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half-real

Video games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds

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Gliederung

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Video Games between Real Rules and Fictional Worlds
Chapter 1: Introduction

What a Game Is:
The Classic Game Model:
(1) a rule-based formal system;
(2) with variable and quantifiable outcomes
(3) where different outcomes are assigned different values;
(4) where the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome;
(5) the player feels emotionally attached to the outcome
(6) and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable.

“It does not mean all games are the same, with these six features We can talk about how games are different from each other.” (Juul, 7)
Games as Rules:

paradox: „... while the rules themselves are generally definite, unambiguous, and easy to use, the enjoyment of a game depends on these easy-to-use rules presenting challenges that cannot be easily overcome.“ (Juul, 2005)
two basic ways in which games are structured and provide challenges for players:
- **Emergence** (a number of simple rules combining to form interesting variations)
card and board games, in sports and most action and all strategy games

- **Progression** (separate challenges presented serially)
Strong control of designer: storytelling ambitions.
Game as Fiction:

“(…) the hero dies and is respawned moments later, the strategy game lets „build“ new people in a few seconds; the player dies and loads a save game in order the continue just before he or she died; in-game characters talk about the game controllers that the player is using.” (Juul, 6)

contradictory (wiederspruchlich).  
incoherent (unzusammenhängend).

“the world of a game is something that the player can often choose to imagine at will.”
The emergence game: replayable multiplayer game – the player can gradually begin to ignore the fiction

The progression game: adventure game – the player faces each setting once and is therefore more likely to take the fictional world at face value.
Rules vs. Fiction:
Saussure: Chess – in a board game the actual shape of a piece appears unimportant in relation to the rules.
Erving Goffman: specific shape of a piece in a game is not important.

"[Games] illustrate how participants are willing to forswear for the duration of the play any apparent interest in the aesthetic, sentimental, or monetary value of the equipment employed, adhering to what might be called *rules of irrelevance*. For example, it appears that whether checkers are played with bottle tops on a piece of squared linoleum, with gold figurines on inlaid marble, or with uniformed men standing on colored flagstones in a specially arranged court square, the pairs of players can start with the 'same' positions, employ the same sequence of strategic moves and countermoves, and generate the same contour of excitement. (Goffman 1972, 19)
The Denial of Fiction:

1. Rules are what makes a game a game.
2. Fiction is incidental to whether something is a game.
3. A game can be interesting without fiction.
4. A game with an interesting fictional world can be a terrible game.
5. Therefore, fiction in games is unimportant. (Juul, 1998)
as you can see, the symbolical or metaphorical meaning of the game is not connected to the program or the gameplay. The relationship is, in a word, arbitrary“ (Juul, 1998)
(Play it by Trust - Yoko Ono - 1966-1998)
„relation between rules and fiction in the games fig 1.4 and 1.5 is not arbitrary!

Fig. 1.4: The love/hate relationship with television personalities as a deep space battle
Fig. 1.5: an academic discussion - defending games against theoretical imperialism - as a deep space battle

they work because the rules fit the representation - in an allegorical way.“ (Juul, 2005)
Chapter 2: Classic Game Model

good definition should be describe these three things:

1. The system set up by the rules of a game,
2. the relation between the game and the player of the game,
3. the relation between the playing of the game and the rest of the world.
The Classic Game Model:

1. **Rules**: a rule-based formal system
2. **Variable, quantifiable outcome**:
3. **Valorization of outcome**:
4. **Player effort**: Games are challenging
5. **Players attached to outcome**:
6. **Negotiable consequences**.
„in short: A game is a **rule-based system** with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where **different outcomes** are assigned **different values**, the player exerts *effort* in order to influence the outcome, the player feels *emotionally attached to the outcome*, and the consequences of the activity are *negotiable.*“ (Juul, 2005)
Figure 2.10
On the borders of the classic game model.
The Classic Game Model:

1. **Rules**: a rule-based formal system
2. **Variable, quantifiable outcome**:
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5. **Players attached to outcome**:
6. **Negotiable consequences**.
The Limits of the Classic Game Model:

**Rules:** The Computer upholds the rules, that allows for video games much flexibility, rules are more complex than humans can handle; freeing the players from having enforce the rules; allowing for games where the player does not know the rules from outset.

**Variable outcome:** In persistent online games, the player never reaches a final outcome but only a temporary one when logging out of the game.

**Valorization of outcome:** Open-ended simulation games (the Sims) change the basic game model by removing goals, by not describing some possible outcome as better than others.

**Player effort:** The non-physical nature of video games means that player effort can work in few ways. The player can control a large number of automatic units in a real time strategy game, which would not be possible in a non-electronic game.

**Attachment to outcome:** Open-ended simulation game does not have a specific win or lose state.

**Negotiable consequences:** Pervasive games, location based games, live-action role playing games... „majestic“ where actual phone calls are part of the game.
**Chapter 3: Rules**

**paradox:** „... while the rules themselves are generally definite, unambiguous, and easy to use, the enjoyment of a game depends on these easy-to-use rules presenting challenges that **cannot** be easily overcome.“ (Juul, 2005)
in short, rules work like this:

1. A specific rule should be sufficiently clear that players can agree about how to use it. Rules describe what players can and cannot do, and what should happen in response to player actions.

2. The Rules construct a *state machine* that responds to player action.

3. The state machine can be visualized as a landscape of possibilities. To play a game is to interact with the state machine and to explore the game tree.
4. Since a game has multiple outcomes, the players must expend effort to reach as positive an outcome as possible. Its harder to reach positive outcome than a negative one. *Challenge*

5. Playing and trying to overcome challenges is *gameplay*. Its an interaction between the rules.

6. Games are learning experiences. The player will have a specific repertoire of skills and methods (rules) for overcoming the challenges. good games makes new demands on the players repertoire.

-**Emergence** (rules combining to provide variations)
The simplicity of the rules of a game may lead to very complex gameplay. The element of surprise is special in that it's an interaction between the rules of the game and the fuzzy ways which humans understand games.

-**Progression** (challenges presented serially by way of special-case rules)
The game designer explicitly determines the possible ways in which the game can progress.
What are Rules?
Limitation?

The rules of a game „set up potential actions“, action that are meaningful inside the game but meaningless outside.

Rules specify limitation and affordances. Rules give game structure.
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Limitation?

The rules of a game “set up potential actions”, action that are meaningful inside the game but meaningless outside.

Rules specify limitation and affordances. Rules give game structure.
A game is a state machine:

„To borrow from computer science, the rules of a game provide a state machine. Briefly stated, a state machine is a machine that has an initial state, accepts a specific amount of input events, changes state in response to inputs using state transition function (i.e., rules), and produces specific outputs using an output function.“ (Juul, 2005)
Abbildung 3: Welt 1 Game Play Konzept

Du hast den Jetpack eingesammelt!

Abbildung 10: Event beim Einsammeln der Items
public void changeJumpPower()
{
    switch (itemsCarried)
    {
    |
    case 0: jumpPower = 40; break;
    case 1: jumpPower = 30; break;
    case 2: jumpPower = 10; break;
    |
    }
}

Abbildung 11: changeJumpPower() Funktion

public void changeScale()
{
    switch (itemsCarried)
    {
    |
    case 0: jumpPower = 28;
        transform.localScale = new Vector3 (startScale.x, startScale.y, startScale.z);
        transform.position += new Vector3 (0, transform.localScale.y*2.1f, 0);
        break;
    case 1: jumpPower = 37;
        transform.localScale = new Vector3 (startScale.x * 2, startScale.y * 2, startScale.z * 2);
        transform.position += new Vector3 (0, transform.localScale.y*2.2f, 0);
        break;
    case 2: jumpPower = 50;
        transform.localScale = new Vector3 (startScale.x * 3, startScale.y * 3, startScale.z * 3);
        transform.position += new Vector3 (0, transform.localScale.y*1.7f, 0);
        break;
    |
    }
}

Abbildung 12: changeScale() Funktion
„if you cannot influence the game state in anyway (as opposed to being unable to influence the game state in the *right* way), you are not playing a game.“ (Juul, 2005)
Algorithmic Rules:

Donald Knuth's *The Art of Computer Programming:*

Finiteness
Definiteness
Input
Output
Effectiveness
„for our purposes, definiteness corresponds to the description of rules as being unambiguous; **finiteness** and **effectiveness** imply that the rules of a game have to be practically usable; **input** and **output** relate to the input and output of the state machine.“ (Juul, 2005)
Chapter 4: Fiction

„The fictional world of a game is projected in a variety of ways—using graphics, sound, text, advertising, the game manual, and the game rules.“ (Juul, 2005)
**Fiction in games:**

- subjective
- optional
- ambiguous
- subject to discussion

„Rules and fiction are attractive for opposite reasons.“ (Juul, 2005)

- Storytelling is not fiction.
- Not fixed stories, but fictional worlds.
contradictory (wiederspruchlich)
incoherent (unzusammenhängend)
“(…) we do not know the names of Mario and Luigi's parents.”

games do not give much information to go by.

“The fictional world of Donkey Kong is only very superficially described, but it is possible to imagine a world in which Mario's girlfriend is kidnapped by an evil gorilla and has to be rescued. This is repeated on levels 1 and 2. On level 3, Donkey Kong kidnaps Mario's girlfriend again and apparently returns to the original hideout. It is harder to understand why Mario has three lives: Being hit by a barrel, by a fireball, or by an evil should reasonably be fatal.”
Five main types of game:

Abstract Games:
Ironic Games:
Incoherent World Games:
Coherent World Games:
Staged Games:
Ways of Creating Worlds:
- graphics
- sound
- text
- cut-scenes

- the game title, box, manual, haptics, rules

-influence the way a player imagines the game world.-
Fiction in games:

-Since the rules of a video game are automated, video games allow for rules that are more complex and hence for more detailed fictional worlds.

-Since the rules are hidden from the player, video games allow the player's initial focus to be on the appearance of the game as a fictional world, rather than on the game as a set of rules.

-Because video games are immaterial, they can depict fictional worlds more easily than non-electronic games.
Fazit:

- Video games are combination of rules and fiction.

- The Classic Game Model: the game, game and player, playing and the rest of the world
Table 6.1

Rules and fiction meet the game, the player, the world

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The game (The game as an artifact)</th>
<th>The player (The player and the game)</th>
<th>The world (The playing of the game and the rest of the world)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· The rules of the game</td>
<td>· Gameplay</td>
<td>· Rule negotiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· The state machine</td>
<td>· Learning</td>
<td>· Repertoire of skills the player brings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· The game tree</td>
<td>· The player repertoire</td>
<td>· Social interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>· Winning and losing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiction</td>
<td></td>
<td>· Consequence negotiations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Signs that project a fictional world</td>
<td>· The way the player actually imagines the fictional world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>· Film conventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>· Game conventions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>· World knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>· Interpretation conventions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“A game is a frame in which we see things differently. Literature can make us focus on the words themselves. In the game, we can seek the beauty of the activity itself” (Juul, 2005)
Kritik:
-Danke für die Aufmerksamkeit-