Social Gaming / Social Computing  SS 2013

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Part I:
Introduction:
Social Games, Social Media, Social Context

“computer games are perhaps the richest cultural genre”
that exists and this fact demands a “search for a suitable
methodological approach” [Aarseth, 2001]
Perspectives on Digital Games

Ludology: „the discipline that studies game and play activities“ [Frasca, 1999; in (1)]
Dutch cultural historian Johan Huizinga [Huizinga, 1939; in (1)]:

(higher form of) play is:

1. “a free activity
2. standing quite consciously outside “ordinary” life as being “not serious”, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly.
3. is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it.
4. proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space
5. according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner.
6. 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.”
Concepts and Definitions for „Play“ and „Games“

Writer and philosopher Roger Cailliois [Cailliois, 1961; in (1)]:

play is activity characterized as:

1. free as in a voluntary activity,
2. separate in time and space and defined in advance,
3. uncertain in course and results beforehand,
4. unproductive in a materialistic way,
5. governed by rules just applicable to the play, and
6. make-believe of a second reality or free unreality.

![Caillois' Taxonomy of Play and Games](chart.png)

Caillois' Taxonomy of Play and Games. Source: [Cailliois, 1961 in (1)]

Concepts and Definitions for „Play“ and „Games“

Philosopher Bernhard Suits:

playing a game as the “voluntary effort to overcome unnecessary obstacles” [Suits, 1978, p. 55]:

1. attempt to achieve a specific state of affairs [prelusory goal],
2. using only means permitted by rules [lusory means],
3. where the rules prohibit use of more efficient in favor of less efficient means [constitutive rules], and
4. where the rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity [lusory attitude].

Concepts and Definitions for „Play“ and „Games“

Ludologist Brian Sutton-Smith [Sutton Smith, 1997; in (1)]:

1. **Play as progress**: covers children’s play or the play of animals, explicitly excludes play of adults, understood primarily as development and not entertainment.
2. **Play as fate**: usually applied for all types of gambling games and other games of pure chance.
3. **Play as power**: representation of a conflict as in sports, athletics or contests in general.
4. **Play as identity**: traditional and community celebrations such as festivals or rituals: means to confirm, maintain or advance the power and identity of communities of participating players.
Ludologist Brian Sutton-Smith [Sutton Smith, 1997; in (1)]:

5. **Play as the imaginary**: applied to the playful improvisation in a play world; idealizes imagination, creativity and flexibility.

6. **Of the self**: individually desired experiences by the player, i.e. fun, relaxation, escape with an intrinsic satisfaction.

7. **Play as frivolous**: usually applied to the activities of the idle or the foolish, such as in ‘playing around’; can be understood as an invert to the classical ‘work ethic’.

**Concepts and Definitions for „Play“ and „Games“**

- **“Play“ vs. “Game“**
  - Social aspects in aforementioned general classification frameworks often implicitly contained:
    - formation of social groupings (Huizinga)
    - community identity (Sutton-Smith)
    - ...  
  - Digital Game: Game involving computer(s)

**Concepts. andDefs: Vrtl. Play & Dig. Games: Academic Prspctv.**

- “play” ↔ “game”:
  - [Salen and Zimmerman, 2004; in (1)]:
    - Descriptive distinction: Games are a subset of play.
    - Conceptual distinction: Play is an element of games.
  - play: activity; game: activity or object
  - [Salen and Zimmerman, 2004; in (1)]: play: “free movement within a more rigid structure”
  - [Salen and Zimmerman, 2004; in (1)]:
    - digital games ➔ meaningful play
    - play that can “overflow and overwhelm the more rigid structure resulting in unpredictable results” ➔ transformative play
“play” $\leftrightarrow$ “game”:

- [Salen and Zimmerman, 2004; in (1)]: 3 categories of “play”
  - being playful
    (incl. playful state of mind $\rightarrow$ cp. Suits’ lusory attitude; Sutton-Smith: informal social play, solitary play, or playful behaviors)
  - ludic activities
    (incl. all non game behaviors of „playing“; cp. loosely Caillios’ agôn, alea, mimicry, and ilinx)
  - Game play:
    formalized interaction when players follow the rules of a game and experience its system through play.

- [Salen and Zimmerman, 2004; in (1)]: definition of game:
  - A game is a system
  - in which players engage in
  - an artificial
  - conflict,
  - defined by rules,
  - that results in a quantifiable outcome.

- [Salen and Zimmerman, 2004; in (1)]: digital game:
  - immediate but narrow interactivity
  - manipulation of information
  - automated complex systems
  - networked communication

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[Salen and Zimmerman, 2004; in (1)]: digital games as systems:

- as emergent systems
- as systems of uncertainty
- as information theory systems
- as systems of information (imperfect, perfect); information economy of a digital game; value created by information through its relationship to other pieces of information.
- as cybernetic systems: (input $\rightarrow$ state $\rightarrow$ output; feedback-loop; “agent”)
- as game theory systems
- as systems of conflict

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**Social aspects** of digital games:

- [Salen and Zimmerman, 2004; in (1)]: “When games are framed as **Social Play** the relationships between elements in the game system are considered to be **social relationships**”

- [Salen and Zimmerman, 2004; in (1)]: “games are emergent social systems in which simple play behaviors and social interactions can result in incredibly complicated experiences of play”

- [Salen and Zimmerman, 2004; in (1)]: “In transformative social play players extend, transform, and manipulate existing social relationships through play itself”

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- Ludologist: Jasper Juul [Juul, 2005; in (1)]: **games as interaction of**
  - rules of the game
  - The player(s)’ pursuit of the goal.
  - The player’s competence and repertoire of strategies and playing methods

- [Juul, 2005; in (1)]: definition of **game:**
  - A game is a rule-based system with
  - a variable and quantifiable outcome,
  - different outcomes are assigned different values,
  - player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome,
  - player feels emotionally attached to the outcome, and
  - consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable.

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Juul’s Classic Game Model. Source: [Juul, 2005; in (1)]
• [Juul, 2005; in(1)]: **digital games**: „**Games are transmedial, and computers a game medium**“:
  - Rules are upheld by the computer → allowing more flexible and complex games, or games in which the players do not know the rules.
  - Variable outcome can be determined by a computer based on actions of players; persistent on-line games: often just temporal outcomes
  - Valorization of outcome omitted and attachment to outcome less important in some open-ended digital games
  - new ways for player effort because of optionally non-physical nature.
  - Negotiable consequences not as implicit as in traditional games. Some digital games rather blended into normal life and not ‘outside ordinary life’.

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• **Frasca** [Frasca, 2007; in(1)]: **properties of play**
  - subjective (activity + state of mind)
  - engaging (pleasure + attention)
  - players believe in their active participation (cp Caillos: ’make-belive’)
  - limits player’s immediate future (freedom, but predictable set of outcomes)
  - player’s willing to tolerate all probable consequences (Juul’s ‘optional, negotiable consequences’)

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• **Frasca** [Frasca, 2007; in(1)]: **properties of games**
  - social („by default social endeavours“) („single gaming: always framed through social concepts“)
  - games are play activities and objects
  - games have rules
  - player performance is measured and valued correlating to a certain social status
  - players believe to actively participate in games (Juul’s required ‘player effort’) (cp. games of pure luck).
  - game consequences are not optional
  - „Any activity can be a game but not every activity is a game“
Concepts and Definitions of „Play“ and „Game“ extending to Virtual Play and Digital Games: Game Designer’s Perspective

- Game Design:
  - design rules and content
  - often perceived as art form
  - applied Ludology
  - only very recently in researcher’s focus (see (1) for cites)

- [Juul, 2005; in(1)]:
  - three levels:
    - game (system)
    - player(s)
    - world (context)

- [Juul, 2005; in(1)]:
  - Games of emergence: some simple rules combining to form interesting variations,
  - games of progression: separate challenges presented serially (fiction, narrative structure)

Social Play:
- rules → collaboration
- community formation
game designer & ludologist Chris Crawford [Crawford 1984; in (1)]:
  - **Representation**: a digital game is a “closed formal system that subjectively represents a subset of reality.”
  - **Interaction**:
    - players change digital representations.
    - injects social / interpersonal element
    - passive challenge → active challenge
    - emotional significance
  - **Conflict**: (cp. prelurary goal)
  - **Safety**: digital games provide “safe ways to experience reality”.

game designer Greg Costikyan
  - [Costikyan 1994; in (1)]: “a game is a form of art in which participants, termed players, make decisions in order to manage resources through game tokens in the pursuit of a goal”
  - [Costikyan 2002; in (1)]: “a game is an interactive structure of endogenous meaning that requires players to struggle toward a goal”

game designer Jesse Schell [Schell 2010; in (1)]
  - **play**: “manipulation that indulges curiosity”
  - **game**: “a problem-solving activity, approached with a playful attitude”

Players of Digital Games