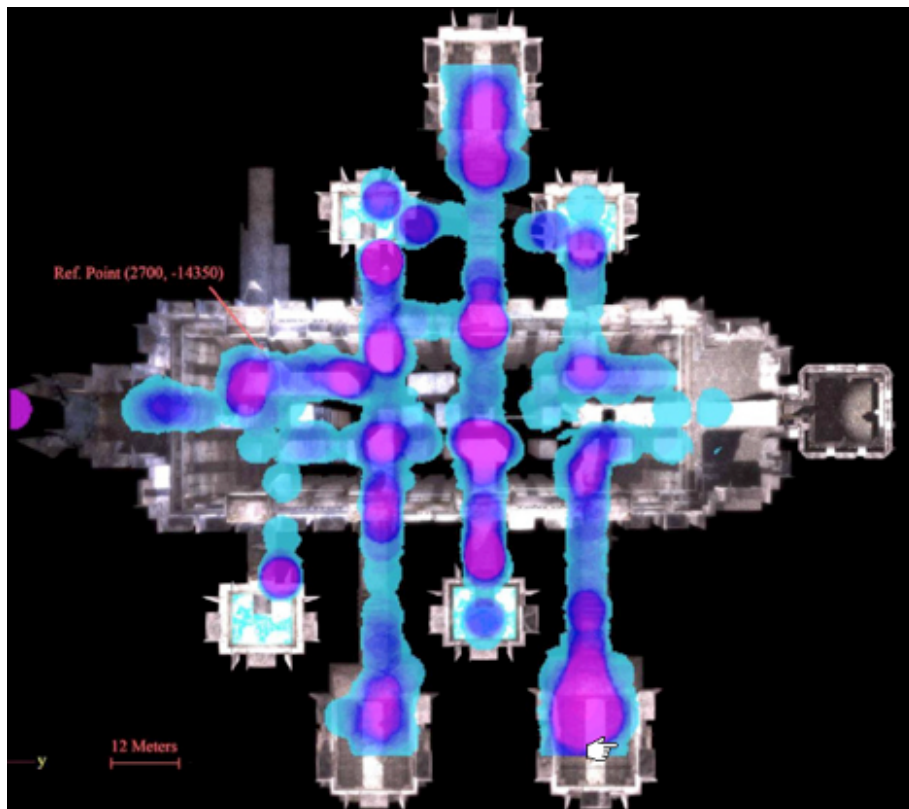


Fig. 1. Automatically generated heatmap of a Unity3D level. Frequently accessed areas are colour-coded in purple, rarely visited areas are in light blue.

At first sight one might think that the purpose of this is to track user experience throughout the world in order to assess which areas the gamers find interesting and which areas they are avoiding. This is often said to be used for debugging purposes or to improve gameplay for future updates. Epic Megagames states: “The purpose of this is to track user experience throughout the world in order to assess which areas the gamers find interesting and which areas they are avoiding” [7]. It is however quite obvious that the same map could easily be enhanced with information that goes beyond in-game information and contains user information or private data.

**Code Example 1:** Code sequence for the Unity3D player class to store player positions and to add personal user data to the generated log file that is contained in the file devlist.txt



```

var positionTrackingFrequency : int = 2; //How often to
store player position
private var timer : float = 0; //The timer
static var posArray : Vector2[]; //Local array storing
player position
private var arrayIterator : int = -1;

function Update(){
    timer += 1 * Time.deltaTime;
    if(timer >= positionTrackingFrequency){
        storePos()}}

function storePos(){
    timer = 0;
    var localArray : Array = new Array();
    if(posArray != null)
        localArray = new Array(posArray);
    localArray.Push(Vector2(transform.position.x,
        transform.position.z) )
    posArray = localArray.ToBuiltin(Vector2);
    arrayIterator++;
    Debug.Log(" " + posArray[arrayIterator] + "
Iteration = " + arrayIterator);}
import System.IO;
var fileName = "devlist.txt";

function ReadPersonalData () {
    var sr = new StreamReader("C:." + "/" + fileName);
    var fileContents = sr.ReadToEnd();
    sr.Close();
    var lines = fileContents.Split("\n"[0]);
    for (line in lines) {
        Debug.Log (line);}}

```

The information saved by the function storePos() saves the player's position at a certain interval, and the function ReadPersonalData() in the code example above contains information about the graphics card, processor, WiFi equipment and other devices that are installed on the player's PC, in the case of the author's PC a total of 168 devices. It is beyond the knowledge of most Unity users that such detailed information is polled and can easily be transferred to a company server via TCP/IP protocol. In this regard the algorithms providing the surveillance possibilities implement what Foucault called an "unequal gaze" [1], the constant possibility of observation, a one-directional view of the observer upon the information the user holds.

It does not happen very often that gamers become aware of path tracking, eye tracking or other surveillance techniques, and even less often do users complain about it. A recent protest about data harvesting in games took place, when German Battlefield 3 players sued the company Electronic Arts (EA) to stop spying on data that leaked to them whenever their game Battlefield was played. The online software component Origin, which was originally declared to spy on license fraud and to illegally install software from EA, seems to have the potential to send non-authorized user data to the company's server. The German television news programme "die Tagesschau" reported on the 8th of May 2012 that Thomas Schwenke, the lawyer of the plaintiffs in the Battlefield lawsuit, declared that "what looks like a copy protection mechanism, actually works like spyware" [8]. Evidence has been presented in this case that private data has been transferred to a server of Amazon company. As a partial success German gamers are now allowed to return copies of Battlefield 3 to stores. The German retailers Media Markt and Saturn have given refunds to customers for used editions of Battlefield 3, even after their PC keys had been redeemed. But even so, Electronic Arts did not concede to having violated user rights. "We have updated the End User License Agreement of Origin, in the interests of our players to create more clarity. Origin is not spyware. Neither do we use nor install spyware on the PCs of users." The updated End User License now contains a line that states: "We have taken every precaution to protect the personal and anonymous user data collected." This seems to say that there is still user data being collected and that Electronic Arts keeps the right to do with it whatever they want. This is not a unique case; other companies operate in a similar way.

Linden Labs, for example, has stated: "Our Privacy Policy sets forth the conditions under which you provide personal and other information to us. You understand and agree that through your use of the Service you consent to the collection and use of your information in accordance with our Privacy Policy. If you object to your information being used in this way, please do not use the Service."

### 3 Digital Panopticon

If social games companies have the possibility of establishing a system of surveillance, and if they do so sometimes in individual cases, or even regularly on a large scale, then one could rightly ask how far the encompassing surveillance system within social games resembles Bentham's Panopticon - and in what respect it differs from the latter. There is no doubt that digital surveillance has a greater ability to surveil subjects than the brick-and-mortar structures Foucault was worried about. The computer game Battlefield 3 that has recently been accused of spying on its users, sold 5 million copies in its first week of sales and, thereby, beat Gears of War 3 and FIFA

12, each of which sold 3 million copies. Digital surveillance resembles the processes that lead to discipline in a Foucauldian sense [1], [2] by replacing arbitrary actions of those who hold power with a systematic and anonymous system of surveillance. Foucault points out that the opacity of the system of surveillance contributes considerably to its success. In digital online environments an end-user agreement usually empowers the provider of the environment to investigate secretly, to pronounce judgment without the right of appeal, and to punish users by banning them from their online environment.

In Linden Lab's Second Life the end-user agreement demands that [9]:

“ ...you agree that you shall not:

- (i) take any action or upload, post, e-mail or otherwise transmit Content that infringes or violates any third party rights;
- (ii) impersonate any person or entity without their consent, including, but not limited to, a Linden Lab employee, or falsely state or otherwise misrepresent your affiliation with a person or entity;
- (iii) take any action or upload content that is harmful, threatening, abusive, harassing, causes tort, defamatory, vulgar, obscene, libelous, invasive of another's privacy, hateful, or racially, ethnically or otherwise objectionable.”

In case of an infringement of these conditions, users will, without having seen any evidence of the criminal procedure, be banned from Second Life. That any action of the criminal that is “otherwise objectionable” can lead to punishment evokes in a cynical manner what prisoners in the Gulag or in torture camps like camp Guantanamo experience. Foucault's description of discipline and the procedure of investigation fits well with the procedures Linden Lab executes, when banning inhabitants. These procedures do not relate to transparent codes of law, but to the symbolic affirmation of sovereign power. This sovereign power once was the king, the army, the national state, and is nowadays Linden Lab, Electronic Arts or SONY. These new sovereign powers can even override federal law or state law. As Linden Lab put it: “As a condition of access to the Service, you release Linden Lab (and its officers, directors, shareholders, agents, subsidiaries, and employees) from claims, demands, losses, liabilities and damages (actual and consequential) of every kind and nature, known and unknown (...) If you are a California resident, you waive California Civil Code Section 1542, which says: ‘general release does not extend to claims which the creditor does not know or suspect to exist in his favor at the time of executing the release, which if known by him must have materially affected his settlement with the debtor.’ If you are a resident of another jurisdiction, you waive any comparable statute or doctrine” [9].

There are similarities of the digital Panopticon, but there are also differences. For Foucault it was the body that worked as the physical centre and constituting factor for discipline and punishment. In the digital realm bodies are replaced by locations of actors. IP addresses or GPS-coordinates replace what the physical body once has been for surveillance. That is why Metadata is so important for a system of control. Once every image is time-stamped and location-stamped, the process of monitoring the generation and dissemination of information can be optimized. Software can be identified as legally copied or illegally cloned; emails can be assigned to paths; mail servers and client IDs images can be tracked down for the real physical location at which they were taken. The system of micro-power has no longer to refer to the body of the individual, but to the location of the actors in the system. In the age of disembodiment “disciplinary power” is no longer – as Foucault had it – coinciding with the birth of “an art of the human body,” but with the emergence and success of locationbased media and the importance of the politics of space. Indeed, when Foucault spoke of the four characteristics of individuality that discipline constructs as cellular, organic, genetic, and combinatory, I would suggest that digital discipline replaces the organic with the location-based whereas cellular, genetic and combinatory characteristics remain essential for digital discipline. Cellular aspects guarantee that the identity of the units is not corrupted by clones, copies or replicated assets. Genetic consistency is essential for tracking down generations of code, programme versions and the whole process of inheritance in object-oriented systems. Finally the combinatory serves to enhance the power of individual actors, to form clouds and distributed computing, and to establish discipline not only in the individual units, but in large systems as well.

## 4 Counter-Strike

Is there a chance to escape digital surveillance, if it is as powerful as the technical system suggests? Three suggestions should sketch alternative routes to escaping, playing with, and fighting digital surveillance.

### 4.1 Camouflage

This is probably the least delightful alternative, but still a chance to escape surveillance. The possibility of setting up firewalls, playing games secretly and in solitude without using the multiplayer mode clearly exists. One might choose to not connect to the Internet, and send emails anonymously from hotmail accounts at Internet cafes, but what life is that? Remaining completely invisible will turn the social gaming experience into a digital hermitage.

## 4.2 Manipulation of Data

Users with programming skills and with a profound knowledge of the systems they use can write software that filters the information they provide to the outside world or they can alter information that social games transmit to the game companies and the providers. The functions in programme example.1 would only require minor amendments to avoid the leak that prepares the device information for transmission. Change

```
var fileName = "devlist.txt";  
into  
var fileName = "noinformation.txt";
```

Then put a text file on your C: drive that contains any message to the games company and it will be sent there. This process of course, is very time consuming and one would enter a rat race of finding out where the next data leaks are in the programmes one has bought can be found.

## 4.3 Cloning and Multiple Identities

There have been successful attempts to escape control mechanisms by disclosing or confusing the personalization of actors in social games. In Second Life, there have been protests that gathered identical clones of avatars to show up at places and to demonstrate against constraints of Second Life civilian rights. By sharing an identical appearance, such interventions make a strong statement against the pseudo-individualism that is promoted by the company. The creation of self-spawning clones is subverting the possibilities of tracking down individuals and punishing them for breaches of the End User License Agreement. "Every Resident has a right to live their Second Life. Disrupting scheduled events, ... following or self-spawning items" are forbidden in Second Life as are demonstrations in real life authoritarian regimes. And in the digital world as well as in modern national states it is up to the sovereign, of course, to decide what a "disrupting event" is.

## 5 Conclusion

Social Games provide possibilities for monitoring user behaviour that other electronic media lack. In such games, it is not only possible to count how often a user visits a place where an advert is located; such games can also measure and document the duration of the eye contact with the object in question, to describe watching patterns

(or listening patterns) in detail, and to relate this to game states, movement patterns, private information and any other conceivable information that can be retrieved from the gamer's computer. The surveillance mechanisms that have been proven to have been installed in modern social games resemble the "unequal gaze" that Michel Foucault found characteristic for the technology of discipline and for the setting of Bentham's Panopticon. There are, however, differences in the way modern surveillance works and how digital surveillance in social games works. The body as the centre of modern pre-digital surveillance has been replaced by location as the main instrument of surveillance and a new micro-politics of power emerges that causes new threads but also new hopes for resistance.

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## Bewegte Spiele

# Zur Verschiebung des Verhältnisses von Spiel und Alltagswelt durch mobile Games

(gemeinsam mit Niklas Schrape, erschienen in: Natalie Binczek, Ludwig Jäger und Erika Linz (Hrsg.) Sprache und Literatur 111. 44. Jg., 2013, 1. Halbjahr. Themenheft: App-Kultur. Red. Stephanie Heimgartner. S. 69 – 83)

### Einleitung

Man fragt sich bisweilen, warum Smartphones nicht als Playphones bezeichnet werden. 58% der Applikationen, die für Android-Mobilgeräte heruntergeladen werden, sind Spiele (für Apples iPhone sind es noch beachtliche 33%)<sup>177</sup>. Smartphones sind nicht zuletzt als Spielplattformen zu verstehen. Durch ihre Transportabilität ermöglichen sie eine neue Qualität der sozialen Einbettung von Computerspielen. Während stationäre PCs und Konsolen der Spielpraxis einen bestimmten Ort zuweisen (z.B. das Wohnzimmer oder das Arbeitszimmer), erlauben mobile Geräte den ständigen und ortsunabhängigen Zugriff auf Spielerlebnisse. Kombiniert mit den technischen Möglichkeiten moderner Smartphones zur unmittelbaren Integration situativ gewonnener Daten – durch Photographie, GPS oder Bewegungssensor – bedingt dies eine fundamentale Verschiebung der Spiel-Dispositive (s.u.). Kennzeichen der Transformation ist eine gravierende Neuordnung des Verhältnisses von Spiel- und Alltagswelt.

Anhand von drei Momentaufnahmen soll dieser Behauptung nachgegangen werden. Im Fokus stehen drei charakteristische Ausprägungen mobiler Spiele: (1) *Casual Games* als populäres und massenwirksames Phänomen, (2) *Augmented Reality Games*

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<sup>177</sup> Vgl. <http://mobithinking.com/mobile-marketing-tools/latest-mobile-stats/e>(zuletzt geprüft am 23.7.2013)

als utopisches Versprechen der Technologie sowie (3) *Gamification Apps* als Mittel der Durchdringung spiel-ferner Bereiche mit Spiel-Strukturen. Die drei Phänomene lassen sich vor dem Hintergrund der Beschreibung etablierter Spiel-Dispositive begreifen.

## Die Dispositive des Computerspiels

In seinem Aufsatz „Die Dispositive des Computerspiels“ von 2008 beschreibt Michael Liebe die zum damaligen Zeitpunkt vorherrschenden Formen des Spielens in ihrer techno-sozialen Bedingtheit. Ihm geht es darum, den Begriff des Computerspielens zu differenzieren, denn „Computerspiel ist nicht gleich Computerspiel“ (Liebe 2008, S. 76). Die kulturelle Praxis des Spielens und ihre Plattformen sowie deren technologische Grundlagen stünden in einem Geflecht aus Wechselwirkungen, die Liebe im Anschluss an Foucault (1983) und Jäger (2001) mit dem Begriff des Dispositivs zu fassen sucht (vgl. Liebe 2008, S. 76). Seine These ist dabei, dass nicht von *einem* Dispositiv des Computerspiels gesprochen werden sollte, sondern von mehreren.

Liebe unterscheidet in diesem Zusammenhang (ebd., S. 77 ff) zwischen (1) dem *Dispositiv Arbeit*, das im Spielen am Desktop-PC im heimischen Arbeitszimmer und mit dem büro-adäquaten Bedieninstrument der Maus seinen sichtbaren Ausdruck findet – meist in der Form zeitintensiver Strategie- und Rollenspiele –, (2) dem *Dispositiv Freizeit*, exemplifiziert durch teure Arcade-Maschinen, die an sozial definierten Orten des Spielens aufgestellt sind, (3) dem *Dispositiv Wohnen*, welches in den Spielkonsolen vor dem gemütlichen Sofa und in Kontrollern, die zum Zurücklehnen einladen, Niederschlag findet und (4) dem *Dispositiv Mobilität*, welches 2008 noch vornehmlich durch so genannte *Handheld* Geräte – also tragbare Konsolen – charakterisiert war, auch wenn sich mit dem Verkaufsstart von Apples iPhone im Sommer 2007 bereits der Aufstieg spielkompatibler Smartphones und Tablets andeutete.

Zwischen den vier Spiel-Dispositiven bestehen vielfältige Interdependenzen, die auch historische Relevanzverschiebungen zeitigten. In den späten 1970er bis Ende der 1980er Jahre waren Arcade-Spielautomaten prägend für die kulturelle Praxis des Videospielens. Mit Beginn der 1990er Jahre wurden sie jedoch durch die Popularität von Spielkonsolen wie dem *Nintendo Entertainment System (NES)* oder dem *Mega Drive* (in den USA als *Genesis* veröffentlicht) von Sega in einen Nischenmarkt abgedrängt. 1989 veröffentlichte Nintendo den *Game Boy*, was der Praxis des ortsunabhängigen Spielens zum Durchbruch verhalf (vgl. Kline et al. 2003, S. 109



ff.).<sup>178</sup> Die zunehmende Verbreitung von Desktop-PCs im Laufe der 1990er Jahre weitete wiederum den Markt für Computerspiele auf Kosten der Konsolen aus – wobei die Popularität der PCs stark durch grafisch eindrucksvolle Spiele wie *Myst* (1993) und *Doom* (1993) begründet gewesen sein dürfte (vgl. ebd., S. 128 ff.). Mit der Veröffentlichung der *Playstation* von Sony und der *Xbox* von Microsoft relativierte sich die Popularität der PC-Spiele Mitte bis Ende der 1990er Jahre wiederum zugunsten der Konsolen (vgl. ebd., S. 151 ff.). Die Balance zwischen den Dispositiven hat sich also im Laufe der Zeit gravierend verschoben, von der *Freizeit* (Arcade) hin zu einem schwankenden Gleichgewicht zwischen *Arbeit* (Desktop-PC), *Wohnen* (Konsolen) und *Mobilität* (Handheld).

Zwei Überlegungen sollen dem Weiteren voran gestellt werden: Zum einen haben die Verschiebungen zwischen den Spieldispositiven zur Herausbildung unterschiedlicher Designmuster und Spielpraktiken geführt. Die Spiele vieler Spielautomaten waren oft dadurch charakterisiert, dass sie über kein finales Siegszenario verfügten und folglich nicht gewonnen werden konnten. Aus ökonomischen Gründen sollte das Spiel idealerweise niemals enden. „Game Over“ musste also stets bedeuten: Bitte das Spiel neu starten! In *Space Invaders* (1977) oder *Donkey Kong* (1981) geht es nicht darum, den endgültigen Sieg davon zu tragen, sondern die eigene Position im Highscore nach oben zu treiben. Die Bedeutsamkeit des Punktestandes potenziert sich dabei durch die quasi-öffentliche soziale Rahmung des Spielautomaten: Die eigene Spielleistung wird so gegenüber anderen sichtbar. Aufgrund ihrer öffentlichen Zugänglichkeit benötigten Arcade-Automaten Designstrukturen, die leicht erlernbar waren und zugleich kurze, dafür aber wiederholte Spielpartien einforderten, deren Erfolg eindeutig quantifizierbar und öffentlich vergleichbar war: deswegen der Highscore (vgl. Liebe 2008, S. 84). Die große Mehrzahl der Arcade-Games waren und sind actionbasiert. Im Sinne von Pias (2002, S. 11) kann folglich von einer Dominanz des *zeitkritischen* Spielens im Dispositiv Freizeit gesprochen werden.

In den 1980er Jahren wurden Spiele zunehmend beliebt, die auf sprachlich-schriftlicher Ebene das Erlebnis von Abenteuern ermöglichten. Solche Spiele, wie die ökonomisch weniger bedeutsamen Textadventures von Infocom (z.B. *Zork* 1980) exemplifizieren eine gänzlich andere Designstruktur von Spielen, in denen Öffentlichkeit, Vergleichbarkeit und Wiederholbarkeit kaum eine Rolle spielen. Solche für das Dispositiv Arbeit charakteristischen Spiele forderten vielmehr eine ausdauernde Einarbeitung, die überwiegend als Privatangelegenheit vor dem heimischen PC erfolgte. Die Form der Interaktion mit Textadventures kann als Austesten einer optimalen Navigation durch eine Datenbankstruktur beschrieben

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<sup>178</sup> Das erste mobile Spielgerät, nämlich „Auto Race“, wurde jedoch bereits 1976 von Mattel veröffentlicht. Hier lassen sich Hard- und Software jedoch nicht trennen.

werden, also als ein *entscheidungskritisches* Handeln<sup>179</sup> im Sinne von Pias (ebd.). Die Motivation erfolgt hier weniger über Punktestände als über Narrative, die der Spieler enthüllen und teils mitbestimmen kann. Für die Frühphase der PC-Spiele ebenfalls charakteristisch waren Strategiespiele, die ein geduldiges Austarieren von Parametern und Optionen, also ein *konfigurationskritisches* Handeln einforderten (vgl. ebd.) sowie Rollenspiele, welche die beiden skizzierten Handlungsformen in komplexen Anordnungen verbanden (z.B. die Spielreihen um *Ultima* 1981 und *Wizardry* 1981). Was konfigurationskritische und entscheidungskritische Spielformen verbindet, ist, dass beide einen langfristigen und kontinuierlichen Interaktionszusammenhang erfordern. Das Dispositiv Arbeit führte also zur Herausbildung einer gänzlich anderen Praxis des Spielens, in der nicht kurze, wiederholte und öffentliche, sondern lange, fortgesetzte und private Spielpartien vorherrschten (vgl. Liebe 2008, S. 79 ff.). Eine Ausnahme bilden dabei die sich erst spät entwickelnden Genres der Browser-Games sowie Massive-Multiplayer-Online-Roleplaying-Games (MMORPGs) wie *World of Warcraft* (2004). Browserbasierte Spiele wie *Travian* (2006) oder *Ogame* (2002) zeichnen sich durch ein fortlaufendes Spiel tausender Mitspieler aus, wobei es niemals pausiert. Die Spielsituation kann sich also beispielsweise auch dann grundlegend verändern, wenn ein Spieler gerade schläft. Da sämtliche zur Verfügung stehenden Handlungsoptionen Zeit erfordern, also nicht jederzeit wiederholt werden können, motivieren solche Spiele dazu, im Laufe des Tages immer wieder für kurze Zeit zu spielen.

Die Praxis des Konsolenspielens des Dispositivs Wohnen kann als Mischform gelten: Hier dominierten zunächst zeitkritische Spiele, oft als direkte Umsetzungen von Spielhallen-Klassikern. Sie wurden in der vertrauten Wohnumgebung und in einer Teilöffentlichkeit, nämlich der Familie oder dem Freundeskreis, ausgeübt (vgl. ebd., S. 85 ff.). Mit der zunehmenden Leistungsfähigkeit von Computern und Konsolen haben sich die Spielformen jedoch ausdifferenziert, so dass sich die schematische Einteilung nicht uneingeschränkt aufrecht erhalten lässt – nichtsdestoweniger bietet sie eine gute Grundlage, um die prinzipiellen Unterschiede zwischen den Spieldispositiven herauszustellen.

Das Dispositiv Mobilität schließlich überspannt die drei erstgenannten und zeichnet sich durch seine Ortsunabhängigkeit und extreme Vielfalt unterschiedlicher Spiele aus

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<sup>179</sup> Unter entscheidungskritischem Handeln versteht Pias Operationen der Spieler, die auf individuell zu treffende und den Spielverlauf beeinflussenden Entscheidungen fassen: Soll ich nach rechts oder nach links gehen? Soll ich den Fluss überschreiten oder auf meinem Ufer bleiben? Soche entscheidungskritischen Handlungen unterscheiden sich von anderen Handlungen, die beispielsweise auf territorialer Behauptung, Geschicklichkeit oder physischem Genuss an Geschwindigkeit, Taumel, usw. beruhen.

(vgl. ebd., S. 88 f.). Wie Markterhebungsdaten zeigen, manifestiert sich das Spiel im Dispositiv der Mobilität dabei heute zunehmend als Game-App.

Im engen Zusammenhang mit dem eben Dargestellten ist zu vermerken, dass die verschiedenen Spieldispositive grundsätzlich andere Verhältnisse zwischen Spiel- und Alltagswelt implizieren. Eine grundlegende Gedankenfigur, die immer wieder verwendet wird, um die Besonderheit des Spiels zu beschreiben, ist das Konzept eines geschützten Raumes, wie es der niederländische Historiker und Kulturwissenschaftler Johan Huizinga in seinem 1938 erschienen Buch *Homo Ludens* entwickelte.<sup>180</sup> In seiner Rezeption wurde es als so genannter „Magic Circle“ oder Zauberkreis populär (vgl. Juul 2006, S. 29 ff., Salen & Zimmerman 2003, S. 95). Huizinga zufolge ist es ein Kennzeichen des Spiels, dass es räumlich und zeitlich abgetrennt von der Alltagswelt stattfindet. Spielende begeben sich an einen bestimmten Ort (z.B. ein Fußballfeld) oder handeln an einem herausgehobenen Ort (z.B. dem Schachbrett), innerhalb dessen Regeln und Prinzipien gelten, die nur während des Zeitraums der Spielpartie akzeptiert werden. Man kann darüber streiten, inwieweit die das Spiel konstituierende Bindungskraft des Zauberzirkels beim Computerspiel gegeben ist (hier ergeben sich Regeln nicht aus sozialer Übereinkunft, sondern durch die Faktizität des Codes; vgl. Liebe 2008b). Nichtsdestoweniger bleibt festzuhalten, dass auch das Handeln im Computerspiel innerhalb eines zeitlich abgesonderten Rahmens stattfindet und sich nur an einem bestimmten Ort manifestieren kann – nämlich dem des Spielgeräts bzw. des Eingabe-Interfaces. Von Interesse ist an dieser Stelle nun die Frage nach den Verhältnissen zwischen den Zauberkreisen der Spiele und der Alltagswelt bzw. ihrem Äußeren, dem Nicht-Spiel.

Die Relevanz der Frage wird im Vergleich zwischen dem Dispositiv Freizeit und dem des Wohnens unmittelbar augenscheinlich. Arcade-Games werden auf Automaten gespielt, die in Spielhallen oder an öffentlichen bzw. halb-öffentlichen Orten wie Einkaufszentren oder Gaststätten aufgestellt wurden. Das Spiel kann sich nur an diesen Plätzen entfalten. Der Spieler kann dabei nicht frei über die technischen Mittel seines Spielens (die Automaten) verfügen. Im Dispositiv Freizeit werden die Orte des Spielens also von denjenigen definiert, welche die Automaten besitzen und kommerziell verwerten. Stellte man sich nun einen Stadtplan vor und würde darauf die Orte des Spielens durch Kreise markieren, dann erhielte man eine überschaubare Zahl solcher potentiell öffentlichen Zauberkreise, in denen sich ein? Spiel manifestieren könnte. Würde man weiterhin die Zeiträume des Spielens im Tagesverlauf markieren, träten klar abgetrennte Spielphasen zutage – schließlich

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<sup>180</sup> Im Untertitel der deutschen Übersetzung aus dem Jahr 1956 „Vom Ursprung der Kultur im Spiel“ soll klargestellt werden, dass Huizinga Kultur wesentlich durch das Spiel bedingt und geprägt sieht.

erfordert jedes Spielen zunächst, die Spielhalle aufzusuchen. Gespielt werden kann nur zu bestimmten Zeiten – nämlich in der Freizeit und auch dann nur während der Öffnungszeiten der Spielhallen.

Beim Dispositiv Wohnen dagegen verfügen die Spieler über ihre eigenen Spielmittel (die Konsolen). Spielen kann hier im Wohnzimmer jedes Einzelnen stattfinden. Anders als bei Arcade-Games vollzieht es sich grundsätzlich im Privaten oder Halb-Privaten. Würden man auch hier die Orte des Spielens in einer Karte verzeichnen, dann erhielte man eine Unmenge potentieller Zauberkreise, die jedoch jeweils nur sehr wenigen Menschen zugänglich wären. Die Spielphasen im Tagesverlauf könnten auch hier nur während der expliziten Freizeit stattfinden, jedoch unabhängig von Öffnungszeiten und auch häufiger, da kein Mehraufwand für den Weg zur Spielhalle erforderlich ist. Eine vergleichbare zeitliche und räumliche Struktur, man könnte von einer Chronotopologie sprechen, ist auch im Dispositiv Arbeit gegeben – auch wenn hier das Paradox besteht, dass arbeitsähnliche Handlungsmuster sich primär in der Freizeit entfalten müssen (der heimliche spielende Büromitarbeiter muss als Sonderfall gelten).

## Das Dispositiv der Mobilität

Das Dispositiv Mobilität bedingt jedoch eine gänzlich andere Chronotopologie. Auch hier verfügen die Spieler über ihre privaten Spielmittel (*Handhelds*). Im krassen Gegensatz zu Spielautomaten, zu Konsolen und auch zu Desktop-PCs sind Handhelds wie der Gameboy jedoch von vornherein auf Mobilität hin ausgelegt. Die Spieler können die Geräte bei sich tragen und sich so jederzeit dazu entscheiden, ein Spiel zu starten und damit in den Zauberkreis treten zu können. Das Spiel wird ortsunabhängig und bleibt doch zugleich privat. Das Verlassen der Wohnung (mit dem PC im Arbeits- und der Konsole im Wohnzimmer) bedingt keinen Schritt in die Öffentlichkeit – zumindest nicht im Hinblick auf das Spiel. In dem Moment, in dem der Spieler seinen *Game Boy* anschaltet, sich über ihn beugt und auf den Bildschirm blickt, eröffnet sich ein ganz privater Raum des Spielens.

Das Dispositiv der Mobilität ist durch die Gleichzeitigkeit des Privaten und der Bewegung im öffentlichen Raum gekennzeichnet. Der *Game Boy* erlaubt es, jederzeit in ein Spiel einzutreten, beispielsweise in der U-Bahn oder in einer Schulpause. Das bedeutet aber, dass Computerspielen nicht länger an vorgegebene Orte und Zeiten gebunden ist (nicht an die Spielhalle mit ihren Öffnungszeiten, nicht an das Wohn- oder Arbeitszimmer in der Freizeit). Diese Ungebundenheit hat gravierende Auswirkungen auf das Verhältnis zwischen Spiel und Alltagswelt: Der Wechsel zwischen den Sphären bzw. der Eintritt in den Zauberkreis kann viel öfter und auch für nur kurze Zeiträume erfolgen. Die Oszillation zwischen Spiel und Alltagswelt

kann rascher und in sehr viel höherer Frequenz erfolgen. Die zeitliche und räumliche Struktur dieses Dispositivs lässt sich somit kaum noch skizzieren: Prinzipiell kann jeder Ort zum Ort des Spielens werden. In der Regel wäre jedoch jeder sich eröffnende Zauberkreis das Privatvergnügen des jeweiligen Spielers und anderen verschlossen. Auch die Einzeichnung der Spielphasen im Tagesverlauf würde hier ein anderes Bild ergeben als bei den übrigen Dispositiven: Die gesamte Zeitspanne wäre übersät mit Flecken des Spielens, die vor allem mit Pausen und Phasen des Wartens korrelieren. Auch die Game-Apps der Smartphones müssen dem Dispositiv der Mobilität zugeordnet werden. Diese Kategorisierung darf jedoch nicht die historischen Verschiebungen zwischen den Dispositiven verdecken, die durch das Aufkommen der Game-Apps verursacht wurden. Sie sind keinesfalls bloße Fortführung der Handheld-Games, sondern verändern das Dispositiv der Mobilität fundamental.

Game-Apps sind Computerspiele auf der Basis mobiler Smartphones, die in App-Stores erworben und heruntergeladen werden können. Im Allgemeinen erfolgt ihre Bedienung über die in den Telefonen integrierten Touchscreens, aber auch Spracheingabe oder eine Steuerung durch Bewegungssensoren ist möglich. Game-Apps nutzen jedoch nicht nur bereits vorhandene technische Strukturen, sondern sind selbst ein Treiber der technologischen Entwicklung. Wie die Verbreitung von Spielen auf dem App-Markt verdeutlicht, korreliert der Erfolg der Smartphones stark mit der Entwicklung populärer Spieleanwendungen. Deutlich wird das beispielsweise daran, dass im Jahre 2012 vier Fünftel der erfolgreichsten käuflich zu erwerbenden iPhone-Apps Spiele waren (vgl. Döbler/Wahl 2012, S. 203): *Doodle Jump* (2009), *Siege Hero* (2011), *Angry Birds* (2009) und *Plants vs. Zombies* (2009). Bei diesen Apps handelt es sich charakteristischerweise um so genannte *Casual Games* – also Spiele, die mit geringen Vorkenntnissen und mit verhältnismäßig geringem Zeitaufwand gespielt werden können und die auf eine möglichst breite Zielgruppe hin ausgerichtet sind (vgl. Juul 2010).<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> Natürlich lassen sich Game-Apps nicht unter einem derartigen einheitlichen Konzept subsumieren. Es finden sich höchst heterogene Formen von Computerspielen in den App-Stores. So gibt es eine Vielzahl spielerischer Anwendungen, die jedoch über kein ausreichendes Maß an Gerechtigkeit verfügen, um als vollwertige Spiele charakterisiert werden zu können (z.B. Apps, die beim Bewegen des Smartphones das Geräusch eines Lichtschwertes aus den *Star Wars* Filmen imitieren). Ein anderes Phänomen ist die bemerkenswerte Anzahl von Remakes und Portierungen älterer Spiele, z.B. *Shinning Force* (1992), *The Secret of Monkey Island: Special Edition* (2009 [Original: 1990]), *Sid Meier's Pirates!* (2004 [Original: 1987]) oder *The Lords of Midnight* (1984). Die Infrastruktur der App-Stores sowie die technische Leistungsfähigkeit moderner Smartphones scheinen der Entwicklung eines kulturellen Gedächtnisses der Computerspiele (im Sinne von Assmann 1992) einen perfekten Nährboden zu bereiten. Nichtsdestoweniger bleibt festzuhalten, dass die dominante Form des Spielens auf dem Smartphone durch Casual Games geprägt wird.

Im Folgenden soll zunächst diskutiert werden, inwieweit dieses Meta-Genre eine neue Form des Verhältnisses zwischen Spiel und Alltagswelt nahelegt. Im Anschluss werden mit *Augmented Reality Games* und *Gamification-Apps* zwei Formate beschrieben, die nicht über die Verbreitung von *Casual Games* verfügen, jedoch prototypisch utopische Erwartungshaltungen verkörpern, die an mobile Spielapplikationen herangetragen werden – vor allem aber handelt es sich um Formate, die eine Reformulierung des Spiel-Dispositivs der Mobilität einfordern.

## Game-Apps als *Casual Games*

So genannte *Casual Games* können als dominante Form der Spielanwendungen auf Smartphones gelten. Außenstehenden könnte der Begriff verwirrend erscheinen: Sollten Spiele nicht immer „casual“, also ungezwungen, (informell und unernst sein; eher: an eine Gelegenheit gebunden)? Ein naives Verständnis von Spiel als Unernst würde verdecken, dass Spiele über strenge Regularien verfügen, zeitaufwändig und im hohen Maße anstrengend sein können. Vor allem aber nehmen viele Spieler ihr Spiel ungeheuer ernst (was sich an schlechten Verlierern zeigt). In diesem Sinne hat bereits Huizinga (1956) auf die Unhaltbarkeit des Gegensatzes zwischen Spiel und Ernst hingewiesen. Spiel ist demnach also nicht per se „casual“. Und genauso wie es überaus ambitionierte Schach- und Tennisspieler gibt, existiert eine Subkultur aus Computerspielern, die Unmengen von Zeit und Geld in ihr Hobby investieren – und folglich marktrelevant sind. Diese kauffreudigen, meist jungen, männlichen Spieler werden im Branchenslang als *Hardcore Gamer* bezeichnet (vgl. Crawford 2011). Im Laufe der 1990er und frühen 2000er Jahre entwickelten sie sich zur Kernzielgruppe der Branche. Die Konsequenz: Die Spielproduktion konzentrierte sich auf aufwändige, teuer zu produzierende Titel, die eine ausdauernde Beschäftigung und Einübung erforderten, und die darüberhinaus nur auf den neuesten High-End Maschinen gespielt werden konnten. Dieser Komplex aus Spielkultur und Verwertungsmodell erfuhr mit dem Aufstieg der *Casual Games* eine gravierende Wandlung.

Vor etwa 10 Jahren drehte sich dann in der Branche die Tendenz um, welche die Dynamik der Computerspielentwicklung über Jahrzehnte bestimmt hatte: Bis dahin wurden Spiele immer komplexer, aufwändiger in Hinblick auf Prozessor- und Speicherplatzanforderungen sowie teurer. Um das Jahr 2004 herum trat jedoch ein neuer Spieltyp auf den Plan, der das genaue Gegenteil des Größer-Schneller-Stärker verkündete. *Casual Games* eroberten im Sturm ein neues Publikum, das an kleinen, unkomplizierten und graphisch wie narrativ eher naiven Spielchen mehr Freude hatte als an den aufwändig gestalteten Flaggships der Spieleindustrie (z.B. *Unreal Tournament* 1999 und *Quake* 1996). Wesentliche Treiber dieser Entwicklung waren

die 2004 veröffentlichte Handheld-Konsole *Nintendo DS* sowie die stationäre Konsole *Wii* derselben Firma von 2006. Beide nahmen mit ihrer gestenbasierten Bedienung (per Touchscreen oder Controller) das Interfacekonzept späterer Smartphone-Spiele vorweg und übertrumpften (anfänglich) die Verkaufszahlen der technisch überlegenen Konkurrenzprodukte von Sony (*Playstation 3* sowie *Playstation Portable*) und Microsoft (*Xbox 360*). Wie sich herausstellte, waren auch Nutzer ohne Erfahrung im Computerspielen problemlos in der Lage, Nintendos neue Spielgeräte zu bedienen: vom Kleinkind bis zum Rentner (vgl. Juul 2010, S. 10ff.). Nintendo flankierte die Ansprache der neuen Zielgruppen mit Spielen wie *WiiSports* (2006), also Sammlungen aus Mini-Spielen, die kaum eine Einarbeitung erforderten. Der Erfolg war durchschlagend und schlug eine Bresche für das Genre der *Casual Games*, die in der Folgezeit insbesondere auf Smartphones populär wurden.

*Casual Games* erlauben es wenig spielerfahrenen Personen, sich kurzfristig, unvorbereitet und unambitioniert Spielen hinzugeben. Spiele wie *Bejeweled* (2000), *Zuma Deluxe* (2005) und *Angry Birds* (2009) erfordern vom Spieler nicht viel mehr als ein paar standardisierte Bewegungen der Finger, undramatische Entscheidungen und Geduld. Aus dieser Beobachtung darf jedoch nicht auf eine nur oberflächliche Beschäftigung mit den Spielen geschlossen werden. Dass auch vermeintlich einfache Spielstrukturen Gegenstand perfektionistischer Anstrengungen werden können, wird am Beispiel der noch immer weitergeführten Meisterschaften um Punktestände auf über dreißig Jahre alten Spielautomaten deutlich (dokumentiert beispielsweise in Seth Gordon's Dokumentarfilm *The King of Kong* von 2007). Juul (2010, S. 30) widerlegt in diesem Sinne das Stereotyp des wenig ambitionierten, nur oberflächlich spielenden *Casual Players*, indem er aufzeigt, dass zumindest einige sehr viel Zeit in ihr Spielen investieren. Die stereotype Dichotomie zwischen *Casual Players* und *Hardcore Players* kann also nicht aufrechterhalten werden.

Anders als im Falle der Automaten Spiele der 1980er Jahre zählen bei den neuen *Casual Games* auch Rentner, kleine Kinder sowie Hausfrauen der Altersgruppe über 40 zur Zielgruppe – im diametralen Gegensatz zum zuvor anvisierten Marktsegment der männlichen Jugendlichen und jungen Männer. Der Spieleindustrie kommt diese Erschließung neuer Käufergruppen entgegen, obwohl die Einkünfte pro verkauftes Spiel zumindest bei Smartphone-Games sehr niedrig sind. Der ökonomischen Raison, dass es wohl besser wäre, vielen Millionen 3 Euro abzunehmen, als ein paar Hunderttausenden 39 Euro, folgte die spielkulturelle Verschiebung von einem Jugendkulturmedium in ein populäres Mainstream Medium, von dem einige

behaupten, dass man es sogar als das Leitmedium des beginnenden 21. Jahrhunderts bezeichnen könne.<sup>182</sup>

Durch *Casual Games* sind Computerspiele zum gesellschaftlichen Breitenphänomen geworden. Ein Grund hierfür ist mit Sicherheit, dass zum Spielen nicht länger der Kauf spezieller Hardware notwendig ist. Game-Apps nutzen die technische Basis der Smartphones, welche sich ohnehin schon im Besitz der Zielgruppe befinden.

Bemerkenswert ist, dass *Casual Games* oft Designmuster verwenden, wie sie für Arcade-Games des Dispositivs Freizeit typisch sind. Beide erfordern typischerweise kurze, wiederholte Partien und nutzen Punktestände und Highscores als Motivationsmechanismen. In *Bejeweled* muss der Spieler beispielsweise Kombinationen aus farbigen Edelsteinen bilden, die sich daraufhin auflösen, was den Punktestand erhöht. Das Spiel wird als Abfolge von strukturell identischen Leveln und, je nach Spielmodus, mit oder ohne Zeitlimit bewältigt. Wie bei Automatenspielen existiert auch bei *Bejeweled* kein finales Gewinnszenario – das Spiel setzt sich annähernd unendlich fort. Deutlich wird das am Beispiel eines Spielers, der nach über 2200 Stunden Spielzeit einen Punktestand von 2.147.483.647 in *Bejeweled 2* (2004) erzielte und damit den maximal anzeigbaren Score sprengte (Sterling 2010). Die Orientierung an High Scores ist auch für viele andere populäre *Casual Games* typisch, wie beispielsweise *Hungry Shark* (2010), in dem der Spieler einen ständig fressenden, wachsenden und damit Punkte generierenden Hai durch eine zweidimensionale Unterwasserwelt steuert. Das ebenfalls sehr beliebte *Plants vs. Zombies* verfügt dagegen über eine Struktur von 50 Leveln, in denen der Spieler sein idyllisches Häuschen durch das Anpflanzen wehrhafter Blumen und Gewächse gegen immer größer werdende Horden von Zombies verteidigen muss. Zwar existiert hier eine rudimentäre Hintergrundgeschichte, aber der Spielverlauf gestaltet sich primär als ständige Wiederholung bei ansteigendem Schwierigkeitsgrad – durchaus vergleichbar mit Automatenklassikern wie *Donkey Kong*, in dem der große Affe die Prinzessin in jedem Level aufs neue entführt und so den Klempner Mario (damals noch als Tischler dargestellt) zur Rettung veranlasst.

Wie an den Beispielen deutlich wird, erwecken *Casual Games* Designstrukturen von *Arcade Games* zu neuem Leben. Juul (2010, S. 2ff.) erklärt diesen Umstand damit, dass sich beide Spielformen an ein generelles, (noch) nicht ausdifferenziertes Publikum richten. So schließt sich der Kreis in der Entwicklung der Computerspiele:

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<sup>182</sup> „Computerspiele sind zum Leitmedium des 21. Jahrhunderts geworden“, so Reinhard Braun (2003). In vergleichbarer Weise schreibt Crogan (2011: XIII): „Computer games are the first major global technocultura form native to the computer, and they are a defining technology of the contemporary digital information age.“



Nach einer Phase der Fokussierung auf eine Kernzielgruppe weitet sich die Nutzeransprache wieder aus und ermöglicht so die breitenwirksame Durchdringung der Gesellschaft. Typisch für *Arcade* wie *Casual Games* sind kurze Spielzyklen, eine Orientierung an Punkteständen, die zum Vergleich einladen, sowie ein prinzipiell nie abgeschlossenes Spielen und ein ausgeprägtes, häufiges Feedback (vgl. Liebe 2008, S. 84f.). Im Prinzip können die meisten *Arcade Games* somit als *Casual Games* –mit dem Unterschied, dass diese sich ortsunabhängig spielen lassen –bestimmt werden (vgl. Juul 2010, S. 2ff.).

In der Fusion mit dem Dispositiv der Mobilität implizieren *Casual Games* somit eine breitenwirksame Durchdringung der Gesellschaft mit Spielen – gleichermaßen räumlich, zeitlich und sozial. Jeder kann jederzeit und überall spielen. Alles, was erforderlich ist, ist ein kurzer Moment unverplanter Zeit. Die Lücken des Alltags werden durchsetzt mit digitalem Spiel.

## Game-Apps als Augmented Reality Games

Während *Casual Games* unter der Bedingung des Dispositivs der Mobilität die totale Durchdringung des Alltags mit Spielen motivieren, bleiben sie doch in anderer Hinsicht ganz der traditionellen Vorstellung von Spiel verhaftet: Wer ein *Casual Game* spielt, der tritt in die Sphäre des Spiels hinein, also in einen klar separierten Bereich. Spiel und Alltagswelt stehen sich hier getrennt gegenüber. Entweder man spielt, oder man tut etwas anderes – aber niemals spielt und spielt man nicht zugleich. Genau diese Möglichkeit ist jedoch eines der Versprechen so genannter *Augmented Reality Games* – Spiele, die auf die Realität selbst als Spielmaterial zugreifen, technisch vermittelt durch die Kameras, Sensoren und Displays der Smartphones.

Die Entwicklung und die Begeisterung für *Augmented Reality* leitet sich nicht zuletzt aus dem Katzenjammer ab, den die Propheten der *Virtual Reality* verursacht hatten, nachdem die Versprechen von Omnipräsenz, unbegrenzter Kommunikationsfähigkeit und sensorischen Genüssen nicht eingelöst worden waren. Charismatische Figuren wie Jaron Lanier hatten in den 1980er Jahren begonnen, die Science Fiction Träume der Autoren Neal Stephenson, William Gibson, Bruce Sterling und Rudy Rucker mit neuen Interface-Entwicklungen aus dem Silicon Valley zu verschmelzen und daraus das Phantasma einer avancierten, technoiden Welt zu entwickeln.<sup>183</sup> Tatsächlich

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<sup>183</sup> Jaron Lanier beschrieb *Virtual Reality* als eine Technologie, die computerunterstützte Kleidungsstücke dazu verwendet, eine gemeinsam erfahrbare Realität zu vermitteln (vgl. Kelly 1989). Lanier bezog sich dabei auf Datenhandschuhe, 3D Brillen und sensorisch wie motorisch aufgerüstete Ganzkörperanzüge. In gleichem Maße von sozialem Pessimismus und technologischem Optimismus getrieben, sollte die *Virtual Reality*

stellten sich den fiktiven Elementen der Virtual Reality sehr bald faktische Begleitinstrumente zur Seite. Die Spielefirma Mattel bot einen Niedrigpreis-Datenhandschuh an, mit dem MIDI Musikinstrumente gesteuert werden konnten<sup>184</sup> und andere Hersteller folgten mit High-Tech für den kleinen Mann und für die entsprechende Geldbörse (beispielsweise Head Mounted Displays, das sind Bildschirme, die am Kopf vor den Augen montiert werden, von den Herstellern Forte oder vuzix). Dennoch blieb der kalifornische Hippietraum des Abdriftens in virtuelle Welten den meisten Benutzern suspekt und *Virtual Reality* kam nach einer kurzen Konjunktur auf Medienkunstfestivals und in universitären Forschungseinrichtungen schnell in Verruf. Die Rettung kam zehn Jahre später mit der ebenso einfachen wie einleuchtenden Feststellung, dass es zwischen weltabgewandter *Virtual Reality* und bodenständig physikalischer *First Reality* doch noch irgendetwas anderes geben müsste: *Mixed Reality*. Paul Milgram (1994) und Ronald Azuma (1997) gehörten zu den Verfechtern einer Mischform aus Computersimulation und elektronisch vermittelten Sinneswahrnehmungen auf der einen Seite und der altbekannten Riech-, Tast- und Schwelt animalischer Natur auf der anderen Seite. *Mixed Reality* sollte das Kontinuum zwischen einer vollständig virtuellen Welt und einer vollständig handgreiflichen Welt beschreiben. So wäre im Hinblick auf den Gesichtssinn eine Datenprojektion auf die Iris unserer Augen mittels verkapselter Datenprojektoren an einem Ende des Spektrums anzusiedeln, ein Blick aus unseren Augen in die Natur auf dem anderen. Dazwischen liegen Mischformen: Der Blick auf die Straße durch die von Foxconn produzierten *Google Glass* könnte als *Augmented Reality* bezeichnet werden, da hier die physikalische Realität durch eingeblendete, digitale Zusatzinformationen erweitert wird. Ein Beispiel für eine *Augmented Virtuality*-Situation wäre auch ein 3D Kinoerlebnis, in dem ein Mensch aus Fleisch und Blut plötzlich und unerwartet vor die Kinoleinwand tritt (wie beispielsweise in den Theaterproduktionen der *Chameleon Group*, z.B. „Doors of Serenity“ von 2002).

Der Durchbruch der *Augmented Reality* Technologie lässt auf sich warten. Es gibt zwar inzwischen eine ganze Reihe von Apps, die versprechen, dass Städte informativer zu erleben seien, wenn man sie durch die *Augmented Reality*-Gläser eines Mobiltelefons betrachtet, dass Restaurants höher geschätzt werden, wenn sie das Smartphone mit Zusatzfunktionen versieht, oder dass Freunde und Bekannte dadurch

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eine zweite Wirklichkeit konstruieren, die möglicherweise lebenswerter war als die zu befürchtende zukünftige erste Realität der Atomkatastrophen, Überbevölkerung, und der Bandenkriege.

<sup>184</sup> 1989 kam der als Powerglove bezeichnete Datenhandschuh von Mattel als Eingabemedium für die NES Spielekonsole auf den Markt. Für nur 100 US Dollar wurde das Interface angeboten, das als Nachfolgetechnologie teurer Experimentalelektronik aus dem Raumfahrt- und Rüstungsbereich gesehen werden kann. Noch drei Jahre davor kostete ein vergleichbares Gerät, der VPL Dataglove, um die 9000 US Dollar.

an Wert gewinnen würden, dass wir wissen, wo sie sich gerade aufhalten, mit wem sie zuletzt telefoniert haben oder in welchem Geschäft sie zuletzt eingekauft haben.

Das derzeit wohl erfolgreichste *Augmented Reality Game* ist *Ingress* (2012) von Google mit mehr als 500.000 Spielern weltweit im Mai 2013 (vgl. Dalenberg 2013).<sup>185</sup> Das Spiel wird auf Android-Smartphones gespielt und nutzt die bestehenden Daten von Google Maps als eine Art Spielfeld, in dem eine digitale Schnitzeljagd stattfindet. Das narrative Szenario des Spiels ist auf eine Verschmelzung von realer Geografie und Fiktion hin ausgelegt: Rätselhafte Wesen, die so genannten „Shaper“, nehmen Einfluss auf die Menschheit durch Energieportale, die sich meist an Sehenswürdigkeiten und anderen markanten Orten festmachen. Die Spieler stehen nun vor der Wahl, ob sie die „Shaper“ als Invasoren oder wohlwollende Helfer betrachten, und können sich entsprechend dem Widerstand („Resistance“) anschließen oder als so genannte Erleuchtete („Enlightened“) die „Shaper“ unterstützen. Geht ein *Ingress*-Spieler nun durch eine Stadt, kann er auf dem Display seines Smartphones die Portale der Shaper sowie die durch die Fraktionen kontrollierten Territorien sehen. Per Mausklick kann er versuchen, Portale zu hacken, sie mit Schutzfunktionen zu versehen oder sie zu verbinden, um seiner Fraktion zur Dominanz zu verhelfen. Wie deutlich wird, ist die Existenz einer *Gaming Community* für das Spiel konstitutiv – *Ingress* könnte unmöglich alleine gespielt werden.

Überdies ist ein anderer Aspekt von *Ingress* bemerkenswert: In diesem Spiel – und auch in vielen anderen *Augmented Reality Games* – verschränken sich die Topographie der Alltagswelt und der Spielwelt. Die erzählerische Welt und die Spielmechanik von *Ingress* können als Oberflächenschicht begriffen werden, die Google über die bereits vorhandene Kartographie der Welt legt. Die Bewegung durch den realen Raum bedingt folglich eine Bewegung durch den Spielraum, denn das Smartphone ortet die Position des Spielers stets per GPS. Wie bei allen Mobile Games ist der Eintritt in den Zauberkreis des Spiels auch bei *Ingress* jederzeit möglich. Alles, was der Spieler tun muss, ist die App zu starten, auf den Bildschirm zu blicken und sich auf das Spiel einzulassen. Wie auch in vielen Browsergames bleibt die Zeit in *Ingress* jedoch niemals stehen: Der Spieler kann sich nicht nach Belieben in die Spielwelt einloggen – er muss es ständig und kontinuierlich tun, um seine Errungenschaften nicht zu verlieren. Das Spiel wird so zur Dominante des Alltags.

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<sup>185</sup> Es ist allerdings nicht ganz klar, ob *Ingress* als *Augmented Reality Game* im strengen Sinne oder als *Alternate Reality Game* bezeichnet werden sollte. Strittig ist dabei, ob die Anreicherung der Realität durch die visuelle Projektion fiktiver Elemente in den Foto-Sucher des Smartphones das primäre Kriterium für *Augmented Reality* ist. Hier wird davon ausgegangen, dass *Ingress* durch die Anreicherung der Kartenansicht mit seinem Spielszenario auch die Alltagswelt anreichert – und in diesem Sinne als technisch vermitteltes *Augmented Reality Game* gelten kann.

Mehr noch: *Augmented Reality Games* wie *Ingress* unterbreiten ihren Spielern das Angebot, sich jederzeit zwischen einem Blick auf die Welt als Alltagswelt oder als Spielwelt zu entscheiden. Der Spaziergang durch die Stadt kann jederzeit als Kampf in einem epischen Konflikt erlebt werden. Die Stadtbibliothek kann entweder als Ort des Lernens oder als umkämpftes Portal begriffen werden.

Stellt man sich die Chronotopologie eines derartigen *Augmented Reality Games* vor, dann erschiene sie nicht in Form von Einzeichnung von Kreisen in eine Karte, sondern als Folie, die über die bereits bestehende Karte gelegt wird. Spiel und Alltagswelt existieren hier parallel. Die Wechsel zwischen den Ebenen können rasch und jederzeit erfolgen.

## Moment III: Gamification-Apps

Als ein mit *Augmented Reality Games* verwandtes Genre können *Gamification-Apps* gelten. Darunter sind Smartphone-Applikationen zu verstehen, die Gamification-Mechaniken implementieren. Der Begriff der ‚Gamification‘ bezeichnet im Jargon der amerikanischen Marketingliteratur die Verwandlung gesellschaftlicher Sektoren in spieldurchdrungene Bereiche.

Das erklärte Ziel der Apologeten totaler Gamification ist dabei, dass letztendlich alle gesellschaftlichen Bereiche, alle subkulturellen Formationen und alle Altersgruppen in den Prozess der Gamification eingebunden sind. „Games are the new Normal,“ verkündete in diesem Sinne Al Gore 2011 in einer Rede auf dem „Games for Change Festival“ (vgl. Tsai 2011). Man könnte überspitzt sagen, dass mit dem Eintritt der Konsumations-, „Ersatzarmeen“ aus Rentnern und Kindern in die Gemeinschaft der Spieler der Spieleindustrie nun das zu glücken scheint, was die Dampf- und Kohleindustrien der industriellen Revolution im England des frühen 19. Jahrhunderts versucht hatten: Einbindung der gesamten Gesellschaft in den Produktions- und Wertschöpfungsprozess. Der Unterschied der gegenwärtigen Durchdringung der Gesellschaft mit Spielprodukten ist allerdings, dass nun totale Konsumtion angesagt ist, damals totale Produktion erzwungen wurde.

Ein einfaches Beispiel für eine *Gamification-App* ist *Nike+* (2006), eine iPhone-App (ursprünglich eine Anwendung für iPod), die es erlaubt, die Zeit, Geschwindigkeit und Schritte beim Joggen zu messen. Wie die Displays mancher Fitnessgeräte erlaubt es auch diese App, aus den gemessenen Werten die mutmaßlich verbrannten Kalorien und andere Werte abzuleiten. Der eigentliche Clou ist jedoch, dass die App es ermöglicht, die persönlichen Laufdaten online mit denen anderer Läufer zu vergleichen. Sport wird so in einen statistischen Wert transformiert, der in

Gegenüberstellung mit Vergleichswerten den Wettkampfgeist anstachelt. Läufer können auf diese Weise virtuelle Ligen bilden, in denen sie gegeneinander antreten. Die Läufer, die am häufigsten oder am schnellsten joggen, also die ersten Plätze in den Ranglisten einnehmen, erhalten Titel wie „Local Legend“ oder „Speed Demon“ und werden mitsamt ihrer Leistungsdaten auf der Seite zur jeweiligen Strecke präsentiert.<sup>186</sup> Die Herstellung von Mess- und Vergleichbarkeit von Sportleistungen schafft die Bedingung für einen zeit- und teilweise auch ortsunabhängigen Wettkampf. Der Sport wird auf diese Weise mit extrinsischen Motivationen aufgeladen und in ein agonales Spiel transformiert – Joggen wird ‚gamifiziert‘. Wie weitreichend die Homogenisierung sportlicher Betätigungen in Form quantitativer, vergleichbarer Werte ist, wird an der Ausweitung des *Nike+* Systems auf sämtliche Sportarten deutlich. Mit „Nike Fuel“ hat das Unternehmen einen universalen Wert geschaffen, der sich aus der Messung und Homogenisierung sämtlicher sportlicher Bewegungen ergibt. In den Worten der Firmenwebsite:

„Der ultimative Massstab deiner sportlichen Entwicklung. Mit NikeFuel lassen sich alle deine sportlichen Aktivitäten zählen: Laufen, Gehen, Basketball spielen. Nike+ Geräte messen deine Bewegungen und wandeln sie in NikeFuel um. Und da NikeFuel für jeden auf dieselbe Art und Weise berechnet wird, kannst du dich auch mit jedem messen.“<sup>187</sup>

Wie deutlich wird, sind Mess- und Vergleichbarkeit die Bedingung der meisten Gamification-Mechanismen, da eine Vergleichbarkeit von Leistungen auf einer gemeinsamen Grundlage die Bedingung von Spiel als Wettkampf darstellt (vgl. Caillois 1966). Ähnliche Systeme werden im Marketing zur Kundenbindung oder im Bereich der Human Resources zur Personalakquise benutzt (vgl. Zicherman 2011; Paharia 2013). Grundmotiv bleibt immer dasselbe: Tätigkeiten, die bisher nicht als Spiele begriffen wurden, werden durch die technisch-mediale Herstellung einer Mess- und Vergleichbarkeit in einem halb öffentlichen, halb privaten, artifiziell generierten Raum zu spielerischen Tätigkeiten transformiert, um extrinsische Motivation zu erzielen.

Obwohl es in der Literatur Versuche gibt, griechische, italienische, schwedische, spanische oder deutsche Varianten der Phänomens in der Landessprache zu bezeichnen, bleibt Gamification weltweit der Referenzbegriff, der *παίγνιδοποίηση*, *Ludicizzazione*, *Ludificação*, *Gamificación*, *Ludización* und die lateinisch-deutsche „Ludifizierung“ in den Schatten stellt.<sup>188</sup> Anglo-amerikanischen Evangelisten der

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<sup>186</sup> Vergleiche hierzu die offizielle Website von Nike: <http://nikeplus.nike.com/>

<sup>187</sup> Quelle: [http://nikeplus.nike.com/plus/what\\_is\\_fuel/](http://nikeplus.nike.com/plus/what_is_fuel/) (zuletzt geprüft am 19.6.2013)

<sup>188</sup> Wir bedanken uns bei unseren Kollegen Paolo Ruffino, Fabrizio Poltronieri, Daphne Dragona und Flavio Escribano für sprachspezifische Informationen.

Gamification, wie Zichermann, Paharia und McGonigal (2011), haben das semantische Feld bereits beackert, als man in Europa noch skeptisch und bedenklich auf ein Phänomen blickte, das vielen eher als Fluch, denn als Segen erschien. (In diesem Zusammenhang muss man auch Flavio Escribanos (2013) terminologische Schöpfung der *Ludictatorship* verstehen.)

Der Zeitpunkt, zu dem Gamification in aller Munde kam, war die Wende zur gegenwärtigen Dekade, mit den wohlbeachteten und vielzitierten Journalbeiträgen von Deterding et al. (2011), Schell (2010) und Reilhac (2010). Für Deterding et al. ist Gamification ein Designproblem. In Ausweitung des Anwendungsbereiches von Spieldesign-Methoden auf spielferne Anwendungsbereiche greift, nach Ansicht dieser Autoren, Design über die Grenzen dessen, was traditionellerweise als Spieledesign verstanden wurde: „[...] we propose a definition of ‚gamification‘ as the use of game design elements in non-game contexts“ (Deterding et al. 2011). Schell dagegen interpretiert Gamification psychologisch als den Versuch, die *Illusion* von Spiel zu erzeugen. Ihm geht es also nur um den Eindruck von Spiel, oder ein Gefühl von spielerischer Betätigung und nicht um die Festschreibung auf tatsächliche spielerische Aktivität: „Gamification is taking things that aren’t games and trying to make them feel more like games.“ (Schell 2011)

In jeder der beiden Definitionsversuche wird dabei davon ausgegangen, dass es Elemente oder Objekte sind, die den Transfer aus der Welt der Spiele in die Welt der spielfernen Gegenstände erfahren. Zugrunde liegt dieser Vorstellung die Beobachtung, wie Guthabepunkte, symbolische Auszeichnungen (engl.: *Badges*) oder andere spielerisch-grafische Elemente in spielferne Bereiche diffundieren oder transportiert werden. *Gamification* kann jedoch nicht nur auf der Objektebene oder Designebene Erklärung finden, vielmehr kann es als weit grundsätzlicherer Transfer von Spielelementen in spielferne gesellschaftliche Sektoren betrachtet werden. In diesem Sinne bezeichnet Fuchs (2013) *Gamification* als „die Durchdringung unserer Gesellschaft mit Methoden, Metaphern, Werten und Attributen aus Computerspielen.“<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Man mag diesem Verständnis von Gamification einen Mangel an Festsetzung der Akteure der „Durchdringung“ anlasten. Unausgesprochen liegt der Auffassung jedoch zugrunde, dass wirtschaftliche Interessen vorrangig verantwortlich dafür gemacht werden müssen, dass Gamification derartig tiefe Spuren in die Medienlandschaft, die Psychostruktur und in die Betriebskultur der 2010er Jahre eingepägt hat. Zichermann, einer der Propagandisten der Verwandlung unserer Gesellschaft in eine gamifizierte Gesellschaft, kommentiert ironisch: „In taktischer Hinsicht ist Gamification nichts als die Verwendung von Spielelementen mit der Absicht eines wirtschaftlichen Vorteils.“ Zichermann knüpft dabei an an Wirtschaftsprognosen, die man eher als Wirtschaftsphantasien bezeichnen sollte, wie diese: „Im Jahre 2016 wird Gamification ein 1.6 Milliarden Dollar Geschäft sein.“ Aus

Aus unserer Sicht ist weniger? die Marktmacht oder die gesellschaftliche Breitenwirkung der *Gamification* von Bedeutung, sondern vielmehr die Frage, wie *Gamification-Apps* das Verhältnis von Spiel und Alltagswelt neu strukturieren. Das Beispiel von *Nike+* macht deutlich, dass *Gamification*-Anwendungen genau wie *Augmented Reality*-Anwendungen eine virtuelle Schicht des Spielens in die Alltagswelt einziehen. Anders als *Augmented Reality Games* stellen *Gamification*-Anwendungen jedoch eines der fundamentalen Kennzeichen des Spiels in Frage, nämlich seine Zwecklosigkeit (vgl. Huizinga 1956, S. 146) bzw. seine Unproduktivität (vgl. Caillois 1966, S. 10). Anwendungen wie *Chore Wars*<sup>190</sup> erlauben es Spielern beispielsweise, unangenehme Haushaltsaufgaben als Wettkampf zu rekonzipieren. In der *Gamification* verschwimmen also die Grenzen zwischen Spiel und Nicht-Spiel, zwischen Arbeit und Freizeit. Arbeit kann so zu Spiel werden, doch zugleich wird Spiel dadurch instrumentell. Die Trennung von Spiel und Nicht-Spiel wird aufgehoben. Anders als *Augmented Reality Games* implizieren *Gamification*-Anwendungen also keine zeitgleiche Parallelität zwischen Spiel- und Alltagswelt, sondern vielmehr eine Fusion von beiden. Sollten sich *Gamification*-Anwendungen breitenwirksam durchsetzen, dann wäre es nicht länger möglich, die Zauberkreise des Spiels vom Rest der Welt zu scheiden.

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anderer Quelle vernimmt man: „Im Jahre 2015 werden 50% aller Firmen, die Innovationsprozesse steuern, *Gamification* dafür einsetzen.“ Ein Jahr später heißt es dann allerdings: „Im Jahre 2014 werden 80% dieser gamifizierten Anwendungen als gescheitert erklärt werden müssen.“ (Burke, 2010, zit. nach *Games for Brands*, 2012. [http://wccorry.blogspot.de/2011\\_09\\_11\\_archive.html](http://wccorry.blogspot.de/2011_09_11_archive.html), zuletzt geprüft am 4.7.2013).

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# Ludoarchaeology

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## Abstract

Ludoarchaeology is a discipline that is methodologically rooted in archaeology with the aim of finding forgotten games—and texts on games. The discipline’s objective is to reinterpret the history of games and play via material objects from the past. This essay offers an example of one such case, revisions to Johan Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens*. In 2012, the author conducted an excavation in Gelderland, near Arnhem in the Netherlands, where Johan Huizinga spent his last years before his death on February 1, 1945. The excavation team found a document that was obviously a manuscript page of a major revision of Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens*. The text consists of an anno-tated version of page 41 from the 1938 edition of *Homo Ludens* with comments that completely change our view of how Huizinga thought about “free play,” rules, and order.

## Keywords

archaeology, homo ludens, magic circle, interest free, play, Bataille, Huizinga, Adorno, Benjamin

Ludoarchaeology is a discipline that is methodologically rooted in archaeology with the aim of finding forgotten games—and texts on games. Our discipline’s objective is to reinterpret the history of games and play via material objects from the past. Our motto is “Dig it out!” This essay offers an example of one such case, revisions to Johan Huizinga’s *Homo Ludens*.



Figure 1. Excavation site on 25th February 2013.

In 2012 and 2013, we conducted an excavation in the De Steeg area in Gelderland, near Arnhem in the Netherlands, where Johan Huizinga spent his last years before his death on February 1, 1945. The excavation team consisted of 12 researchers from the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, and Australia and was generously supported by the Austrian Archaeological Society, Dutch Huizinga Foundation, and the Australian Research Council. The team spent most of 2012 and early 2013 systematically searching the site (see a shot from the excavation site [Figure 1], Professor Dr. Fuchs to the right with orange security jacket and white helmet.)

## The Document

On February 25, 2013, the team finally found a document (Figure 2) dated January 21, 1945, that was confirmed to be a manuscript page of a major revision of Huizinga's *Homo Ludens*. Paper quality, analysis of coffee stains, and radiocarbon dating

proved that the document could be traced to the period between 1940 and 1946. This archaeological discovery is a milestone in the theory of games and play and has been warmly welcomed by the Australian Archaeological Society, the Royal Archaeological Society of Great Britain, and the Dutch Huizinga Foundation.

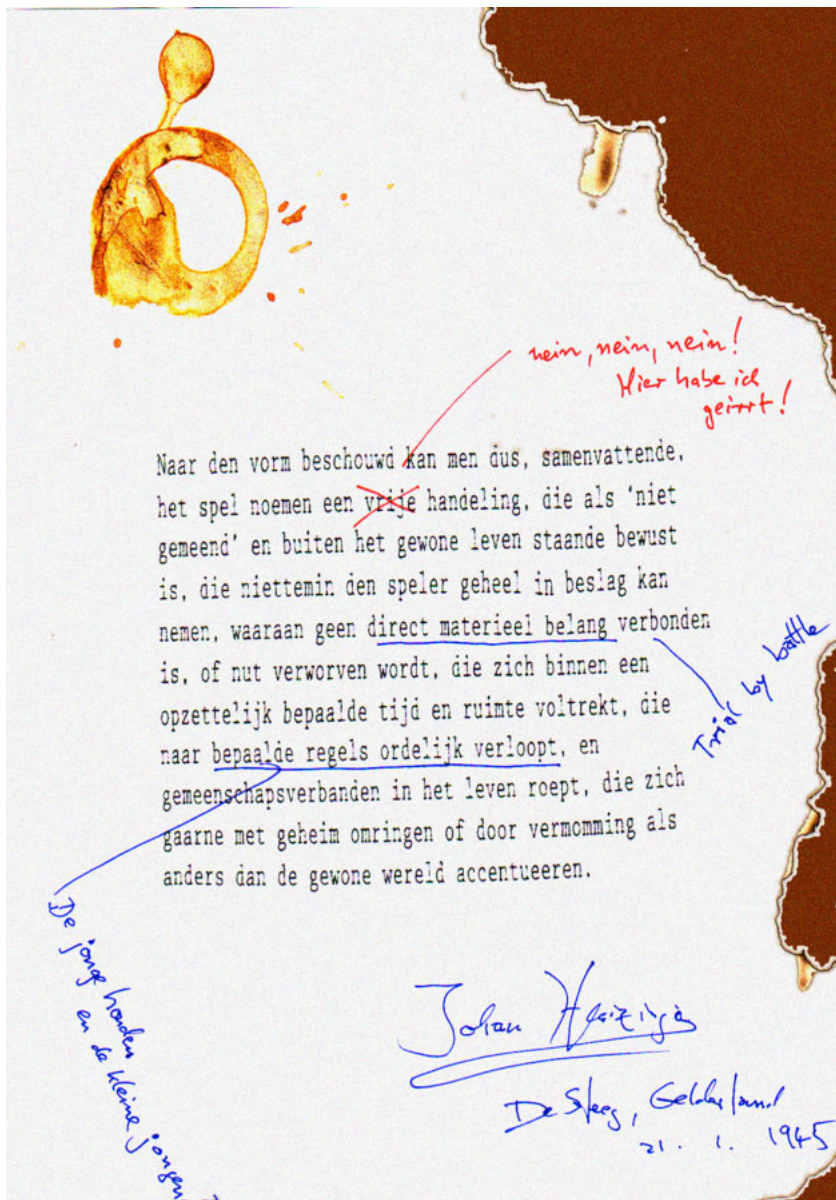


Figure 2: Page 41, annotated, 21 January 1945. English translation:

...a free activity standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious,” but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner. It promotes the formation of social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world by disguise or other means. (Huizinga, 1949, p. 28)

The text consists of an annotated version of page 41 from the 1938 edition of *Homo Ludens* with comments written in Dutch, English, and German handwriting. The notion that play worked “according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner” (Huizinga, 1949, p. 13) is shown here to be contested by Huizinga later in life. This essay considers how this revelation might reconfigure Huizinga’s views about rules and order. In particular, we show why game studies in 1945 utilized a notably different set of words and ideas than they did in 1938 and draw attention to the cultural ramifications therein.

## No Country for Old Men (or Games Scholars)

The years 1938 and 1945 marked a gradual transformation from an alleged sense of “rules and order” to an inescapable “terror and chaos” for Germany and the whole of Europe. In 1938, Hitler prepared for war (and genocide) by creating the High Command of the Armed Forces. While Huizinga published *Homo Ludens* in Leyden, the Reichskristallnacht happened all over Germany. Two hundred and sixty-seven synagogues were burned, 7,500 Jewish businesses were destroyed, 91 Jewish citizens were killed, and at least 25,000 were arrested.<sup>191</sup> The next year, World War II began and millions of soldiers and civilians were killed directly and indirectly. The war lasted until 1945, the year when Huizinga died. Not even the most idealistic anthropology could have maintained a merry tone with the world having turned from modernity to barbarity. The suggestion that playfulness might exist as an interest-free human activity that emancipates mankind and contributes to cultural progress must have sounded cynical in this context.

Theodor Adorno, one of the most important critics of Huizinga’s theory, famously said that “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today” (1949, reprinted

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<sup>191</sup> <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/kristallnacht/homepage.asp>

in *Prisms*, p. 34).<sup>192</sup> Ideas and notions like the free man, proper rules, or orderly manner, once common in philosophy and anthropology, must have sounded completely absurd, if not corrupt, in 1945. By invoking poetry, Adorno implies much more than the traditional practice of writing poems, he is expressing his cynicism about the power of writing in the face of barbarism. Here, poetry refers to an anthropologic quality of free activity that can be likened to Huizinga's idea of ludic activity. Like Huizinga's play, Adorno's poetry cannot be forced to happen, and it can never force others to do anything. Like play, poetry is connected with no material interest. *Poiesis* is etymologically derived from the terms *ποίησις* and *ποιέω*, which means "to create." Therefore, culture must be poetic, as it is the totality of human creation. Since poetry within barbarity is impossible, Adorno locates poetry within culture. Similarly, Huizinga locates the play element within culture.

There is a third position that must be mentioned here. Like Huizinga and Adorno, Marcel Mauss argued that a fundamental quality of human interaction must exist outside the rationality of exchange and of monetary interest. He proposed that the gift was an alternative to the rationalist calculation of capitalist exchange (Mauss, 1923/1924). To give without any expectation for pay allows us to act without alienation in a way that differs considerably from the exchange of commodities with the aim of profit making. George Bataille (1975) used Mauss's conception of the gift to justify the possibility of a human sovereignty within economic systems. For Bataille, play fosters a type of sacrifice that resembles a gift. The game considered as a free activity—as Huizinga (1938) might argue—was interpreted here in opposition to alienated work. Gaming and labor became diametrically opposed, and the "sacred" within play was a source of hope to escape the master–slave dialectic of capital–labor relationships. In this regard, Bataille differs essentially from how Adorno and Benjamin thought about gaming: For Adorno (1984, p. 371), the "repetitiveness of gaming" is nothing but "an after-image of involuntary servitude"; "Nachbild von unfreier Arbeit"; Adorno, 1970, p. 401) and for Benjamin, the gamer's actions resemble those of the proletarian worker, as they perform what is deprived of all meaning, the "drudgery of the player" ("Fron des Spielers"; Benjamin, 1939, pp. 72–33).<sup>193</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> The quoted words in context: "Cultural criticism finds itself faced with the final stage of the dialectic of culture and barbarism. To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today. Absolute reification, which presupposed intellectual progress as one of its elements, is now preparing to absorb the mind entirely. Critical intelligence cannot be equal to this challenge as long as it confines itself to self-satisfied contemplation" (Adorno, 1949, p. 34, *Cultural Criticism and Society*, reprinted as the first essay in *Prisms*).

<sup>193</sup> Having lived in Germany as a Jewish citizen (or noncitizen by German standards of 1938, by which time he had already fled to France), Benjamin was caught by the terror of the regime much earlier than other critical thinkers abroad. A large portion of the European intelligentsia



Why did the synchronous works of Benjamin and Huizinga, who shared a profound historical knowledge, a deep interest in play, and an admiration for European cultural values, differ so strongly in their appreciation of play? Although both authors were persecuted by the Third Reich, they maintained a strong commitment to Germany as a cultural home, to German as a language, and to humanistic ideas that were rooted in a German tradition of idealistic philosophy. Huizinga wrote some of his publications in German and studied at Leipzig in Germany. Benjamin always stayed connected with his political and academic friends in Germany.

If Huizinga had rewritten *Homo Ludens* in 1945, it would have marked a radical change in his conception of both playfulness and the freedom of play. We must read his statement from 1938 about play as an activity that is free of any interest and his description of players as “social groupings which tend to surround themselves with secrecy and to stress their difference from the common world” (Huizinga, 1949, p.13) either as an escapist tactical move or as a description of academia and the free world hoping not to be affected by barbarity. Huizinga and his contemporaries must have viewed playfulness as a *promesse de bonheur* for a better world. It is specifically read in opposition to barbarity in Huizinga’s anthropological examples.

Playfulness is an easier tactic to implement than resistance. Even Benjamin, who was completely aware of the necessity for resistance against the terror regime, had his moments of escapism. That is why his good friend Berthold Brecht had criticized him in a poem: “Am Schachttisch sitzend in des Birnbaums Schatten/Der Feind, der dich von deinen Büchern jagte/Läßt sich von unsereinem nicht ermatten.” (“At the chessboard seated in the pear tree’s shade/The Enemy then drove you from your books/The likes of us? Ground down, outplayed”; Brecht, 1941, p. 828.) Brecht’s insight was that activities like playing chess, which are supposedly free of interest, do not contribute to the struggle against barbarity. Brecht criticized Benjamin, but he would have been even more critical with Huizinga had he known his proposition that a social group can “stress their difference from the common world by disguise ...” (Huizinga, 1949, p. 13). The argument that Brecht pronounced so well in his short poem was later reiterated in precise detail when Adorno criticized Huizinga’s theoretical stand-point. Adorno did not allow for a difference between “magic circle” and “common world” when he wrote about the “repetitiveness” of play and followed up on the suggestion of Benjamin to compare the players’ activities with those of the workers in a factory.

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did not recognize in time what kind of changes the Nazi regime would bring to both Germany and the whole of European culture (Hamerow, 1997; Hoffmann, 1977). Although some have described this as intellectual paralysis, it has been considered wishful thinking by others (Faber, 2009).

It must be said that Huizinga had never used the notion of a magic circle with a direct reference to games. Huizinga states that there is no formal difference between arena and magic circle, but he does not propose that playgrounds are “consecrated spots” or “hedged round by magic circles.”<sup>194</sup> This is rather an idea introduced and promoted by Salen and Zimmerman (2003b). Zimmerman (2012) claims that “Frank Lantz and Katie Salen have more or less invented the concept.” He obviously had a rather pragmatic concept of the magic circle in mind, when he talked about it in *Rules of Play* (2003b): “The magic circle is the idea that a boundary exists between a game and the world outside the game.” Not at all referring to what Huizinga believed to be the sacred or the magic of play, Zimmerman declared in a profane manner: “In my opinion, design concepts (such as the magic circle as described in *Rules of Play*) derive their value from their utility to solve problems. Their value is not derived from their scientific accuracy or proximity to truth” (Zimmerman, 2012, p. 585). No wonder he was praised for this pragmatic approach by a few and blamed by many. Gordon Calleja’s critique of Zimmerman’s viewpoint and rhetoric noted that Huizinga’s concept of a protected zone had its roots in a dis-course of cultural studies and that it was Zimmerman who dragged the notion into design theory and practice. A conference in Tampere entitled *Breaking the Magic Circle*<sup>195</sup> was one of the events where scholars tried to come to terms with the magic circle concept of Salen and Zimmerman that has often been wrongly attributed to Huizinga. Annakaisa Kultima and Frans Mäyrä noted in their contributions to the debate “that the notion of magic circle was still fruitful for facilitating discussions from different perspectives” and “focused on the playful acts and attitudes that produce identity for any ‘game’, ‘game player’, or ‘game world’, and also on the necessarily dialectical nature of such productive differentiating gestures.” (Kultima & Mäyrä, 2007)

Mäyrä and Kultima propose a dialectical method that the late Huizinga would need to have adapted—as I suggest—and that the pre-World War II Huizinga might have lacked. What I want to say here is, if Huizinga has indeed extended an anthropological concept of play into a dialectic theory of play, player, and play worlds, it would have been a consistent next step to include the sociopolitical world—beyond play worlds—in the equation.

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<sup>194</sup> “Just as there is no formal difference between play and ritual, so the ‘consecrated spot’ can-not be formally distinguished from the play-ground. The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc. are all in form and function play-grounds, i.e. forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain” (Huizinga, 1949, p. 10).

<sup>195</sup> <http://breakingmagiccircle.wordpress.com/>

Of Huizinga, Adorno (1984) wrote, “He fails to realize how much the element of play is itself an afterimage of praxis rather than of semblance. In all play, action has fundamentally divested itself of any relation to purpose, but in terms of its form and execution the relation to praxis is maintained” (p. 401). Adorno grabs Huizinga’s text by the metaphorical notion of “disguise” and talks about play having “divested itself” of purpose. He replaces Huizinga’s somewhat blurry notion of the “common world”<sup>196</sup> with “praxis,” or socially relevant action. Praxis and labor are key factors in a tradition of materialist Marxist theory for the formation of society and should not be undermined in importance by either “the sphere of play” or a mysterious magic circle. Adorno (1984) remarks:

The element of repetition in play is the afterimage of unfree labour, just as sports—the dominant extraaesthetic form of play—is reminiscent of practical activities and continuously fulfils the function of habituating people to the demands of praxis above all by the reactive transformation of physical displeasure into physical pleasure, without noticing that the contraband of praxis has slipped into it. (p. 401)

But neither Adorno’s sharp remarks nor Roger Caillois’ attention on gambling with monetary interests (Caillois, 2001) stopped generations of games scholars from repeating the formula of the magic circle and reiterating Huizinga’s dichotomy of work and play. Georg Lauteren (2007, p. 2) finds it “surprising ... how much effort is spent reconciling an almost 70 year-old model of thinking with a contemporary subject of investigation” and accuses Salen and Zimmerman (2003a), Montola (2005), Harvey (2006), and Rodriguez (2006) of doing so.

## Paradise Lost, Beauty Gone

The differences between Huizinga’s appreciation of the play element and Benjamin, Adorno, and Bataille’s views on play can be traced back to their idealistic or materialistic standpoints, respectively. Huizinga never references Friedrich Schiller directly, but the way he contextualizes play points directly to the position Schiller

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196 In defense of Huizinga, one has to acknowledge here that “common world” is not as vague in an Anglo-American context as “das ‘gewöhnliche Leben’” from the German edition that Adorno most probably had read (Huizinga, 1961, p. 37) or “de gewone wereld” from the Dutch original (Huizinga, 1938, p. 41) that Adorno might have had access to. The German translation puts “gewöhnliche Leben” in quotation marks, as it sounds like a strange concept anyway. The Dutch original and the English translation leave common life without the quo-tation mark, because of connotations to “common man” and “commons” make the idea more of a philosophically valid term.

developed in the Aesthetic Letters (1794). “Playing, so we say, has a certain inclination to be beautiful,” (Huizinga, 1949, p. 19) says Huizinga in a Schillerian tone. Huizinga’s statement is actually a resonance of Friedrich Schiller’s famous phrase:

“... man should only play with beauty, and play only with beauty”  
(Schiller, 2000, p. 62).

Though Huizinga differs from Friedrich Schiller’s idea of a “play instinct” and dismisses it explicitly, he sticks to “the idealistic concept of playing as an inexplicable ‘last’, which remains ultimately resistant to empirical investigation” (Lauteren, 2007, p. 3). But, as I have pointed out earlier, an idealistic interpretation of play turned unthinkable and unspeakable in 1938 due to the grotesque barbarity of Nazi Germany. Briefly after the war, Jürgen Habermas phrased what was evident even before World War II: “And where it ever had existed, the unity of work and play dissolved” (Habermas, 1958, p. 220). Habermas acts here as the voice of both the Frankfurt School and a specific approach to dialectical materialism and the possible relationship between labor and play. It is not by chance, therefore, that Habermas shares the beliefs promoted by Benjamin, Adorno, and Bataille, that labor and play are two different things that might have an influence on each other but that never can be harmonized as one.<sup>197</sup>

## Huizinga’s Doubt

The book *Homo Ludens* was published in Dutch in 1938, translated into German in 1944 and then English in 1949. Many of its key notions, like the magic circle, were not christened as such by Johan Huizinga. Additionally, the critiques that Adorno, Habermas, Bataille, and Caillois penned so convincingly had only been written after the drastic changes in viewing society, culture, and civilization which followed World War II. But, it is clear from the evidence presented in this study that Huizinga (1938, p. 41) was also apprehensive about his ideas such as “vrije handeling, die als ‘niet gemeend’ en buiten het gewone leven staande bewust is.” (“free activity standing quite consciously outside ‘ordinary’ life”; Huizinga, 1949, p. 28). There are a few sections in *Homo Ludens* where Huizinga struggles with his own concept. Is war of a playful nature? Huizinga says on page 210: “Modern warfare has, on the face of it, lost all contact with play” (Huizinga, 1949, p. 210). On the same page, he speaks about his “gnawing doubt whether war is really play.” He comes to the conclusion at one

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<sup>197</sup> In his statement that “According to one theory play constitutes a training of the young creature for the serious work that life will demand later on” (Huizinga, 1949, p. 2), Huizinga (1949) approaches Adorno’s worries, but with an altered direction: Work follows play. This is the opposite of Adorno’s “afterimage of unfree labor.”

point, that “war has not freed itself from the magic circle,” but keeps the reader uninformed why this is “despite appearances to the contrary.” (Huizinga, 1949, p. 210) Considerations like these show Huizinga’s awareness that the materiality of the world was in direct conflict with his idealistic concepts.

While Huizinga is remembered for an optimistic appreciation of the play element which views it as a noble activity that enhances culture and is constituted within culture, he is actually quite pessimistic: “A happier age than ours made bold to call our species by the name of Homo Sapiens” (Huizinga, 1949, first page of the unpaginated foreword). This shows that Huizinga was aware of both the changes being implemented in 1938 by the Third Reich and horrors yet to come when he introduced his theory of the Homo Ludens that is often read in defense of “free activity,” “fixed rules,” and “orderly manner” (Huizinga, 1949, p. 28). The Homo Ludens of 1938 was not an unproblematic, cheerful guy sitting on a hill or inside a magic circle, but he was in serious doubt and probably in deep despair. No matter whether the documents mentioned in the beginning of this text are authentic or not: Everything points toward the possibility that, if Huizinga had revised his book in 1945, he would have revised it as the excavated pages show.

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# Phantasmal Spaces

## Archetypical Venues in Computer Games

(wird 2019 erscheinen als: *Phantasmal Spaces. Archetypical Venues in Computer Games*. New York, London, Oxford, New Delhi, Sydney: Bloomsbury Academic, ca. 200 Seiten)

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## Introduction: Phantasmal Spaces

Everyone I know has seen the clouds in the sky.  
Many people have traversed a forest.  
Some have jumped from a cliff.  
Most of the people I know have been in a cave.  
And almost everyone has been on an island and travelled on a road.

All these people share an experience of space that is strongly anchored in the spatial disposition of a venue, a passage or a site and embraced by the poetics of these spaces. As much as the venues are topological containers for an individual to be situated within, they are also poetic machines that could be viewed with the eyes of a psychologist, a psychoanalyst, a philosopher or an artist. This book is written with the intention to obtain alternating points of view. Gaston Bachelard found a fitting notion for such a diversity of methods, when it comes to an analysis of space. He suggested that the ‘radiation’ of the poetic images that surround spatial archetypes should undergo some form of ‘topo-analysis’ (Bachelard 1964: xxiv). Obviously alluding to psycho-analysis Bachelard’s topo-analysis is more than a Freudian view on a *topos*. Bachelard acknowledges the relevance of the psychologist’s viewpoint and the psychoanalyst’s method, but he suggests that phenomenology introduces a new quality of resonating with the investigated spatial object. This resonance leads to a form of understanding that goes beyond knowledge. ‘Knowing must be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget knowing. Non-knowing is not a form of ignorance but a difficult transcendence of knowledge.’ (Bachelard 1964: xxviii–xxix). For Bachelard topo-analysis is the method of his choice to step from knowledge about the space to a form of intimacy with space. The philosopher states that he would not describe objectively geometrical and physical problems and that he would even go beyond the limitations of memory. ‘My research,’ he states, ‘is devoted to the domain of intimacy, to the domain in which psychic weight is dominant.’ (Bachelard 1964: 12).

The intention of this book is to deconstruct some of the clichés we have much too willingly accepted when dealing with archetypical spaces. I do not want to get rid of knowledge about spatial archetypes or to disconnect from the history of poetic, scientific or technological reasoning about space. On the contrary, I intend to relate observations from art history with innovations for computer games technology and to create cross-references between findings from psychology and psychoanalysis with claims from media studies. The network of references suggested here is supposed to install a precise view on crucial details of the whole. With no attempt to cover the totality of spatial archetypes the method of a topo-analysis that is based upon a

multimodal approach hopes to provide a glimpse or even a close view on spaces of intimacy. 'All the spaces of intimacy are designated by an attraction. Their being is well-being. In these conditions, topoanalysis bears the stamp of a topophilia, and shelters and rooms will be studied in the sense of this valorization.' (Bachelard 1964: 12). A topophile project like this book is certainly subjective and the reason for selecting spatial archetypes like the ruin, the cave, the forest and the road amongst others can hardly be defended other than by stating bluntly: I detect a particular radiation that these spaces emit that is intense, lasting and rich in connotations. Other authors might have selected different spaces and actually this book could be substantially extended by adding further spatial archetypes, e.g. the ocean, the moon, the desert or many more. I hope, however, that many readers will sense a sonority that they have experienced as private and remote voices. The book shall also help in discovering that many of the private voices and 'radiations' are not as private as we think they are. There are certainly spatial dispositives that are related to 'archetypes' that C. G. Jung wants to trace back to what he calls 'collective subconscious'. Bachelard warns from subscribing to the psychologist's obsession of getting lost 'in the inextricable chaos of psychological antecedents' and uses C. G. Jung's own words here (Bachelard 1964: xxviii) but he differs from Jung, when he states that we 'must go beyond the problem of description – whether this description be objective or subjective, that is, whether it gives facts or impressions' (Bachelard 1964: 4). The psychoanalyst's method of making the unconscious conscious diverts the observer from seizing the specific reality of a spatial arrangement. Bachelard admits that the approach of the psychologist, the psychoanalyst and the phenomenologist all contribute to an understanding of the object of inquiry, but it is the 'under' in 'understanding' that he is suspicious of. For the psychoanalyst 'sublimation ... is nothing but a vertical compensation, a flight upwards, exactly in the same way that compensation is a lateral flight. And right away, the psychoanalyst will abandon ontological investigation of the image to dig into the past of man.' (Bachelard 1964: xxvi). In other words, the psychoanalyst cannot appreciate what is, but needs to see what lies underneath. Bob Dylan phrased the attempt to free one's mind from what lies underneath immediate sensory perception in his song 'Gates of Eden' when he says:

At dawn my lover comes to me and tells me of her dreams  
With no attempts to shovel the glimpse into the ditch of what each one  
means  
DYLAN 1965

For both Dylan and Bachelard the reserve against depth of analysis does not keep them from acknowledging that there is something 'in the ditch'. Bachelard concedes that 'we encounter a co-operation between psychoanalysis and phenomenology which

must be stressed if we are to dominate the human phenomenon. As a matter of fact, the image has to be understood phenomenologically in order to give it psychoanalytical efficacy. The phenomenologist, in this case, will accept the psychoanalyst's image in a spirit of shared trepidation.' (Bachelard 1964: 19). Yet, both the psychoanalyst and the phenomenologist cannot stop at that point. 'The psychoanalyst cannot cling to the superficiality of metaphors and comparisons, and the phenomenologist has to pursue every image to the very end.' In a surprising thought experiment Bachelard finally sees the psychoanalyst and the phenomenologist reading Poe's *Tales* (c. 1832–45) together and imagines them understanding what each of them can achieve from the co-operation.

Edgar Allan Poe is indeed a key reference for what I will call *Phantasmal Spaces*. Poe's tales of mystery create spaces that are imaginative and owe much more to the power of imagination than to the persuasiveness of similarity to what we consider to be real. A phantasm can turn a hut into a palace, but this does not mean that a palace has been created for real. Bachelard phrases this with the words: 'It would be quite superfluous for such images to be true. They exist.' (Bachelard 1964: 178). The images are mental images and such mental images constitute phantasms when combined with ideas. Fox Harrell suggests a very wide definition of what a phantasm is, when he states: 'A phantasm is the result of human imaginative cognition.' (Harrell 2013: 3). Being aware of the relevance of material and immaterial determinants and of respective mediatic transformations Harrell insists that phantasms cannot be reduced to neurobiological processes only, but rather are 'a combination of imagery (mental or sensory) and ideas' (Harrell 2013: 4). This is to say that it would be reductionist and idealistic to speak of phantasms as creatures of the mind. Phantasms have a significant real-world impact and in this regard they differ from daydreams. The way phantasms are articulated, is based on worldviews that contribute to an epistemic domain. Depending on the worldview the observer subscribes to, the images that are combined with the ideas can be quite different.

Let us again take the example of the hut and the palace. A citizen of the Democratic Republic of Germany who views the world from a socialist perspective might consult images of the *Palace of the Republic* at Berlin's former Marx-Engels-Platz to match those with his concept of working-class palaces. A captive fan of Tolkien's fiction will grab different images to come to terms with his phantasm of palaces. Visitors of the Royal Palace in Final Fantasy XII's *Rabanastre* will again refer to another set of sensory images that they encounter when walking through the halls of the palace which is decorated in a voluptuous, orientalist computer game style. It seems that worldviews overlap in the case of phantasmal spaces. Is the underlying worldview of the *Rabanastre* Palace inspired by orientalism, computer game design or some Hollywood costume drama staged in the Middle Ages (as one would assume from the

music and game character voices)? Obviously we have a mix of worldviews here: a few of the audio-visual elements are coloured by romantic European ideas of the East, others by concepts of how a computer game should look like and still others by costume movies of the Kirk Douglas type. Fox Harrell calls mixed worldview phantasms ‘revealed phantasms’ and I will argue that phantasmal spaces are usually built upon more than just one single worldview.

To draw from one of the examples that I will talk about later, the phantasmal space of the ruin, is built upon different worldviews like ancient Greek mysticism, German romanticism, Hollywood action movies, the apocalyptic prophecies from the Book of Daniel, and many more. When I talk about *Phantasmal Spaces*, I also assume that these conceptual constructs are constituted from a multitude of spatial images that are rooted in different worldviews. It has to be noted here that the notion of phantasmal spaces differs from Harrell’s ‘phantasm space’ (Harrell 2013: 11) that he uses synonymous to ‘phantasm’. In a first attempt to define what phantasmal spaces are, I suggest to think of them as topological archetypes that combine mental and sensory images with ideas that stem from different worldviews – and not a combination of ideas and images that are embedded within one single worldview. It is difficult, if not impossible, to dissect the conglomerate of systems of reference that we unconsciously rely upon when making sense of something. We refer to a concept of Viennese cuisine when talking about a certain type of food and discover that most of the ingredients of this cuisine are Bohemian, Hungarian, Polish, Jewish, French or Italian. But even if we were to separate the dishes that have strong Hungarian kitchen-historical influences like the goulash from others that we call ‘typical Austrian’, like the Bohemian dumplings that have been introduced by female cooks from the neighbouring Northern country in the nineteenth century, we cannot assign the ‘Hungarian’ dishes to one frame of reference. We have to acknowledge that goulash is called *Pörkölt* in Hungary and that the *Szekler-goulash* that most Austrians consider a national dish has not gotten its name from the Székelys, (also referred to as Szeklers, a Hungarian minority now living in Romania). We need to understand that a registrar with the name József Székely ordered a combination of *Pörkölt* and *sauerkraut* in his favourite restaurant in Budapest in 1846. What he called ‘Kraut à la Székely’ thereafter became well known as *Szegediner gulasch* in Austria. I am not trying to teach Viennese cooking here, but I want to point out how systems of reference are inextricably interwoven and often hard to dissect.

Fox Harrell uses another example to show how a revealed phantasm can be ‘immediately understood and uncontroversial in meaning in their native cultural settings’ (Harrell 2013: 10). It sounds convincing when he points out that the sensory images for the notion of ‘woman’ differ in the cultural contexts of Western countries, India and Oman. Harrell explains that three different worldviews tend to connect

images of a stylized figure of a woman when indicating that a room is a ladies' room. Obviously the iconic signs showing a black and white figure wearing a skirt is clearly different to the figure wearing a sari and the latter can with little effort be differentiated from the figure with Muslim-style clothes. Harrell is also right in stating that the worldviews that generated the images can be traced back – or be 'revealed' as he likes to call it. The fact that the process of inscribing meaning and detecting the cultural backgrounds of meaning making in each of the three particular cases is immediate and uncontroversial is, however, due to the fact that the images are iconic, prototypical and unequivocal. That's just what icons are. If Harrell had extended the range of visual objects from being black and white to coloured, or from being graphic symbols to photographs, Harrell would have had to admit that signification is not always unambiguous. A photograph of a Scotsman in traditional kilt displays the shape of a person with a garment of trapezoidal shape, but it does not necessarily denote womanhood. The phantasm connected to such an image could as well be the phantasm of the Scottish Highlands. It could also be, depending on the kilt's pattern, the phantasm of London-based fashion in the stylistic registers of Burberry or Vivienne Westwood's autumn/winter collection from 1993/4. The kilt obviously goes with worldviews as disparate as those of traditional Scotsmanship, Punk or the fashion industry. My first objection against Harrell's understanding of phantasms is therefore that phantasms can never be 'immediately understood and uncontroversial in meaning', as he states on page 10 of his brilliant book *Phantasmal Media* (2013). Harrell has to be credited that he hints that the sari-skirt differentiation is not as simple as it looks at first sight when he observes that: '... many women in other countries such as Bangladesh, Mauritius and the United States also wear saris' (Harrell 2013: 8).

My second objection is that the interpreting community is never as homogenous as Harrell thinks it could be. The phantasms that he hopes to be able to detect in 'their native cultural settings' (Harrell 2013: 8) are set in cultural, historic and political contexts that are far from being stable and that are heterogeneous to a high degree for most modern societies. If revealing a phantasm means 'making conscious the awareness of the cultural worldview from which the phantasm is drawn', then I am afraid that revealing a phantasm is an impossible task. The worldview is not a shared belief of a group of sign-makers and of meaning-makers. One could attempt to argue that a phantasm that is created by an individual via a novel, a musical composition or painting has a single native source, but the collective creation of phantasms that this book is about are not based on one single worldview or one single person's worldview, but rather on a conglomerate of different worldviews. The fragments of viewing the world are sometimes melded together into what looks like a common spirit, an overarching programme or a conceptual framework, but when looked at in detail, the fragments disassemble quickly. Is the West Coast lifestyle somebody's native

cultural setting? Or is it the spirit of tolerance in the melting pot of New York? Or would we rather have to look at the pieces that make up the Californian phantasm, and differentiate between a Hispanic fast food employee in San Jose and a Berkeley professor? Is the phantasm of New York anything else than ‘anything goes’? Or is there just a phantasmal space that is currently labelled New York City and contains a kaleidoscope of ideas, concepts, images and worldviews? I will in this book argue that phantasmal spaces are made up from components, fragments and singularities that imbue colours, atmospheric content and a multitude of stories and connotations.

I will for this reason not differentiate between revealed phantasms and unrevealed ones and use the notion of phantasmal spaces to conduct a topo-analysis of spatial archetypes. The topo-analysis could be seen as a method that assembles the observations from different disciplines, worldviews and individuals to arrive at a panorama of phantasms that hover above a spatial archetype.

When I say ‘space’ here, I need to add that I will most of the time not be talking about ‘continuous, unbound, or unlimited extent in every direction’, i.e. an abstract and ‘pure’ space (Vella 2013: 2). Daniel Vella is right, when he demands a differentiation between space, as an abstract quality, and ‘place’ as inhabited space. A place is a venue we have already stepped into and where we have experienced moving around, seeing objects, hearing sounds and having had contact with others (humans, monsters, animals, robots, AIs). As Yi-Fu Tuan phrases it, we have changed ‘amorphous space into articulated geography’ (Tuan 1977: 72). It seems to me that Yi-Fu Tuan and Daniel Vella both assume that we can start from a void, an abstract spatial *a priori* that has to be filled with meaning via physical movement and time-consuming cognitive exploration. This will then, Vella tells us, actuate ‘both an actual, physical traversal and an exploratory shift’ (Vella 2013: 3). This sounds plausible to me, as long as we start exploring space in an unknown environment. As a rather random example let’s take a young student from Pine Bluff, who has never in his or her life left Arkansas. This student decides to take a trip to Venice in Europe. The only possibility to develop a feeling of place there is to explore the amorphous space of the city of Venice: take a walk from Piazza San Marco to the Rialto Bridge and then try to find the Palazzo Cavalli-Franchetti. Later take a *vaporetto* and visit Burano. It will take some time to get acquainted with this location and finally become familiar with it. Everything is different than what it was in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Not even Venice, Arkansas helps our traveller because the latter has not the slightest resemblance to the European Venice. The main requirements for the discovery of the ‘personality of the place’ (Tuan 1977) are time and movement to be spent and performed in the unfamiliar, new place.

But then again, let's think of another traveller. This person is a learned scholar on Italian history and an expert on Renaissance and Baroque architecture with a research focus on North Italian art and architecture. She has frequently been to Florence, Milano, Siena, Venice, Padua and Trieste. Drop this person in any of these cities and the 'personality of the place', the historic context and the aesthetic particularities of each of these cities will pop up within a tenth of a second. The scholar does not have to move, she does not even have to spend a lot of time there. She can just run her internal cinema of images, sounds and smells to dive deep into the place. In her case the place-experience does not follow the spatial exploration, it precedes space. If you are prepared to accept my observations about the place-space dynamics as plausible then I would like to ask whether similar mechanisms are imaginable in games. Is it not true that a newbie in *Zelda: Breath of the Wild* (2017) has to spend hours to turn the undifferentiated landscape into something that makes sense? And does it not even take longer than that to arrive at a feeling of place in and around *Hyrule* castle? In so far I can follow the hypothesis of Vella (2013) and Tuan (1977). But when it comes to routine *Zelda* players and adepts of the *Zelda* universe, things look differently. A player who is more familiar with the valleys, rivers and mountains of the country of *Hyrule* than with the streets and places of his own physical urban environment, might start the console with *Zelda* and feel the place at once. He might later on explore new spaces in Nintendo's 'Open Air'<sup>198</sup> game, but the whole world is his place from the beginning on. In the case of those at home at *Hyrule* the game starts on native grounds. It starts place-bound and then expands spatially. That is why I am opposing Tuan's topo-chronology. Tuan says: 'What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value' (Tuan 1977: 6). I would like to add: there are cases where place is the point of origin. Then space travelling commences and wider grounds are incorporated. Due to the variety of space-place dialectics and the complex dynamics of experienced, undifferentiated, pure, inhabited, inherited and personalized spaces, I will stick to the simple term space when talking about what the main topic of this book is: *Phantasmal Spaces*.

Phantasmal spaces belong to the aesthetic regime. As we will see later, the phantasms are independent of a specific materiality, even though they will be looked at from the viewpoint of a new-materialist discourse. Colours, shapes, textures and tones contribute to a special phantasm, yet, none of those can define a phantasm. The reason for that is the process of exchange with sister materialities and brother media. As Daniel Martin Feige observes, 'the computer game has to be unveiled in the light of its exchange processes with other aesthetic media' (Feige 2015: 23). So have spatial phantasms. We will never understand what the phantasm of the forest is if we look at oil paintings of woods only. We will never understand what the space of the road in

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<sup>198</sup> Nintendo seems to call Open World Games 'Open Air' games.



computer games comprises of, if we miss out on road movies, photography of the road, novels and stories about the roads. This book is therefore an exploration of spatial phantasms of digital games but it relies on looking at media other than digital games.

The book has a subchapter on intermedial exchange and transmedial transfer for each of the large explorations into *The Road*, *The Ruin*, *The Cave*, *The Cloud*, *The Cliff*, *The Forest*, *The Portal* and *The Island*. Readers who are mainly interested in transmediality and want to understand what is going on in between media might develop a reading strategy that traverses the book via the subchapters 1.4, 2.4, 3.4, 4.4, 5.4, 6.4, 7.4 and 8.4. In this way, they will leap from one medium to another, as the title within *The Cliff – Leaping from one Medium to Another* suggests. Other readers might be interested in the psychological analysis of games or a psychoanalysis of the players of games. For those readers, another shortcut is possible. Start with 1.3 – *Psychology of Driving*, and continue with the third subchapters of each of the large topical chapters, i.e. 2.3, 3.3, 4.3, until you arrive at 5.3, *Psychology of Risk Taking*. Then proceed with 6.3, to read about Freud's conception of the *Uncanny*, continue with 7.3 about *Rites of Passage* and finish with 8.3 about the psychology of loneliness. There are other ways to create non-linear reading strategies for those who have a strong interest in games technology or for readers whose affection is directed to art history. I hope that readers who follow my invitation will in the end have grown some appetite to read the whole book, but this is up to the reader.

How is this book structured? The book is structured in sections that deal with the topoi of *The Road*, *The Ruin*, *The Cave*, *The Cloud*, *The Cliff*, *The Forest*, *The Portal* and *The Island*. Each of these topoi will be looked at and critically analysed with regard to aesthetics, games technology, psychoanalysis and intertextuality. Let's call these approaches methods.<sup>199</sup> This structural grid of seven topoi and four methods provides the reader with a systematic framework to understand a complex phenomenon and to pick and choose favourite aspects, topoi and approaches (and thereby read the book in a non-linear way). Think of the book as a matrix. You have eight rows (the chapters or the respective topoi) and four columns (the methods). Within this matrix you can move like a rook chess piece. You could progress vertically from one topoi to another, or you could move horizontally from one method to another. But no one stops you from moving like a knight, a pawn, a king or whatever you like. Nelson Goodman

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<sup>199</sup> The notion of 'methods' is a simplification as we will see later. The epistemic domains or research areas of aesthetics, games technology, psychoanalysis and intertextuality are sufficiently complex as to contain a whole set of methods for each of them.

found a fitting description for such a manner of creative non-linear reading when he recommends reading a book of his in a particular fashion:

This book does not run a straight course from beginning to end. It hunts; and in the hunting it sometimes worries the same racoon in different trees, or different racoons in the same tree, or even what turns out to be no racoon in any tree.

GOODMAN 1978: ix

This structure of the book offers freedom, but it also asks for readiness to cope with swift changes in regard to method and topic. Chapters and subchapters are, however, held together by spatial settings in computer games that serve as points of reference, as signposts for orientation, and as evocative sources for historical, emotive and phantasmal content. Ruins, forests, islands and clouds do not only denote real-world objects: they also suggest and bring forward emotional states, historical context, atmospheric 'attunement' (Massumi 2014) and aesthetic programmes that go beyond direct semiotic reference. The author of this book invites you to tune in with rocks, trees and clouds. We will look at *The Road*, *The Ruin*, *The Cave*, *The Cloud*, *The Cliff*, *The Forest*, *The Portal* and *The Island* through the looking glass of games and try to see what these phantasmal spaces do to us and what they do to computer games.