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Perspectives on Digital Games

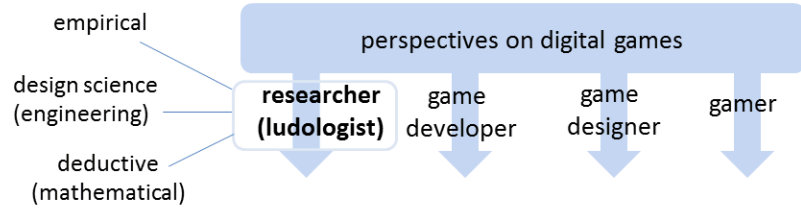
Part I: Introduction:

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]

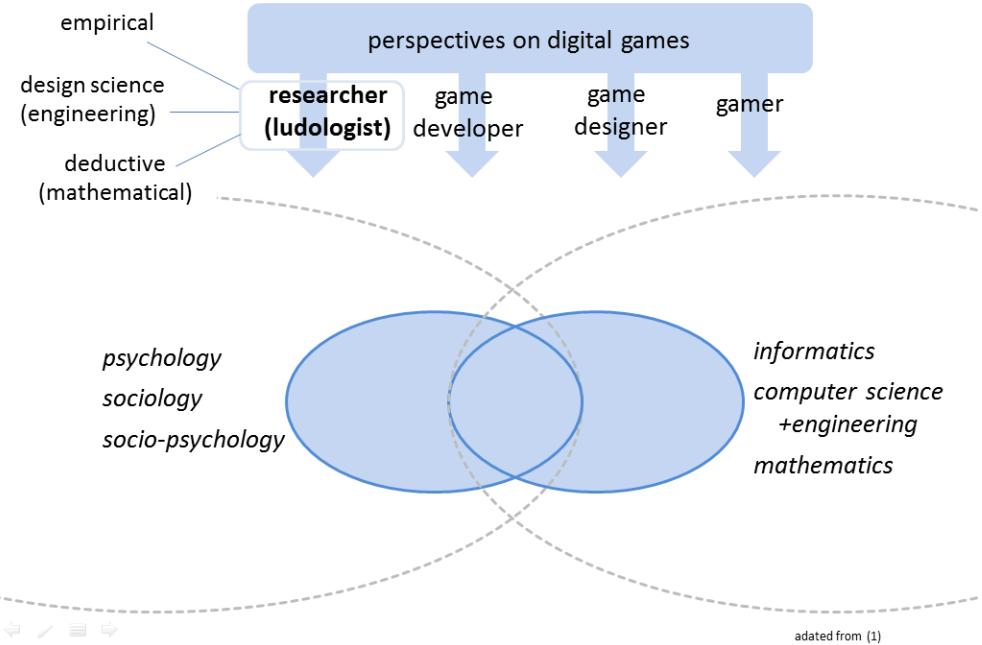


Perspectives on Digital Games

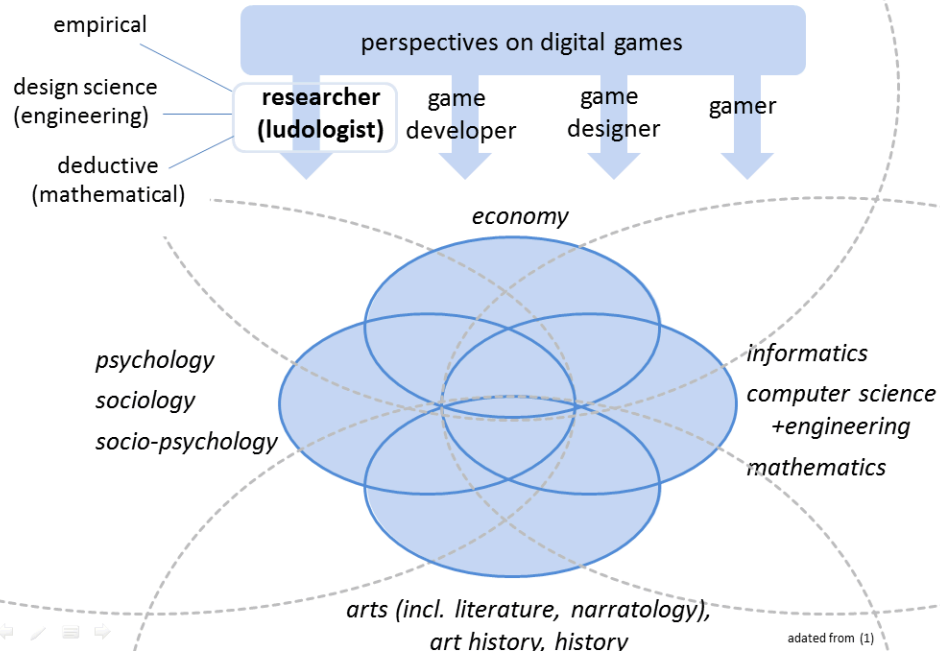


Ludology: „the discipline that studies game and play activities“ [Frasca, 1999; in (1)]

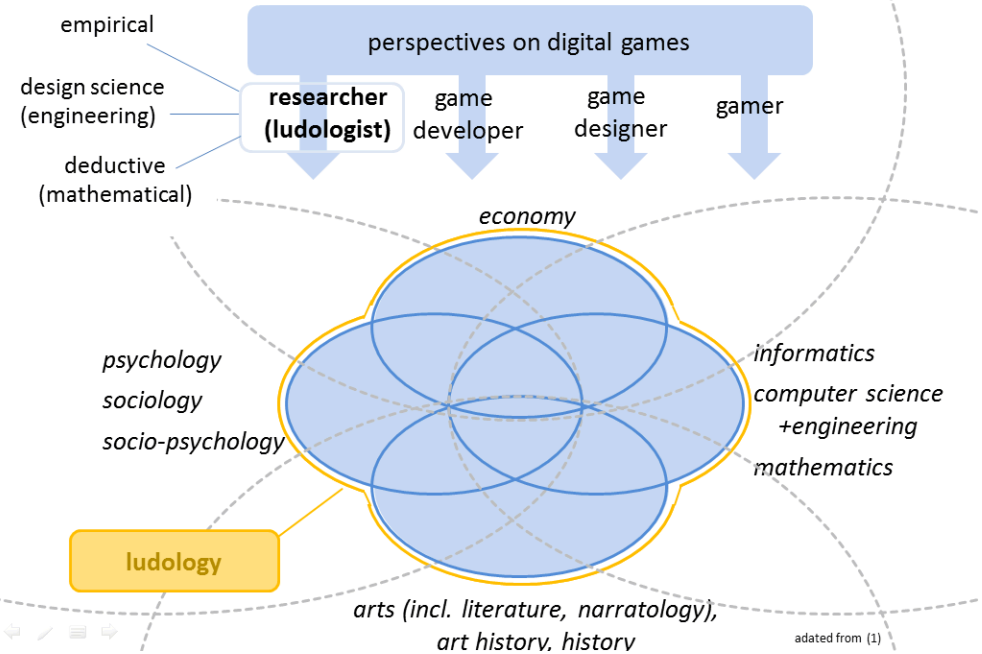
Perspectives on Digital Games

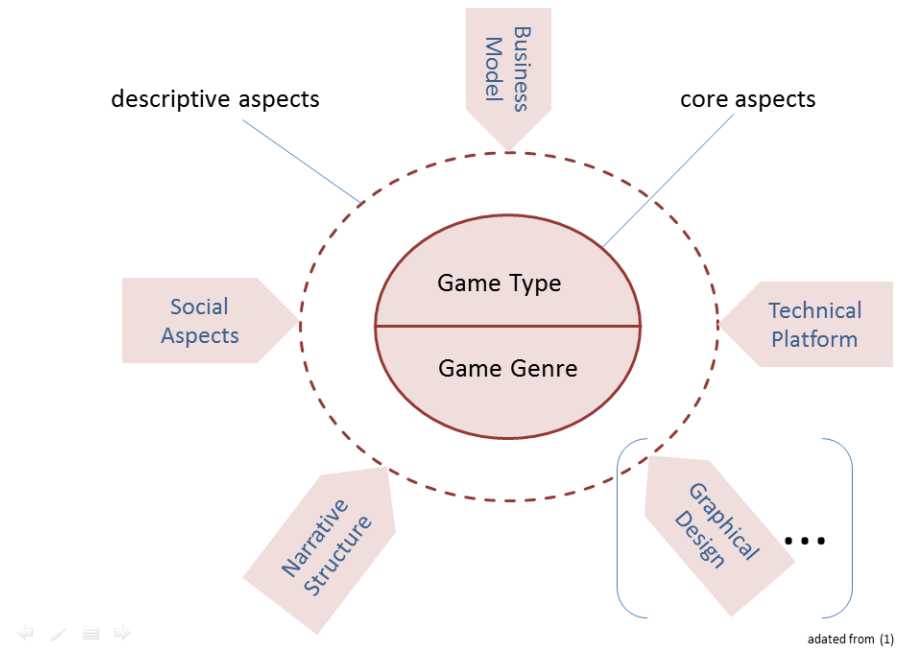
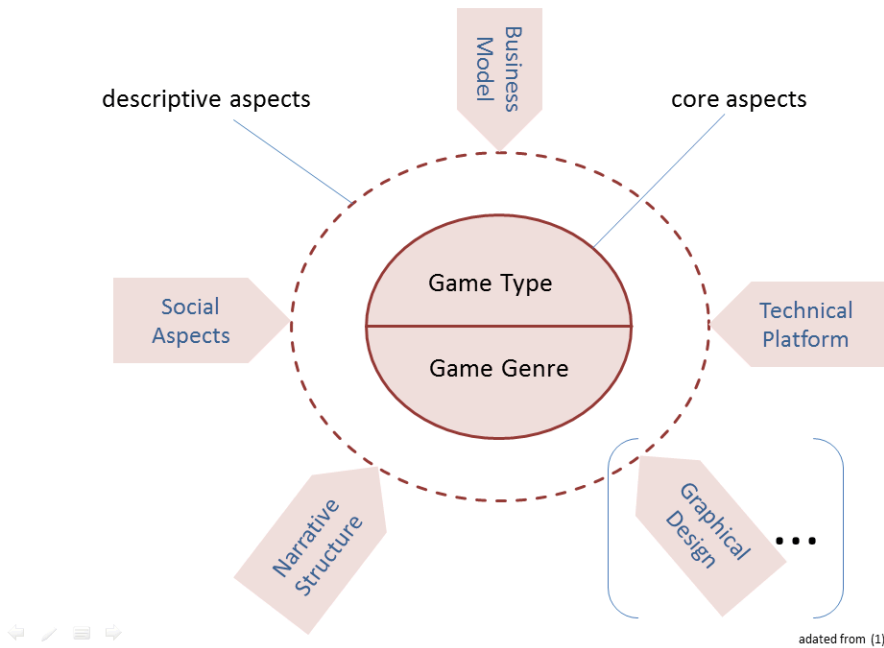


Perspectives on Digital Games



Perspectives on Digital Games





Concepts and Definitions for „Play“ and „Games“

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."

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

Concepts and Definitions for „Play“ and „Games“

Writer and philosopher Roger **Caillois** [Caillois, 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.

Concepts and Definitions for „Play“ and „Games“

Writer and philosopher Roger **Caillois** [Caillois, 1961 in (1)] :

	AGÓN (Competition)	ALEA (Chance)	MIMICRY (Simulation)	ILINX (Vertigo) <small>also: German: Rausch, Engl: flush</small>
<p><small>"primary power of improvisation and joy"</small></p> <p>PAIDIA</p> <p>Tumult Agitation Immoderate laughter</p>	<p>Racing Wrestling Etc. } <small>not regulated</small> Athletics</p>	<p>Counting-out rhymes Heads or tails</p>	<p>Children's initiations Games of illusion Tag, Arms Masks, Disguises</p>	<p>Children "whirling" Horseback riding Swinging Waltzing</p>
<p>Kite-flying Solitaire Patience Crossword puzzles</p>	<p>Boxing, Billiards Fencing, Checkers Football, Chess</p> <p>Contests, Sports in general</p>	<p>Betting Roulette</p> <p>Simple, complex, and continuing lotteries*</p>	<p>Theater Spectacles in general</p>	<p>Volador Traveling carnivals Skiing Mountain climbing Tightrope walking</p>
<p><small>"having taste of gratuitous difficulty"</small></p> <p>LUDUS</p>				

Caillois' Taxonomy of Play and Games. Source: [Caillois, 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** [**preludory 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**.



Concepts and Definitions for „Play“ and „Games“

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’.

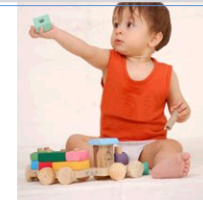


Concepts and Definitions of „Play“ and „Game“ extending to Virtual Play and Digital Games: Game Researcher’s Perspective



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)



Cncpts. and Defs: 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“ ↔ „game“:

- [Salen and Zimmerman, 2004; in (1)]: 3 categories of “play”
 - being playful
(incl. playful state of mind → 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 Caillois’ agôn, alea, mimicry, and ilinx)
 - Game play:
formalized interaction when players follow the rules of a game and experience its system through play.

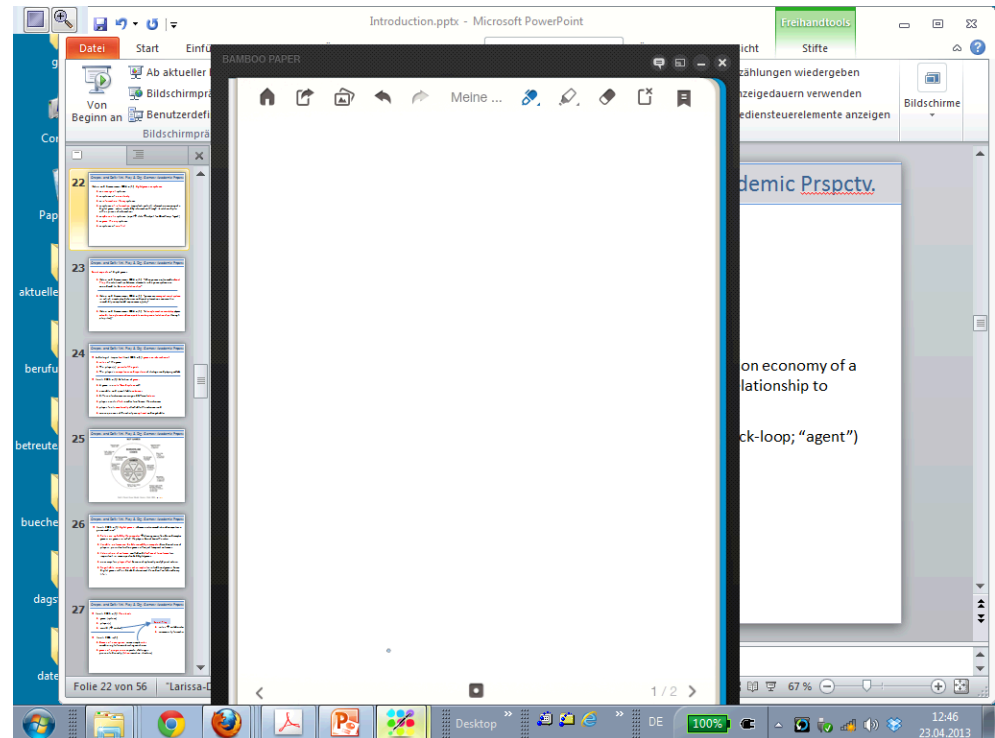
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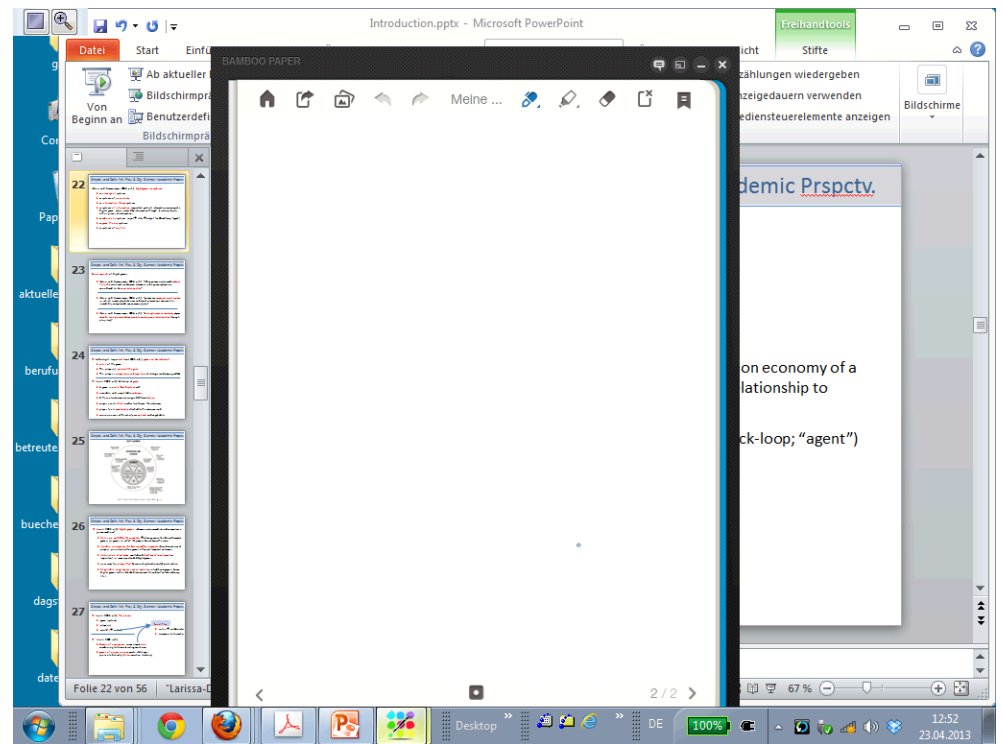
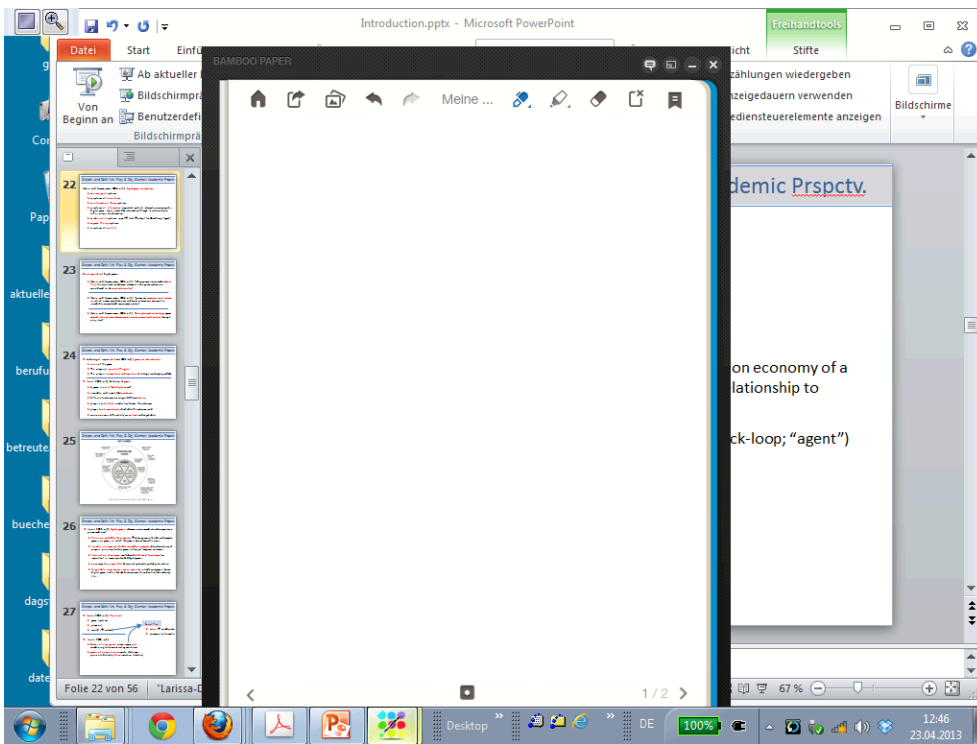
- [Salen and Zimmerman, 2004; in (1)]: **definition of game:**
 - A game is a **system**
 - in which **players engage** in
 - an **artificial**
 - **conflict**,
 - defined by **rules**,
 - that results in a **quantifiable outcome**.

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

[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 → state → output; feedback-loop; “agent”)
- as **game theory** systems
- as systems of **conflict**





Concepts and Definitions: Virtual Play & Digital Games: Academic Perspective.

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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.

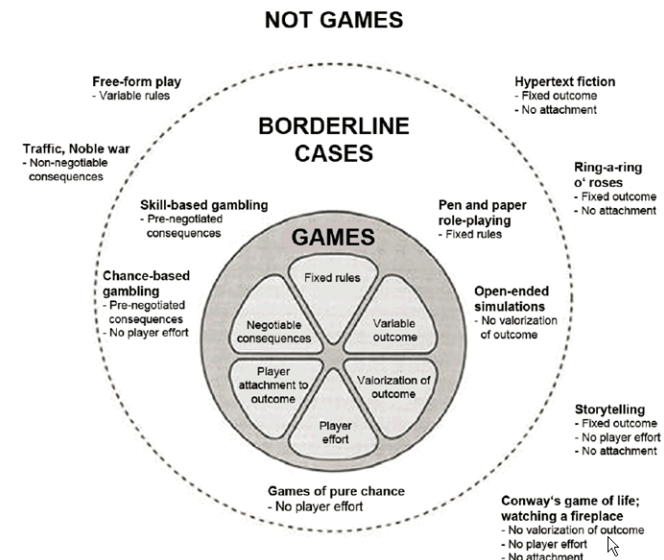


Social aspects of digital games:

- [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**”



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’.



- [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
-



- Frasca [Frasca, 2007; in(1)]: **properties of play**
 - subjective (activity + state of mind)
 - engaging (pleasure + attention)
 - players believe in their active participation (cp Caillois: ‚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‘)



- 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“



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



Concepts and Definitions of „Play“ and „Game“ extending to Virtual Play and Digital Games: Game Designer's Perspective



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- 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. prelusory goal)
 - **Safety**: digital games provide “safe ways to experience reality”.



- game designer Sid **Meier**:
 - in [Rollings and Morris 2000; in (1)]:
game: “a **series of interesting choices**”:
 - in [Rouse 2001; in (1)]:
three criteria for interesting choices:
 - no single option should be **best**
 - options should **not be equally good**
 - player must be able to make **informed choice**



- 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

