**THE CLASSIFICATION OF GAMES**

***The Definition of Play***

J. Huizinga - analyzed several of the fundamental characteristics of play, demonstrated the importance of its role in developing civilization.

* Sought an exact definition of play
* Tried to clarify the role of play present in essential aspects of all culture (philosophy, poetry, juridical institutions, war)

His work is not a study of games - instead question about the creative quality of play in culture & the spirit that rules certain kinds of games.

* Huizinga’s definition of play: Free activity outside ordinary life (not serious) but also absorbing the player “intensely and utterly.” No material interest, no profit. Promotes formation of groups. Boundaries of time, space and rules. Groups tend to surround themselves with “secrecy”

A good definition, but limited in a few areas:

* The secrecy/mystery aspect. (Mystery and secrecy can be turned into play activity but play removes the nature of mystery.
* No material interest and no profit excludes betting and games of chance.

Rest of definition:

* No goods are produced is true, play does not create any wealth or goods which makes it different from work or art
  + Play is pure waste: of time, energy, ingenuity, skill, sometimes money
* Free and voluntary activity
  + A game that is forced to be played would not be *play*
  + Theplayer devotes himself spontaneously to the game
* Play is a separate occupation, isolated from the rest of life
  + Space for play (i.e. place for hopscotch, board for checkers, stadium, etc)
* Agreed boundaries
  + Duration often fixed in advance, the game’s domain is a restricted, closed, protected universe
  + In this fixed space there are rules that must be accepted
  + Rules are imperative: a game is destroyed by the nihilist who denounces the rules as absurd and refuses to play because the game is meaningless (not by cheating, which is only a player taking advantage of the other players loyalty to the rules)
* Play is free activity (one only plays when one wants to)
  + Doubt must remain until the end
  + Every game involves risk for the player, risk of defeat
  + Constant unpredictable situations are necessary

Not all games imply rules

* Playing with dolls, cops & robbers, etc
* The pleasure is free improvisation and playing a role - in this case, fiction replaces and performs the same function as rules do
* Rules by themselves create fictions

Games are not ruled and make-believe. They are ruled OR make-believe

* Two new domains to play: wagers and games of chance & games of mimicry and interpretation .

***The Classification of Games***

Proposes four different categories depending if the dominant role is competition, simulation or vertigo.

* *Agon:* football, billiards, chess
* *Alea:* roulette, lottery
* *Mimicry:* pirate, Nero, Hamlet
* *Ilinx:* rapid whirling or falling movement, state of dizziness and disorder

*Fundamental Categories*

**Agon**

* Competitive, in which adversaries should confront each other
* Rivalry that hinges on a quality exercised
* Winner appears to be better than the loser
* Also games where the adversaries divide elements into equal parts and value (checkers, chess, billiards)
* Handicaps for players of different classes to promote equality in the rivalry
* Sustained attention, appropriate training, desire to win
* Spirit of *agon* found in culture: duel, tournament, war
* Feats of prowess

**Alea**

* Latin name for the game of dice
* Games based on a decision independent of the player, outcome over which he has no control, winning is result of fate
* Player is passive -does not use resources, skill, muscle or intelligence
* Negates work, patience, experience
* Total disgrace or absolute favor

**Mimicry**

* Becoming an illusory character oneself, and behaving as them
* Forgets, sheds or disguises his personality in order to play another
* Children: aim is to imitate adults
* Pleasure lies in passing for another
* The games basic intention is not to deceive the spectators (only the spy and the fugitivie who disguise themselves to really deceive because they’re not playing)
* Rule of the game is the actor fascinating the spectator, lends himself to illusion

**Ilinx**

* Games based on the pursuit of vertigo
* An attempt to momentarily destroy the stability of perception
* Vertigo linked to desire for disorder in either organic or psychological form
* Pleasurable torture (vertigo inducing rides)
* Pursuit of the disorder or panic

*From Turbulence to Rules*

*Paidia*: spontaneous manifestations of the play instinct

* Cat with a ball of yarn, dog sniffing, somersaults
* Need for disturbance and tumult
* Joy in destruction

*Ludus:* disciplines and enriches paidia

* Provides an occasion for training, mastery
* Strongly affected by fashion
* Second form: the hobby, secondary activity undertaken and pursued for pleasure
* Relates to primitive desire to find diversion and amusement in recurrent obstacles
* The specific element in play the impact and culturual creativity of which seems most impressive

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**FRAMING GAMES - ANNIKA WAERN**

Research on games has mostly come from the study of digital games.

* Digital games are not the only kind that exist
* There are many that mix digital and non-digital components
* There is a need to develop an approach to study all forms of games

Strength of digital game studies

* Ability to uncover the relationship between the structure of a game and the way people engage with that system

*Games as Systems and Activity*

* Nominal definitions: aim to capture how a word is used in language
* Essential definitions: aim to establish a term that captures a particular concept or phenomenon
* Two types of definitions for games: as systems, or as human activity
  + Some argue that games are both games and activities
  + Usually games that favors one definition or the other is limited

*What is it in a game…*

Games we give names to are systems: chess, Left 4 Dead

* A game is a game-like system which has as its primary purpose to be played
  + Game-like systems and play exist outside the context of games: it’s only when they coincide that we have a game (when a game like system has been designed for the purpose of supporting play or emerged out of a playful practice)

*Framing Play*

* - playing and gaming have distinct meanings
* Both play and game can be used as nouns and verbs
* Play as basic human or even pre-human activity
* A major division in the way that play has been defined is in the way it has been framed (framing it as a cultural or social phenomenon OR as a mindset)

*Play as a mindset*

* Piaget (1962) defines play as capturing a range of activities that are motivated by the self
* Activities based on extrinsic and intrinsic motivation
* Apter (1989) telic & paratelic
  + Telic: state of mind in which the goal is primary
  + Paratelic: where the intrinsic experiential motivations are primary

*Play as a sociocultural agreement*

* Huizinga (1955)
* Goffman (1975)
* Bateson (1955)
  + Animals are able to meta-communicate in activity that is play
  + Play as resignifying the activity and contain an element of pretence
* Suits’ (2005)
  + To play a game is to engage in activity directed towards bringing about a state of affairs
  + Using means permitted by rules
  + Rules are accepted because they make the activity possible
* While it’s true game frame changes the meaning of actions in games, players do not always interpret those meanings as in any way ‘less real’ than meanings outside the game frame
  + Social frame provides rules about how we are expected to behave in a gaming situation
  + Allows us to establish a play agreement

*Framing Games as Systems*

* Rules
  + Rules are important to make games repeatable
  + Support the re-signification that goes on
  + Infuse meaning into otherwise meaningless activity
  + Game rules must be explicit, or there is no way for players to understand and agree that the meanings through rules hold only within the game
  + Does not mean they need to be *fixed*

*Goals and Opposition*

* Require some form of goal and at least minimal opposition
* Not all game situations are equally desirable

Requirements of play activity for author:

* Must be paratelic
* Re-signified

Requirements on game-like systems

* Must have explicit rules and goals

A game is a (designed or emerging) system of rules, goals and opposition, which has its primary purpose to allow people to engage with it for paratelic reasons, while agreeing that the actions performed are re-signified.

DIAGRAM ON PAGE 11

**WHAT IS A GAME?**

1. Game Playing as the Selection of Inefficient Means
   1. Playing games is different than working
   2. Work is technical activity in which an agent seeks to employ the most efficient available means for reaching a desired goal
   3. The means employed in games are not the most efficient

2. Rules and Ends in Games

* Rules in games seem to be inseparable from ends
* If the rules are broken the original end becomes impossible of attainment

3. Not Ultimately Binding

* Games cannot command ultimate loyalty
* We acknowledge that games are in some sense non-serious
* There is always something in the life of a player that is more important than playing the game
* This observation might be insufficient. Golf player example: he is still playing a game, despite it being “repugnant to nearly everyone’s moral sense’

4. Means, Rather than Rules

* There is a crucial limitation but it;s not *rules*
* The means which the rules permit must be short of ultimate utilities
* Drawing lines essence of gamewright’s craft between two extremes: winning can be too easy, and everything being so lax that the game disappears. Lines can become too tight so the game is too difficult.
* Recent proposal: Games are activities in which rules are inseparable from ends, but with the added qualification that the *means* permitted by the rules are smaller in scope than they would be in the absence of rules

5. Rules are Accepted

* Rules are obeyed because obedience is a necessary condition for my engaging in the activity
* External reasons for conforming to the rule: because its violation would vitiate some other end
* Games consist in acting in accordance with rules: which limit the permissible means to an end, and where rules are obeyed so that activity can take place

6. Winning is not the end..

* An end distinct from winning the game
* Restriction of means to this other end which makes winning possible
* Defines what it means to win

Refer to definition #7

**MEANINGFUL PLAY**

* According to Huizinga, play and games are at the very center of what makes us human
* Play links combative nature of contest directly to war, poetry, art, religion
* “All play means something”, there is a “sense” to play
* Many different ways to interpret his meaning

*Meaning and Play*

* Game designers must care about the relationship between meaning and play
* Meaningful play: learning to create great game experiences for players experiences that have meaning and are meaningful.
* Near infinite variety of forms that play can take
  + Intellectual dueling of chess
  + Team based basketball
  + Online-roleplaying game
  + Lifestyle-invading game played on a college campus
* Each situates play within the context of a game
* Meaningful play emerges from the interaction between players and the system of the game (as well as the context in which the game is played)
* Players making choices within games (how to move their bodies, what cards to play, what options to select)
* Player choice -> outcome
* Every action taken results in a change affecting the overall system of the game

*Two Kinds of Meaningful Play*

* Every game lets players take actions and assigns outcomes to them
* This definition is descriptive, because it describes what happens in every game
* That’s the first understanding of meaningful play
* Second definition: meaningful play refers to the goal of successful game design.
* *Evaluative*: helps ups critically evaluate the relationships between actions and outcomes and decides whether they’re meaningful enough within the designed system of the game
* Meaningful play occurs when the relationship between actions and outcomes are both *discernable and integrated* into the larger context of the game.

*Discernable:*

* Result of the game action is communicated to the player in a perceivable way
* When the relationship between an an action and outcome is not obvious or discernible to the player, meaningful play is difficult to achieve
* Discernibility lets the players know *what* happened when they took an action

*Integrated*

* The action a player takes not only has immediate significance in the game, but also affects the play experience at a later point in the game
* Any action taken at one moment will affect possible actions at later moments (chess)
* Every action is woven into the larger fabric of the overall game experience

**CHAPTER THREE: WHAT IS IT GOOD FOR**

* A game is an experience created by rules
* The experience that we identify as a game has character, someone is there to have that experience (someone we refer to as the player)
* Experience of a game is created by the interaction between different rules
* The rules are not the game, the interaction is
* Variation between games - games are good at exploring dynamics, relationships and systems

*The Story of Tetris*

* *System:* the interaction or ongoing interactions between a set of rules
* Rules function to give game a momentum and shape, help game escalate
* Systems can be translated into game rules (SimCity)

*Rise of the Designer*

* Folk gamesL no single credited author, but many untraceable authors over many years
* Artifacts shaped by entire cultures
* Authored board games (games created by a single person or small group) are a more recent phenomenon
* Can there be folk video games?
* Folk games tell us about the culture that created them; authored games tell us about the author that created them
* Authored games have the potential to be more personal, and thus more specific and diverse

*What’s Video Good For?*

* In a digital game, the computer keeps the rules
* Much greater control over what info the players have access to
* Leads to ambiguity - which is good for storytelling (author has control of when information is revealed and control the pace of a story)
* Hidden rules in video games can result in complex systems without complicating the game
* Video games are often performative
* Designer can teach the player the subtleties of complex system through careful use of variables
* Video & audible helpful for storytelling
* Strict narrative control author is able to have over player’s experience because the machine enforces the rules

**CHAPTER 6: INTERACTIVITY**

Debate over the term interactivity is varied.

* Most basic term, it simply describes an active relationship between two things
* We need a more rigorous definition
* Something is interactive when there is a reciprocal relationship between two elements in a system (conversations, databases, games, social relationships)
* Many definitions - it takes place within a system, it is relational, it allows for direct intervention within a representational context and it is iterative

*Multivalent Model of Interactivity*