MASTER THESIS

What criteria do experts consider important when it comes to design guidelines for serious board games?

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In the programme

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Vincent Hayen, declare that this thesis titled, "Can guidelines be formed for the creation of simulation-based serious board games?" and the work presented are my own. I confirm that:

- This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University.

- Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated.

- Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed.

- Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work.

- I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

- Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself.

Signed: Vincent Hayen

Date: August 16, 2024

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Appendix

Appendix A: Consent Form

CONSENT FORM – RESEARCH "Criteria Game design framework for serious board games".
Research Title: Game design framework for the creation of serious board games.
I _____ (your full name) provide consent to
the following research institution:
Breda University of Applied Sciences (BUas)
to use my data within the above-mentioned project.

I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary, I am free to refuse to participate and free to withdraw from the research at any time. My refusal to participate or withdrawal of consent will not affect my position and my relationship with the institutions involved.

If I have any inquiries about the research, I can contact Vincent Hayen (234707@buas.nl), the responsible researcher, or if any concerns or complaints regarding the way the research is or has been conducted, I am free to contact MSc Kevin Hutchinson (hutchinson.k@buas.nl), supervisor and first reader on this research.

By filling in the checkboxes below, I am indicating to what extent my data will be used anonymously:
☐ I consent to my name being used when directly quoted.
☐ I consent to my name being used when writing & talking about who was interviewed for this research.
☐ I consent to my name being used on the generated transcriptions from the performed methodology.

In case of none of the above boxes being checked off, I understand that my data and identity will be anonymous for this project.
By signing below, I am indicating my consent to:
• Provide access to the collected data regarding game design guidelines for the creation of serious board games.
• Being recorded through video and audio as part of the methodology. (These recordings will only be processed internally)
• Having the collected data shared and to be used to evaluate and improve the design for serious board games.
• Being contacted if further clarification is necessary to investigate statements present in the collected data (Except in case of later withdrawal from the research).
• The data is to be handled by the project leader prior to full anonymization to enable further inquiries if required. All data presented outside of the researcher team will be presented in an anonymized way (According to anonymity preferences as stated above).
• In case I decide to withdraw from the research after data has already been collected, the provided data can still be used anonymously without participating in further research of the project.

I understand that the data collected from my participation will be used for this research and will be securely stored, and I consent for it to be used in that manner.

Signature: Date:

_____   _____

Appendix B: Demographic Survey

Link to the original demographic survey as hosted on Google Forms:

https://forms.gle/VqskYDGpBLX4pLo88

Demographic survey – Research SBG Design

This survey aims to gather some information on your experience and background within the field. This information will be used anonymously in the final research to categorize answers (Eg. "According to senior designers…", "In the opinion of professionals in the field…", …).

<u>Why a survey?</u>

By gathering this data through a survey, this information can be gathered at any time you like and therefore the interview can be more focused and take up less time.

Section 1:

E-mailadres: [Required Question]

Have you signed the consent form? [Required Question]

- o Yes
- o Not yet

Do you have experience with designing/developing serious games? (Serious Board Games, Serious Digital Games, or both) [Required Question]

- o Yes, serious board games
- o Yes, serious digital games
- o Yes, both serious board and digital games
- o No

Section 2: Introduction Questions

How many <u>digital games</u> would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious games) [Required Question]

- o 0
- o 1-2
- o 3-5
- o 6-10
- o 11-20

- 20+

How many <u>serious digital games</u> would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Serious games) [Required Question]

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 20+

How many <u>board games</u> would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious board games) c

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 20+

How many <u>serious board games</u> would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Serious board games) [Required Question]

- 0
- 1-2
- 3-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 20+

Section 3: Substantive Questions

Do you usually design/develop these serious games with multiple people in a team or alone? c

- Always in a team
- Mostly in a team

- Half in team, half alone
- Mostly alone
- Always alone

Section 4: Substantive Questions – Team

What is your team like? Any specific team structure? (E.g. 1 game designer, 2 programmers and a dedicated playtester)

Is there a structure when working with multiple people to design these games?

If hypothetically you would have to design a game alone, how would your process change? In what way?

Section 5: Substantive Questions – Framework

When designing a serious (board) game, what are the steps you take in your current design process?

Do you use any frameworks, templates or guidelines for this? [Required Question]
- Always
- Mostly
- Half the time
- Usually not
- Never

Section 6: Frameworks

Who created the framework?
- Externally created
- Internal created
- Externally created, adapted internally

To what extent is the framework documented?
- Entirely documented
- Partly documented
- Not documented at all

In case the framework is documented, how specific or generalised is it?

- o Documentation specific to a project
- o Generalised to be used on different projects
- o Other c

From your experience, what do you think is currently improvable from the process?

Section 7: Background in the field

Demographic questions regarding your background in the field.

What was your prior education and the institute that you studied at before joining the industry?

Have you spent time (for studies or work) in your career away from your cultural background? If so, what cultural region and how long (in years) did you spend there? [Required Question]

How many years of professional work experience do you have designing games? (Entertainment & Serious games) [Required Question]

- o < 1 year
- o 1-2 years
- o 3-5 years
- o 6+ years

If you had to give an estimate percentage, how much of that time would you say was spent on serious board game project? [Required Question]

How would you describe your current work position?

Section 8: Outro

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the survey, I look forward to our interview in the coming days.

What part of the design process would you like to be further documented/researched?

Would you like to receive the results of this study? (Results will be shared through email, if another way of communication is preferred please mention it be selecting the option "other").
[Required Question]

- o   Yes
- o   No
- o   Other [Required Question]

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview

- Would you use frameworks in the future?

- Do you know any interesting frameworks I should look at for this research? Which ones?

- What shape should a framework have to be useful for you? (E.g. step by step, iterative, strict, rather open, …)

- What is your opinion on a multi framework system? (generic base framework with additional specific layers on top)

ANON DATA 01

Fields: Research

ID-Codes

- Participant
- Researcher
- // observational notes
- [comments] e.g. SBG = Serious Board Games

SURVEY

Performed:	06 March 2024

Do you have experience with designing serious games? (Serious Board Games, Serious Digital Games, or both)
Yes, both serious board and digital games

Introduction Questions
How many digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
20+
How many serious digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (serious Games)
3-5
How many board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
20+
How many serious board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Serious Games)
6-10

Substantive Questions
Do you usually design/develop these serious games with multiple people in a team, or alone?
Mostly in a team

Substantive Questions – Team
What is your team like? Any specific team structure? (E.g. 1 game designer, 2 programmers and a dedicated playtester)
We have a diverse team of artists, programmer and game designers
Is there a structure when working with multiple people to design these board games?
Usually 1 or 2 designers take the lead, employing others for playtests to get feedback. When people are happy with the gameplay an artist is involved to finalise the game components.

If hypothetically you would have to design a game alone, how would your process change? In what way?

With only a single designers the design process becomes harder as you don't have someone to exchange ideas with, but the process stays the same. Without playtesters you would have to run mock sessions by yourself, which seems very ineffective.

Substantive Questions – Framework

When designing a serious (board) game, what are the steps you take in your current design process?

Client meeting (establishing subject, objectives, criteria)
Initial design
Iterative refinement (internal playtest, define successes and failures, create new design)
Client test (return to iterative refinement or continue to approval)
Concept approval Creation of visuals, manuals, components
Delivery
Game master training (optional)

Do you use any frameworks, templates or guidelines for this?
Usually not

Frameworks

Who created the framework?
Internal created

To what extent is the framework documented?
Not documented at all

In case the framework is documented, how specific or generalised is it?
/

From your experience, what do you think is currently improvable from the process?
Template or structure for the formulation of criteria and objectives Clearer planning during the iterative refinement process Templates for logging of playtest results, refinement and rule/component iterations Component creation guidelines

Background in the field

What was your prior education and the institute that you studied at before joining the industry?
[Redacted]

Have you spent time (for studies or work) in your career away from your cultural background? If so, what cultural region and how long (in years) did you spend there?
[This question was not part of the survey at the time of performing this data collection]

How many years of professional work experience do you have designing games? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
6+ years

How many of those years have you been designing serious games? (Serious Games)

6+ years
If you had to give an estimate percentage, how much of that time would you say was spent on serious board games?
25%
How would you describe your current work position?
Project Leader

Outro
What part of the design would you like to be further documented/researched?
See earlier answer

Interview – Warm-up

Researcher
Okay, should be running Hopefully. Alright, so (...) currently I just made a quick drawing of the Q-Sort.

Participant
Mhm.

Researcher
Thomas mentioned to get like a mini whiteboard, that would be easier. Didn't have the time to buy it, so

Participant
Okay.

Researcher
This will to do.

Participant
Yeah.

Researcher
And then I have post-it notes, that I will give you one by one, and then you can place them where you feel they fit.

Participant
Okay

Researcher
Alright, also with actual participants I would have to be like, (...) kind of like introduce instead of like, hey Q-Sort.

Participant
Yeah.

Researcher
But for now I'll skip that.

Participant
Yeah.

QSORT – META CRITERIA

Performed:	07 March 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Validated	Self-Explanatory	Ease of use	Identify scope and limitations	Effectiveness (achieving primary objective)
	Moderation	Generic	Depth	
		Memorable Captivating		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

- Memorable captivating
    - Alternative for the term 'Fun' as a secondary objective.
- (Achieving primary objectives)
    - Effectiveness in learning or achieving the kind of primary objective, whether it teaches you something or conveys a message or whatever that objective is.
- Depth
    - How specific are the types of information that you can provide for a type of game that you want to make?
- Moderation
    - These games are serious games, you almost always have a moderator because they're run in a workshop settings. It's not always the case, but I think it's common enough that you should identify it.

Qsort evolution

Self-Explanatory: -1
Effectiveness: +2
Ease of use: 0
Generic: 0
Identify scope and limitations: +1
Validated: -1
Memorable captivating: 0
Effectiveness: rephrased to "effectiveness in achieving primary objective"
Depth: +1
Moderation : -1, which moves validated to -2

No rearrangement at the end.

QSort Transcription

Researcher
To start off with the meta criteria, first off there is the (…) self-explanatory. So with this I mean that the model, the framework itself, should hold all the information and that you should not be required to like go looking for other sources or that it links to other

sources that you first have to read through before you can understand what the model means.

Participant
Okay

Researcher
That is the idea behind it.

Participant
Yeah. Can I reorganize these afterwards?

Researcher
Yes.

Participant
Okay. I'm going to put this here.
Researcher
Okay, -1.

Participant
Because I think (...) having the core structure be available right away is important but then if people have to dig a little bit further, the amount of effort it takes is less so than if the structure itself isn't clear.

Researcher
Okay

Participant
So if you are a designer or someone learning and you have to dive a bit deeper to understand the process, I think that's acceptable.

Researcher
Okay. (...) Then for the next one I have effectiveness. So with this one is meant that the model should help the designer (...) design the game. So if a model does not help you in a way, it's not effective.

Participant
Okay. I do think Meta, I think the phrasing of that one, this will always be number one I think, the way that is phrased.

Researcher
Yeah. To reveal a little secret I guess. I tried to put the obvious ones first and then a bit more controversial ones towards the end. That way indeed like oh I did put this at plus two and another one comes along. Now that you make a choice and explain that choice. So that's kind of how I try to set it up. We'll see how it works. (...) And for the next one I have ease of use. (...) With this is meant as pick up and use. So don't assume experience

on the part of the user or the designer. And then like kind of like cover the basics in a way of like the board game design, game design principles.

Participant
I feel like this has the two components right because there is the part of when I'm familiar with it.

Researcher
mhm

Participant
I want it to be as fast as possible. If there is a certain structure I want to have templates and whatever already.

Researcher
mhm

Participant
I think that's really important. But what you describe as not requiring any foreknowledge. I think that would be more part of this and I think that's not important. So yeah, I'm going to put it in the center for now I guess.

Researcher
Then the next one I'll leave the choice up to you. So whether the framework should be generic or whether it should be very specific. (...) So like generic for example would be a general framework for board game in general. While for specific it would be very specific to like simulation based board games or even like a very specific type of it.

Participant
So you want me to pick one of the two and then rate how important it is generic or specific.

Researcher
Yes.

Participant
(...) I think it should be generic. (...)I'll also put it in the center for now.

Researcher
And why would in your opinion it should rather be generic than specific?

Participant
Because I think the outer structure that you should be defining for this I think can be generic enough that you can apply it for different things. You could have more specific subsections for specific things but they should fit into a larger model in my opinion.

Researcher

Okay, and if you had to kind of give a scale how generic would it be? Would it be board games? Would it be games?

Participant
Serious games.

Researcher
Serious games.

Participant
Well, no serious board games.

Researcher
Serious board games.

Participant
Because we're talking about board games.

Researcher
Yeah.

Participant
Then you have all the different subsections of what kind of technology is involved. What kind of gameplay is it actually? And I think for those you get specific things. Okay. You could elaborate this for a specific subsection.

Researcher
Yeah Okay. Then for the next one I have identified scope and limitation. So with scope and limitation. The model itself should mention where in the process of designing that it is helpful for the designer. And then what it does and what it does not do. (…) Instead of being like oh I'm a model and then you as a designer have to figure out where.

Participant
Yeah.

Researcher
Okay.

Participant
I think that's important. Because if you don't identify scope and limitation people are likely to misuse it or (…) And I think it also helps when you're creating these guidelines and therefore identifying your own scope and limitation is important as well as target scope and limitations for what you're making.

Researcher
Yeah, And you give that a plus one.

Participant
Yeah.

Researcher
Is there a reason (…) that it's (…) that it goes into one instead of two?

Participant
Because I think effectiveness is more important than …

Researcher
mhm

Participant
like if you don't identify a scope but it's still super effective.

Researcher
Yeah.

Participant
It's best in the other way around.

Researcher
Alright (…) Then I have the card of validated. So this is whether or not the model has been tested and verified in its effectiveness.

Participant
Hmm. (…) So I think it's important in the sense that people only use it if it's validated.

Researcher
mhm

Participant
At the same time. I don't think it's actually important to validate it as long as the person reading it keeps an open mind and just takes the ideas that are relevant to them.

Researcher
Yeah
Participant
So I'm going to put it at minus one. (…) Mostly because. (…) Yeah, the on the meta-level to make the framework spreads and we need to be validated.

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
But for use case-wise, I don't think so.

Researcher
Okay. (…) Then here comes the fun part. Now some blank cards will follow. So now it's up to you to decide what criteria you still think are have to be mentioned and where they should be placed.

Participant
Hmm. (…)Okay, so things I'm thinking about component wise, should there be some sort of guidelines for (…) art or if you're doing 3D printing or just printing what kind of stuff do you need. But that's more, I guess, content-wise should contain that rather than (…) criteria for the

Researcher
framework itself.

Participant
The framework itself (…) Hmmm (…)

Researcher
//You can also like think out loud//

Participant
// I think yeah I think I// would split effectiveness more

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
because I think (…) you can approach the effectiveness of a game in different ways. (…) So if I say effectiveness in learning or achieving the kind of primary objective and the secondary being fun,

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
which all games should have in some way, or I don't think fun is actually the right word, it is (…) hmmm

Researcher
an enjoyable experience?

Participant
It doesn't have to be enjoyable to be effective, that's the thing it has to be (…)

Researcher
Pleasant?

Participant
memorable, captivating. (...) Yeah, okay, I'll just write that down there instead. (...) It's not exactly the word I'm looking for, but I can't find it.

Researcher
Okay.

Participant
(...) So I wrote achieves primary objective, whether it teaches you something or conveys a message or whatever that objective is.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
And then I guess the meta criteria is how do you make it do that (...) for the framework?

Researcher
How does the framework help in establishing that and then making sure that the designer doesn't lose focus of it?

Participant
Exactly, so that would be what kind of teaching methods are there,

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
what teaching strategy effective, like repetition, that kind of stuff.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
I feel like the things you've identified here are generic enough that the main things I would like to add are sub-components.

Researcher
Okay, which ones would you like to split up then?

Participant
Well, for example, we talked about the generic specific one,

Researcher
Mhm

Participant

and it's kind of the opposite of self-explanatory, which is that there is, for specific cases, that there is more that you can go further into. (...) But you could also see it as this one, right? I could say, okay, it has to be specific,

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
but it has to be specific for all the different things,

Researcher
yeah

Participant
which is not feasible, I guess.

Researcher
Okay, if I may make a suggestion, how about a multi-level model, you have a foundation,

Participant
Yeah

Researcher
And then very specific?

Participant
I mean, that's what I've been trying to get at, but then how do you identify that as criteria? Because on the highest level, it should be generic,

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
and most things should fit in there that you would want to make. And then the other criteria is how far down does it go?

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
So how specific are the types of information that you can provide for a type of game that you want to make? (...) I'm going to write it down as depth.

Researcher
Okay, and you give that a plus one?

Participant

Yeah. (...) I'm actually not sure which one of these should be a plus one. (...) I think depth is more important than it fitting absolutely everything. So the things that you do find fit in there fit in there well.

Researcher
Yeah, Okay and one last one. Are there anymore that you would like to split up?

Participant
I'm also thinking, so far I've been thinking very meta, right? But this is not a very meta one. So maybe I should think a bit about content. (...) Again, I would also put it in there others, but moderation. (...) Because these games are serious games, you almost always have a moderator because they're run in workshop settings. It's not always the case, but I think it's common enough that you should identify it.

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
And what to do in moderation is quite a difficult topic. And it is, of course, part of effectiveness, but I think it's different enough that it should (...) be a section by itself in anything that you make.

Researcher
Okay

Participant
Where should that be? Okay, I'm going to move this one down. (...) So I moved validated to minus two. Just so you have the record there.

Researcher
Yeah Okay

Participant
I'm going to put it in minus one then because I don't think it is more important than any of these.

Researcher
Okay, So quickly an overview. So currently validated is minus two. Self-explanatory and moderation is minus one. Ease of use, generic specific and

Participant
Memorable captivating.

Researcher
Memorable captivating is zero.

Participant

And note that generic specific is generic. It's //generic//, yep.

Researcher
//Generic//

Researcher
Identify scope and limitations and depth are plus one and effectiveness when it comes to achieving the primary objective or the goal is plus two. Would you like to rearrange them?

Participant
No, I think this is correct.

[This was removed after the test run, sorting within a column is not done for Q-sorting]
Researcher
And when we look specifically at a column, for example, plus one, Do you see that less important than Identify scope and limitations?

Participant
No, more. Do you want the top ones to be the most in the category, the most important ones?

Researcher
Yes.

Participant
Okay, these should be splits. Here. (…) I think this is fine. I think these will be flipped.

Researcher
All right, so let's plus one and flip to minus one. Okay.

QSORT – CONTENT CRITERIA

Performed:	07 March 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Time	Precise & Measurable goal	Venue	Venue	Social elements
	Fun	Moderation	Essential experience	
		Components		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

- Moderation
    - introduction, the debriefing, and then keeping the game running
- Components
    - clarity if you're presenting cards, what is where was the reading order of the player. what kind of components are you going to use? There are so many different types of materials and then also including digital stuff
- Time
    - how long should the game be? How long should you expect a certain mechanic to be? How long can you keep player attention and how long do you want to make a game to reach the objective? How do you structure a workshop? And also like a day, you can have different sessions during a day with different parts in there. So it's really about the time of the game and the setting there. Not about how long it takes to create a game or whatever

Qsort evolution

Fun: -1
Precise & Measurable goal: 0
Venue: +1
Social elements: +2
Essential experience: +1
Motivation: +1, venue moved to 0

Moderation: 0
Components: 0, precise & measurable goal moved to -1
Time: -2

No rearrangement at the end.

QSort Transcription

Researcher
Then I have the same Q-sort structure, but in this case the content criteria instead of the meta criteria, so about what the framework should talk about.

Participant

Okay, so I just did part of that at the end.

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
Okay, sure.

Researcher
Well, this will be very specific towards it. (…) So you mentioned kind of last time, but you were trying to find a better term for it.

Participant
Yeah

Researcher
So talking about fun, then for example, what I wrote down was like, oh, if the game is not fun, then why would you go for like a gamified project?

Participant
Well, for I have a specific example. So for a zero hunger game,

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
the experience or the thing that we want to convey is how does it feel to be systematically hungry?

Researcher
Yeah.

Participant
And it's not fun.

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
It's not a fun experience that we want the player to have.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
So then them having fun, they'll still kind of have fun because they're playing a game.

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
But fun is not the core experience.

Researcher
Okay.

Participant
So do you want me to rate fun or like I said, the experience or memorable or?

Researcher
Fun separately.

Participant
Okay, I'm going to put it in minus one then.

Researcher
Okay.

Participant
Because I think it in most cases fun is the experience that you want to go for.

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
There are just specific exceptions.

Researcher
Okay. Then the next one is to set a precise measurable goal. (…) So what is I have like, what should the player achieve? at the end of his experience what should they have? Or what should…

Participant
Yeah

Researcher
what should have change?

Participant
Yeah, what should change

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
I'm going to put it in zero. It might go lower.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
Because I think in most many cases you have a measurable goal if you just want to teach him on something.

Researcher
Yeah.

Participant
But I think there are also many just you want to convey a message. You could technically test it afterwards.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
It would just be a lot of work and take a lot of time because you can't test it immediately afterwards. It would have to be like six months afterwards after you retain the message.

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
And I think that is that importance in many cases. So I think setting a precise goal is quite important.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
Not setting a measurable goal.

Researcher
Okay.

Researcher
Then next one is venue. That one kind of needs some explanation in my opinion. How should the game be used? So for example, you have the board game, assuming people come together for it. Where would it be played? How would it kind of like be set up in a way?

Participant

Yeah

Researcher
How would it be used?

Participant
Yeah. I'm going to put it in plus one.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
Because these games, like I said, they're often workshops. So how they are set up is very important to how they're played. Where you can just by setting tables up in a certain way or putting certain teams next to each other, it changes the game experience.

Researcher
Okay. (...) Then we have social elements. So for example, promoting teamwork, promoting discussion between people, the implementation of social elements.

Participant
Yeah. I'm putting it in plus two because I think almost all of these games are about social elements in some way.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
And that's the reason why you're playing a board game because you can talk to other people.

Researcher
Yeah. Next is the essential experience, which is something you've already hinted towards. Compared to what fun was. (...) Yeah. (...) Compared to what the measurable goal was, the goal is what will they have at the end of it, what will have changed. With essential experience, what is the experience like and (...) what will that be for the player?

Participant
Yeah. So the more generic version of fun.

Researcher
Yeah.

Participant
Okay. Yeah. I think that's important. I'm putting it in plus one. (...) I think it will in many cases overlap actually with social elements or be caused by social elements. But what

I'm thinking is (…) in many cases, the essential experience is for example, you're playing a company or certain role or some part of society, which then gives you the experience of playing that role or that experience. But the more important part is in reflecting and talking about that with other people.

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
And that's the social elements. That's why I'm writing that higher. And these will have to be flipped.

Researcher
So you flipped the venue in plus one

Participant
Yeah

Researcher
below the essential experience.

Participant
Yeah.

Researcher
And the reason for that is...

Participant
I think venue contributes to the essential experience, but these are for me the main two things that you want to convey.

Researcher
Okay. So essential experience and social elements are the essential parts.

Participant
Yeah.

Researcher
Okay. Then there is motivation. So how can the game motivate the player to do something as well as if the player is motivated? How can the game use that motivation?

Participant
Yeah. (…) Yeah. This is a little about how do you make people create their own essential experience.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
//Okay, I'm going to keep shifting them//.

Researcher
//Okay//

Participant
I'm going to move this to zero and put this in plus one.

Researcher
Venue to zero and motivation on bottom of plus one. Alright (…) Then we're back to the fun part. With the blank cards.

Participant
So I put moderation in the previous one, but I think they should also be, because they're really content, they should be here.

Researcher
Mhm (…)Okay.

Participant
I'll put it in zero and move precisely measurable goal down. I think it is actually above venue.

Researcher
Okay. In your opinion, why is there a distinction between moderation and venue?

Participant
Yeah, I think they're extremely close.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
The difference I'm seeing is venue is the location and the setup of where you playing,

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
where are the things positioned in that room.

Researcher
Yeah

Participant

Do you have any special props or something that you're using?

Researcher
Yeah.

Participant
And I think you can play a good game in a bad venue, but you can't play a good game with a bad moderator.

Researcher
Okay. And what would you say moderation compared to essential experience?

Participant
I think moderation adds to the essential experience mostly by introducing the game in a certain way that allows you to get in the right mindset to get to your essential experience.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
But they are also different phases of the game where I think when you're playing, the essential experience is the most important and moderation should help with that. But then afterwards there's a reflection where that essential experience should be turned into a learning moment.

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
And that is where moderation comes in.

Researcher
Okay.

Participant
So this is the introduction, the debriefing, and then keeping the game running.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
Then here I'm going to write components. (…) I think this is closely tied to venue since they're both about the physical components or the digital components sometimes that you're using.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant
I think I'm actually going to put it above there. (...) So then this all goes down again.

Researcher
Okay

Participant
So I put it below moderation because I think a moderator can compensate for a little components. And in many cases components can make a good game better.

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
But a bad game can't be good because of good components.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
While moderation can make or break a game.

Researcher
Alright

Participant
And I would do want to clarify so venue is for me parts of components because it's how you do the setup what props you're using, etc.

Researcher
Mhm

Participant
But this is also the clarity if you're presenting cards, what is where was the reading order of the player.

Researcher
Yeah

Participant
Are the icons that you're using clear that kind of stuff.

Researcher
Okay

Participant

And I think it could also contain, what kind of components are you going to use? Are you going to use 3D printed miniatures? Are you just going to use cards, plastic cards? Are you going to use paper cutouts, wood carving, whatever. There are so many different types of materials and then also including digital stuff

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

that I think you could cover that. Okay, what is the effect of using this type of material going to be? (…) I was thinking about interaction, I think it is part of social elements. (…) Oh, time. (…) Where should that be? (…) I'm going to put it at minus 2.

Researcher

Okay, and what do you mean with time?

Participant

So how long should the game be? How long should you expect a certain mechanic to be?

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

How long can you keep player attention and how long do you want to make a game to reach the objective? How do you structure a workshop? And also like a day, you can have different sessions during a day with different parts in there. So it's really about the time of the game and the setting there.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

Not about how long it takes to create a game or whatever, that would be a meta thing.

Researcher

Okay, alright. So currently the setup is time minus 2, precise goal minus 1, fun minus 1, moderation, components and venue at 0, essential experience, motivation at plus 1 and social elements at plus 2.

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

Would you like to re-evaluate?

Participant

No.

INTERVIEW

Researcher

And now normally I would have some questions, for example, from the survey. (…) But I currently don't have follow-up questions from your survey answers. I quickly went through. But now we can kind of have a discussion in a way, I guess. Is there something that you would like to discuss, mention?

Participant

Yeah, I'm just thinking about all the kind of the sub-elements or the interpretation of these (…) kind of meta, I guess. But maybe when you give people one of these, you should also ask them how they interpret it and what they think falls under that one. (…) Because you give a definition that is a very basic one. But if I'm thinking about social elements,

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

it kind of includes roles, though that's combined with motivation. Because what role you are determines how you interact with the others. It is player interaction, because that's what creates social elements. It is kind of the narrative that you create, etc. Right? So this is a whole bunch of stuff, but it's going to be different for anyone that does this.

Researcher

So would you say I should not give the basic one?

Participant

I would give the basic one, because it's a very basic overview. Then ask people what kind of elements they think fall under there.

[Turned into a feedback session after this point]

ANON DATA 02

Fields: Research

ID-Codes

- Participant
- Researcher
- // observational notes
- [comments] e.g. SBG = Serious Board Games

SURVEY

Performed:	15 March 2024

Do you have experience with designing serious games? (Serious Board Games, Serious Digital Games, or both)
Yes, both serious board and digital games

Introduction Questions

How many digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
9
How many serious digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (serious Games)
3-5
How many board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
3
How many serious board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Serious Games)
2

Substantive Questions

Do you usually design/develop these serious games with multiple people in a team, or alone?
Mostly in a team

Substantive Questions – Team

What is your team like? Any specific team structure? (E.g. 1 game designer, 2 programmers and a dedicated playtester)
R&D team – scrum development
Is there a structure when working with multiple people to design these board games?
Co-creation is typical with a client or expert on the subject matter
If hypothetically you would have to design a game alone, how would your process change? In what way?
I have no clue what you mean with this question

Substantive Questions – Framework

When designing a serious (board) game, what are the steps you take in your current design process?

Meet the client, define goals and resources, establish contract, initial concept meeting with client, build early prototype, test with client, refine based on feedback, create MVP, test with client and target audience, refine, test, refine, test, until contract obligation met, hand over to client,

Do you use any frameworks, templates or guidelines for this?

Usually not

Frameworks

Who created the framework?

Externally created, adapted internally

To what extent is the framework documented?

Partly documented

In case the framework is documented, how specific or generalised is it?

Documentation specific to a project

From your experience, what do you think is currently improvable from the process?

Game development methods often clash with methods that come from the subject matter field. This means we often adapt their frameworks to create a form of validity for their industry needs. This often also slows down development as the methods are often ill fitting for game development or do not consider all parts of interactivity.

Background in the field

What was your prior education and the institute that you studied at before joining the industry?

[Redacted]

Have you spent time (for studies or work) in your career away from your cultural background? If so, what cultural region and how long (in years) did you spend there?

[This question was not part of the survey at the time of performing this data collection]

How many years of professional work experience do you have designing games? (Entertainment & Serious Games)

6+ years

How many of those years have you been designing serious games? (Serious Games)

3

If you had to give an estimate percentage, how much of that time would you say was spent on serious board games?

3?

How would you describe your current work position?

Educational Specialist

Outro

What part of the design would you like to be further documented/researched?

Translation of domain specific metrics to game related metrics to establish a more robust approach to dealing with data in serious games

Interview – Warm-up

0:0:13.380 --> 0:0:14.460
Researcher
Alright. How are you doing?
0:0:14.900 --> 0:0:22.220
Participant
All good. You know, you caught me after lunch, so I'm in a good mood. We have compensated for that bias.
0:0:23.580 --> 0:0:34.220
Researcher
There's something. (…) It was interesting because like last class. I forget who presented, but with the statistics.
0:0:34.980 --> 0:0:35.180
Participant
Mm hmm.
0:0:36.400 --> 0:0:42.220
Researcher
He also brought up the judge. (…) I guess fallacy in a way.
0:0:43.200 --> 0:0:43.240
Participant
Mhm
0:0:43.820 --> 0:0:50.460
Researcher
And he was talking about how it was debunked. But I forget how to how he explained it.
0:0:52.230 --> 0:0:54.350
Participant
Yeah, that would be Raphael then I guess.
0:0:55.940 --> 0:0:56.940
Researcher
Yeah, Rafael. Yes.
0:0:57.600 --> 0:0:59.960
Participant
OK. Yeah, well, interesting.
0:1:2.130 --> 0:1:12.30
Researcher
Alright. (…) OK, if this is working fine. (…) I believe miro works for you as well. I saw you.
0:1:12.290 --> 0:1:14.50
Participant
Yeah. Seems to work.
0:1:15.480 --> 0:1:19.480
Researcher
OK can you move the sample card? Can you drag it around?
0:1:20.280 --> 0:1:21.400
Participant
Yep, that also works.

0:1:21.160 --> 0:1:26.200
Researcher
Alright, good. Alright then we can get started with the interview.
0:1:28.110 --> 0:1:37.520
Researcher
So to start off. (…) I'll I'll give a bit of a a definition of framework, since it's might be a little bit ambiguous.
0:1:39.640 --> 0:2:0.760
Researcher
When talking within this research about framework, it's mostly thinking and talking about the way that it guides someone through a process, and it can be through any medium or form that they desire. For example, set of cards, flow charts, a survey, something like that.
0:2:0.500 --> 0:2:0.700
Participant
Mhm
0:2:1.850 --> 0:2:7.370
Researcher
So it's kinda what we understands under framework is that clear so far?
0:2:7.830 --> 0:2:8.110
Participant
Yeah.
0:2:9.50 --> 0:2:55.930
Researcher
Alright. (…) Then this interview will start off with a section that will be using a Q sort so quickly. Explain how a Q-sort works. (…) In front of you on miro, you can see a little structure and then there are multiple columns with number on top coming from -2 to +2. (…) Then I will give you cards with some term on it. I will also give you a definition on what I mean with that term. Then you can place it in one of the squares according to your preference. What that term where does that score relative to the order cards?
0:2:56.780 --> 0:2:56.820
Participant
Mhm
0:2:58.280 --> 0:3:10.200
Researcher
For this I would like to ask you to (…) Also sort them in a way. So let's say if you look at column zero, there are //three// squares there.
0:3:09.310 --> 0:3:09.510
Participant
//Mhm.//
0:3:10.260 --> 0:3:18.980
Researcher
In your opinion, whichever term that you place in the zero column is more important to place that one on top in the first top square.
0:3:35.460 --> 0:3:35.660
Participant
Mhm.

0:3:22.410 --> 0:3:37.330
Researcher
And kind of the goal of this is that I am looking at where you place these terms and if you change them, why you change them. So if you could elaborate on that, I will also ask the questions, but //maybe// keep that in mind.
0:3:36.500 --> 0:3:36.650
Participant
//Mhm.//
0:3:37.700 --> 0:3:37.900
Participant
Yeah.
0:3:40.830 --> 0:3:51.830
Researcher
And lastly, before we begin. I kind of have a janky set up here. I will be looking around and taking some notes. You don't have to look at me (...)
0:3:51.840 --> 0:3:52.40
Participant
Mhm.
0:3:52.490 --> 0:3:54.70
Researcher
Or wait for me. You can take it at your own pace.
0:3:54.650 --> 0:3:56.170
Participant
Yep, alright, //clear//.
0:3:56.190 --> 0:3:56.830
Researcher
//Alright//.
[Small feedback conversation on the set-up of the interview]

QSORT – CONTENT CRITERIA

Performed:	15 March 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Venue	Fun	Essential Experience	Set precise measurable goals	Social elements
	Realism	Co-creation	motivation	
		Duration		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

- Realism
- Co-creation
    - o Typically make a game system in a field that you are not an expert in, so you rely on external experts and your client to give you the information you need in detail. About the field that you're making the simulation or game experience for.
- Ducation
    - o How long does this last? How many sessions?

Qsort evolution

Fun: -1
Set precise measurable goals: +1
Venue: -1
Social elements: +2
Essential experience: 0
Motivation: +1
Realism: -2
Co-creation: 0
Duration: 0

Rearrange
Venue to -2, realism to -1
Thought about moving set precise measurable goals to a 1.5 category

QSort Transcription

0:5:9.110 --> 0:5:11.870
Researcher
So your first card.
0:5:14.370 --> 0:5:16.390
Researcher
The first queue sort we will be doing
0:5:16.430 --> 0:5:16.630
Participant
Mhm.

0:5:16.630 --> 0:5:39.620
Researcher
Is regarding to the content that a framework would be covering. And with that, the first card I will give you is fun and to kind of explain it a bit. (…) If the game that was made with this framework, if it is not fun, then why would you go for like a gamified project?
0:5:40.460 --> 0:5:40.660
Participant
Mhm.
0:5:41.120 --> 0:5:43.480
Researcher
that is kind of the idea behind this term.
0:5:44.60 --> 0:6:30.960
Participant
Alright. And then in terms of importance, where would that fall? I would argue fun would be at a -1. It's not completely unimportant, but from an educational point of view, especially from if we look at serious games through the lens of training, education and the like. A very powerful thing in education can be negative experiences or tense experiences, things that are typically not considered fun, right. They are experiences. (…) But you wouldn't classify them as fun. They might be tense. They might be frustrating, they might be confrontational, and those are actually incredibly strong learning moments.
0:6:31.610 --> 0:6:31.810
Researcher
Mhm.
0:6:32.410 --> 0:7:11.500
Participant
So fun, although can be beneficial. Should not per se be the thing you're aiming for in a serious game to some degree. Now there are games where indeed fun just for the sake of attracting people and engaging people, might be a powerful strategy. (…) But you're potentially eliminating those confrontational moments due to the fun part. By prioritising fun, you basically tend to remove (…) Frustration and to some degree tension or at least negative tension. Which actively makes learning less effective.
0:7:13.330 --> 0:7:22.650
Researcher
Yeah, Alright. (…) For the next one, I have to set a precise measurable goal.
0:7:23.90 --> 0:7:23.610
Participant
Hmm Yeah.
0:7:24.250 --> 0:7:31.530
Researcher
With kind of the idea being what should the player achieve within the game?
0:7:33.160 --> 0:7:34.40
Participant
//Mhm mhm.//
0:7:33.160 --> 0:7:35.850
Researcher
//in the session of playing it//, what? What is their goal? What should they achieve?

0:7:36.560 --> 0:8:16.300
Participant
Yeah. All right. I think that would be a + 1. (...) The reasoning there being that. (...)
This ties into the feedback that the game gives to the player. So when we're talking again
educational training and the like is if the player cannot see the effect of what is
happening and therefore is guessing how systems work in entertainment, that's fine to
some degree. And actually figuring that out over time by mastery of the system is part of
where excitement, enjoyment and mastery comes from.
0:8:17.100 --> 0:8:17.300
Researcher
Mhm.
0:8:17.940 --> 0:9:0.630
Participant
But if that is unclear, in typically shorter play sessions of serious games where you play
them maybe 2/3 times maximum and then in very intense workshop kind of context,
you need the people to walk away with. I got the point. So making sure that whatever
they do in the game is abundantly clear how it works, how well they performed. Is an
incredibly useful tool to make sure that they got the point that it was really clear this
was the thing we're trying to teach you is abundantly clear that that was the point and
one of the most effective ways is by showing very precise end results and instructions to
getting to that.
0:9:2.510 --> 0:9:11.930
Researcher
OK. And with that explanation, you mentioned that for shorter. Serious games
specifically
0:9:11.930 --> 0:9:12.130
Participant
Mhm.
0:9:12.130--> 0:9:21.770
Researcher
Does that mean that if you have serious games that take longer or are expected to play
way more that it becomes less important than for shorter ones?
0:9:23.590 --> 0:10:48.350
Participant
I think that there is definitely some relationship there that if the games are done for a
substantially longer time, how it exactly works becomes less important. To give a very
simple practical example, you had those cars with those fuel indicators that if you drove
very efficiently, the tree would grow and be bigger on your dashboard as a stimulus to
be more conservative during your driving. Arguably a very simple game and how it
exactly works is not particularly clear in the game. It's just OK, I think I understand how
to drive more conservatively, burning less fuel and those kind of things. But it's never
explicitly told to you and the result of the tree growth is also exceptionally delayed, so
it's not that it's like, oh this 10 kilometre drive I did very efficiently in the trees, instantly
bigger. (...) So with that kind of context. Seeing the long, the longer form, oh, I think I
now understand how to do this better. Can be very powerful. (...) The problem is that a
lot of serious games tend to not be done in that context, so it can be done, but the
majority of games I've seen at least almost always these either in a workshop format or

short term educational context where it needs to get the point across as quickly as possible and people don't have time to engage for a longer format.

0:10:49.230 --> 0:10:49.390
Researcher
Yeah.

0:10:50.70 --> 0:11:0.340
Participant
So that's where I think that the this distinction lies. Why I think it's more it's more important than. In those short term context, because those deals happen a lot more often.

0:11:1.940 --> 0:11:2.460
Researcher
Alright.

0:11:3.900 --> 0:11:9.380
Researcher
Then very quickly you mentioned this game of driving with the tree.

0:11:8.520 --> 0:11:8.720
Participant
Mhm.

0:11:9.420 --> 0:11:14.230
Researcher
Do you? (...) Per chance know the the name of this game where it was applied.

0:11:14.670 --> 0:11:18.510
Participant
I think it was in BMW cars, but I'm not 100% sure.

0:11:21.320 --> 0:11:21.800
Researcher
Alright.

0:11:21.310 --> 0:11:23.930
Participant
And arguably, it's barely a game, right?

0:11:23.930 --> 0:11:24.170
Researcher
Yeah.

0:11:24.170 --> 0:11:36.830
Participant
Because it's literally how effective is your fuel measurement and icon grows, but it was effective. People noted it. People were actively trying to improve their driving to get that thing to grow more. So it did it's job.

0:11:36.140 --> 0:11:41.380
Researcher
Yeah, OK. (...) For the next card.

0:11:42.150 --> 0:11:42.190
Participant
Mhm.

0:11:43.100 --> 0:11:51.440
Researcher

I have venue with this I mean that how should the game be used? How should it play it in what kind of environment?

0:11:51.440 --> 0:11:51.640
Participant
Mhm.

0:11:51.640--> 0:11:58.700
Researcher
If you have like a group group of people, are they sitting around? Are they sitting at separate tables kind of like how is it set up in a way?

0:11:59.680 --> 0:12:11.170
Participant
Mhm. (...) Is that in relation to the game design or in terms of the organisation of the event?

0:12:12.180 --> 0:12:13.20
Researcher
Game design.

0:12:13.260 --> 0:13:22.230
Participant
Game design. (...) huh, that's an interesting one. (...) I would say that's a little bit less important, so a -1. And that is not because it's not important in terms of design, but due to the practicality of how you have to run these kind of game sessions most of the time is that you do not have enough control over where they are played, so you need to design for a more generic location so that you can play the game in whatever is available instead of having a hyper specific requirements of like needs to be done in a theme parks somewhere specifically. To be able to facilitate the the workshop or the game experience. So although I do agree from a design point of view, it's an incredibly influential one. You actively tend to avoid it as a topic in the actual design because of the practicality that comes from where you often have to run these serious games.

0:13:24.580 --> 0:13:36.860
Researcher
Alright. (...) then for the next one, it is social elements. With

0:13:38.780 --> 0:13:48.880
Researcher
But the idea being, for example, the integration of teamwork discussion. Really like the social elements as it says.

0:13:49.240 --> 0:15:26.10
Participant
Yeah. (...) I'd argue that and then why I think that one is very, very important is that almost every single stakeholder like serious training game, I've seen the strongest learning effect or the strongest training effect, the strongest, deeper introspection of what is happening is in the context of people discussing. And that's not just stakeholder kind of decision based games 'cause there. It's obviously important because that's the entire point of the game session. But even in in non decision making process games right. Like the the governmental simulation type games but more in even in other games where the that is not the core experience. (...) A lot of people. Engage with this kind of social context and the discussions that come forth for it. So even though (...) In the actual game, the multiplayer component or the social context might not be that important in

the game mechanics itself. (…) In terms of achieving the goals of what the serious game needs to do. (…) It often is the most important thing in in my experience so far is that. (…) Most serious games are not about the actual game itself. (…) But the discussions that are triggered. (…) By people playing with the game.

0:15:27.280 --> 0:15:43.870
Researcher

Mhm. And would you say (…) there is a difference? In if it's aimed towards you have teamwork work together in little teams, or if it's like oh, everybody has like a standpoint and now discuss it all individually.

0:15:48.710 --> 0:16:18.240
Participant

I think both will naturally happen even if you don't design for it. People will talk amongst each other even if it's fully team based and the same way around as well. Even if you make it an individual kind of experience, people likely will form certain teams or when they have similar goals in the game system itself, even though they're not part of the same team, that collaboration might start happening on its own. Knowing that you want to design for it

0:16:18.440 --> 0:16:18.640
Researcher

Mhm.

0:16:18.700 --> 0:16:51.120
Participant

to to either cater or typically to stimulate that behaviour, cause most of the time that is a super important component, so you hardly ever want to disincentivise it. You almost always want to stimulate it. Therefore, it's almost guaranteed going to be part of the design, regardless of if it's an individual or team-based game. Especially also, for example, if you have opposing viewpoints which would make them part of different groups, that interaction that communication is in most serious games, even the bloody point of running the game in the first place.

0:16:52.40 --> 0:17:2.240
Researcher

Alright. (…) And do you. Perchance have like an example of a game that does this very well, this particular aspect.

0:17:4.500 --> 0:17:35.530
Participant

Umm. (…) Yes, we had. (…) I forgot the name of the game. Let me think for a second. We had it internally at BUas. It's one that I worked on and it was a game regarding factories. And how they would make how they would optimise their factory process in a franchise company. So they were fifty different factories that used to be all independent factories and then they were all put under franchise. So they're technically now all the same company.

0:17:36.480 --> 0:17:36.280
Researcher

Mhm.

0:17:36.130 --> 0:20:18.710
Participant

And the context there was that they would all be competing with each other, even

though they're in the same bloody company. So upper, upper management of that company wanted to make sure, like, hey, stop competing with each other, start collaborating and that the game that we made was a fictional version of building your factory, growing your factory and highlighting to them that buying resources together, sharing. Capacity in factories and diversifying their. Their. (...) product range with different factories was beneficial to everyone involved in that franchise, but they were completely unaware of this because they were looking at it from a competitive point of view, and that game really highlighted to them that like, hey, stop thinking as an individual start thinking as a collective of factories that all work under the same franchise. And that was an incredibly powerful one. Specifically because the game was set up to in the first round. (...) Reward individualism. It was rewarding. You are the biggest factory. You are smaller. Therefore you are better. You are worse. But as the game progressed, we started implementing things that really highlighted that. Like all of you are gonna go bankrupt if you start. If you continue going for this individualistic way of working 'cause, you're competing with each other, but you're part of the same group. With a market simulation and the like. And then the game started shifting towards rewarding that type of collaboration more and also indexing like hey, look your company profits are increasing and there was a not a particularly accurate model behind it, but it was really showcasing a hey look, you can buy resources together. Hey, look, you can merge factories to some degree. And I've really pushed the the the point home that the client wanted to communicate. It was like, hey, you guys really need to start collaborating. And by simulating that thought process they got that message relatively quickly. But it was also quite confrontational for them because they normally get a bonus at the end of the year if their factory does really well. So the company's structure itself, like the, the, the people that gave us the assignment also were currently rewarding the companies to be very individualistic. So it wasn't just the individual factories that were the problem. Our client was part of the problem, so they were also part of this game to learn themselves like, hey, maybe we are stimulating the wrong things in the first place. Maybe we shouldn't reward the biggest factory in the highest turnover every year because we're basically telling them keep on doing this and be egotistical in your resources. Here's a fat paycheck at the end of it.

0:20:19.890 --> 0:20:32.610
Researcher
Yeah, you mentioned that in the first rounds it would be kind of a mirror of reality and then you would be like, OK, individualism is like the best approach to this

0:20:32.720 --> 0:20:32.800
Participant
Mhm.

0:20:32.890 --> 0:20:52.410
Researcher
just like you're doing right now. Is that just simply to mirror reality and then build upon it towards the goal that you actually want to achieve, or is that kind of to make sure that every single player is in that mindset of individualism at the start of the session?

0:20:54.370 --> 0:22:19.30
Participant
Yeah, it it is multiple at the same time. One it was in a tutorialization round, so that the game mechanics were relatively simple and that they could understand them in a

context they are already familiar with where it's like, AH, I run my factory. I need to make profit. That was their. That was their day-to-day mindset and that mindset in the first round was perfectly fine to then learn the game with and only in the later stages of the game did we start introducing these conflict moments so that they. That they weren't thinking weren't thinking about the game mechanics anymore, because if the the point was not to learn how the game works, the point was to learn how to collaborate and if the game is too complex early on, they're only thinking about how to play the game well, and that's not the point. So that's also why we started with a relatively accurate context, so that they first of all were willing to accept, hey, this is exactly how I work. Currently day-to-day. So their willingness to engage with the current gameplay was a reflection of what they were currently doing and therefore also getting more likely that later on when the game is talking about a fictional future, they're still willing to connect that to possibility in the future because they started with a realistic context that that future scenario might be actually achievable because they were put in the context of realism first.

0:22:20.10 --> 0:22:27.230
Researcher
Mhm. OK, that kind of ties in with the the next cards that being essential experience with this. What I had in mind was.

0:22:27.390 --> 0:22:27.590
Participant
Mhm.

0:22:21.400 --> 0:22:38.110
Researcher
with this. What I had in mind was. What game experience should the player have? so that kinda comes to what we were just talking about.

0:22:27.390 --> 0:22:27.590
Participant
Mhm.

0:22:42.830 --> 0:25:45.910
Participant
What kind of experience? And then how important is that? (...) I would say that that by definition is a 0. For the reasoning that. (...) With these type of games, a curated experience is a lot less likely to happen than with an entertainment game where it's like, OK, we're playing God of War, we want you to have this kind of experience. We have this emotional moment with Kratos and his son, and we have this high tension combat moment where it's very predictable and in very intentional what the emotional state of the player's going to be in those moments. (...) Within these kind of serious games, and especially the socially focused ones, you're basically dealing with a multiplayer context in the same way that we have multiplayer first person shooters and we already stated at the start online gameplay, not not monitored and not part of the ESAB rating because we can't control how people experience it. The same is really true for serious games and potentially even stronger. (...) That we can't fully predict what their experience is going to be because the entire point of a lot of serious games is to get people in with their prior notion of how the world works. Expose them to new stimuli that then might change how they view the world and therefore hopefully in the long run changes their behaviour. (...) You don't know exactly who you're going to have in these kind of contexts. Typically,

49

when these games are made, or at least in my experience, when these games are made, you you built them first for a particular audience, like a particular government or a particular industry. That's like, hey, we're from the tourism industry. We want tourism operators to learn about a certain topic. Then you have quite the focused audience. But what then often happens with the types of games is that, oh, that was very successful. Can you run it with group X or group Y that are typically not the original audience you designed the game for, So what you learn with a little bit of experience in making these type of games is that you don't. Over curate the intended experience because you know when you're running this game for the 2nd, 3rd, fourth, fifth time, you're likely playing it with a slightly different target audience so you don't have that control. Of who is going to learn this thing cause a lot of these games are stakeholder negotiations and these kind of things. If you've done played with a different group, you have different stakeholders. They bring in different perceptions, different notions of what is important. (…) And you can't predict who that player is going to be very often. So you kinda also don't want to rely too much on very intentional game experiences because you don't know who your player is exactly.

0:25:47.680 --> 0:25:52.880
Researcher
So you mentioned that you don't wanna over curate the experience.

0:25:53.800 --> 0:25:54.0
Participant
Mhm.

0:25:54.110 --> 0:25:55.880
Researcher
What do you exactly mean by that?

0:26:0.810 --> 0:26:55.440
Participant
For example, like the game that we talked about previously, when when it's about the the collaboration is important, right? That that you can do that in different levels of abstraction. You can get very key specific examples where you say. (…) It's important to work, collaborate on product line or diversification of the portfolio of products or on efficiency of the development process. Like you can very specifically say, OK, we want you to realise that it's on this very specific thing that you can collaborate. And you can learn about this very specific thing to collaborate. The problem there is is if you design in that way. (…) The game, if you have people in the in the the play group that don't have that background, they first of all don't have the knowledge of that hyperspecific detail in that pipeline. So they won't get the point.

0:26:56.360 --> 0:26:56.560
Researcher
Mhm.

0:26:57.80 --> 0:27:45.880
Participant
And it also makes it so that their experiences or their external knowledge to this process, they might be from the marketing department instead of of the production. For example, they have interesting insights, and if you over curate it, those insights will never come forward because it's so specific. The thing that they're doing, that they're, they're just trying to understand the production process at that point. They're not

bringing in their own personal expertise anymore as an external to the problem. And so you want to generalise. It to to a more abstract scenario of collaboration is important, not specifically here collaboration is important. That's what I mean with the. Curation of the experiences, is like how specific do you want to nail a certain point to the audience?

0:27:48.150 --> 0:28:11.270

Researcher

OK. (…) Then for the next card. (…) I have motivation. (…) Both in the way of how can the game motivate the player as well as how can the game use the motivation of the player?

0:28:16.590 --> 0:31:46.440

Participant

That's an interesting one. (…) How important is that in design? (…) I think that's decently important, but it's a tricky one. I'm not 100% sure about this one. Because there's the there's a practical component to this motivation that makes it very difficult to predict what the target audience's motivations are to participate in this, and there's also a little bit of an awkward one because a lot of the times these kind of serious games are used in training context. And the people that are doing the training typically didn't sign up voluntarily. they were told by their boss, go do this thing. (…) Which creates typically a oh crap. Now I need to go do this stupid thing that I don't feel like they often then have a good experience at the end of it, but when they get in, they're like, why am I doing this? This is a waste of my time. (…) I'm a serious professional. Why the hell am I doing a board game or something? (…) So designing for that onboarding and stimulating that motivation early on of like look hey this is important, you see very quickly how this could be relevant to your profession is incredibly important. (…) But that drops off really quickly because once they are engaged, you kind of stop doing the motivation thing and that relates also to that fun thing we initially discussed where it's the (…) You will have negative experiences in a lot of these serious games where something goes horribly wrong and you need to deal with it. That's not a fun experience, but it is an incredibly engaging one or an educational one, or relevant one to discuss and those kind of things and it's in a safe simulation. So the repercussion is 0, but the exploration of what the hell would we do if this happens is incredibly powerful. (…) And that often conflicts with motivation. Now there's another sin and more sinister part in this as well. Is again, if this is done in company context, you typically have multiple hierarchy levels of people in the game play session. You have a a senior manager, you have a junior level producer for example you have some on the bottom level of the organisation playing in this game session and there are often agendas involved of. I want this company to go this direction. So during this game session I'm going to make a point out of. Whatever the thing it is that they want to push through, so they they sometimes have a personal motivation within their career or within the company to kind of use this game to to steer their agenda. And that's actually a very negative kind of influence on the game 'cause it's it's removing its objectivity. And that's something that is really hard to design around or try to deal with. So although it's an important one, I don't think we can actually do a lot about it.

0:31:49.410 --> 0:31:58.210

Researcher

OK, so I assume that means that you have not found a holy solution for this.

0:31:58.670 --> 0:32:41.370
Participant
No, no, especially on the sinister indent part. That one is incredibly difficult to deal with also, because you're not their boss. You're not part of their company, so you really have nothing to say about it. You do notice that it's happening, but you just have no influence there in terms of the onboarding. So that to make sure that they get excited for the kind of game play and that they that they engage with it is I think a very positive, very important one to to definitely include in the design process because if they don't get on board. And the game starts getting more complex and the the the topics are a little less comfortable to deal with. If that motivation drops is is never established, they will also not want to engage with those more complex topics.
0:32:43.60 --> 0:32:50.450
Researcher
Alright. Then now comes the fun part.
0:33:1.300 --> 0:33:1.500
Participant
Mhm.
0:33:1.600 --> 0:33:2.780
Researcher
I will give the floor to you and now it will be blank cards. So you will have to fill in a term and kind of like explain the definition as well and place them on the board.
0:33:3.250 --> 0:34:37.700
Participant
Alright. (...) Yeah. (...) I I know exactly what a good -2 is in this case, which is realism. (...) Because that's commonly discussed within this kind of design, and the more I've made these games, the more I realised that realism doesn't actually matter in most serious games. Whilst dealing with clients and with researchers that are not from a gaming background, they will all insist that the game needs to be an accurate representation of reality as much as possible, because otherwise the game experience is not relevant and they can't connect it to the real world practises. In my experience none of that is true. (...) For several reasons, one of that is if you model accurately to the real world, a lot of things tend to increase by like 1%. (...) Over a year of time. So let's say a turn in the game. Noticing as a player a difference of 1% in a board game is almost impossible, so you kind of need to artificially inflate the numbers to just give that feedback, which we what we discussed with the set precise measures and goals that the game needs to give feedback
0:34:39.820 --> 0:34:40.20
Researcher
Mhm.
0:34:38.440 --> 0:36:4.950
Participant
to be able to notice the effect in the game and realism is often said like super important, super important. It's a simulation. It needs to be accurate. In my experience it it actively makes the experience less engaging. And makes it difficult for the participants to see what the effect of their changes is, whilst if you say hey it's a loose interpretation of your industry. The numbers are inflated and you just make them aware that the effects are larger than that they would be, so that it's clear in the demonstration process, people are

very willing to accept this. They're like, Oh yes, we're talking about massively disrupting tourism in Amsterdam and we we just wreck entire hotels down, which in reality will never happen. But it by showing, hey, if you would reduce the amount of hotels. This would happen. In smaller numbers and over a longer period of time, they are perfectly willing to accept that. So the initial response that everyone has realism is super important is just not true. And I think that's from a game designer point of view, incredibly important in the development of these games that you communicate this with your client, with your stakeholders, because their intuition is often it is super important and it's not.

0:36:6.990 --> 0:36:16.260
Participant
OK, let's see what else. Do you need me to grab more cards?

0:36:17.370 --> 0:36:25.580
Researcher
Oh yes, I can make one, of course. (...) There you go.

0:36:24.340 --> 0:39:12.590
Participant
Alright, cool. Yeah. (...) Let's see. Are there things that are super important that we're missing right now? (...) co-creation. (...) This is a tricky one and that's exactly why I'm putting it in the middle. Cocreation is very typical in this kind of development process because you typically make a game system in a field that you're not an expert in, so you rely on external experts and your client to give you the information you need in detail. About the field that you're making the simulation or game experience for. (...) The problem is, is that we don't have good. Framing or information on how to do cocreation in this context. Well, what typically tends to happen is that you get them early on in the project they tell you about the exact problem they have. They give you some data on the the metrics that they've been tracking over the few last few years. They typically come with some kind of framework that they are you commonly using in their industry, but they have zero experience with game development and they often also bring in that realism perception. (...) Of hey, here is my super accurate data which often isn't as accurate as they think it is. (...) And often only shows like a 1% difference in in user behaviour. So the numbers that they present typically are not particularly useful and often lack the detail to build a realistic system on. (...) And due to them not knowing game development, they often bring in ideas into the game design process that you tend to then struggle with because they are the client most of the time. So you know you want to keep them happy. You want to include them in the development process, but there's also a moment where Co creation actually starts breaking down where the more you start moving towards development and they start bringing in more and more items just disrupts the actual development of an effective game. So although a lot of people are a big fan of cocreation, in my experience it can also be a massive detriment to your development process. So. If you ask in the void how important is cocreation, I would say incredibly important. If you would ask later in the process how important is the Co creation, I would say not at all.

0:39:13.300 --> 0:39:14.940
Researcher
Yeah.

0:39:14.590 --> 0:39:23.550
Participant
So it's spot in the middle and that's because it is initially incredibly important and at the end massively overrated.

0:39:26.80 --> 0:39:29.360
Researcher
Alright. Two questions. When it comes to cocreation.

0:39:28.140 --> 0:39:28.460
Participant
Yeah.

0:39:31.730 --> 0:39:58.250
Researcher
When you mentioned that you rely on them to give you the information about their field. (…) To me, that sounds like there would be an underlying problem that that person, most likely the head of the company. And they would be very biassed with the information that they give coming back to the negative of the teamwork that we mentioned earlier.

0:39:59.730 --> 0:43:41.10
Participant
Yeah, that that definitely has happened. I've seen that happen several times. (…) One of the scenarios was actually with that factory simulation that we did, because that was one of the major heads of the company was not the the CEO, but it was one of the top people and they indeed had preconceived notions of how these companies operated. And they, for example, did not identify the game that in the in the initial design process that they were part of the problem. In terms of how they were doing the reward structures for these factories, for example, so indeed that information can often be a problem because you're not getting the full picture, you're getting a biassed picture. And some of the data is often also. And they feel it's very accurate because for their normal day-to-day processes, it is the information they use. So for them it feels complete. But game systems often need far more data in terms of markets and those kind of things where products are placed, especially if you're doing a company simulation is they have their data and how effectively it was sold. But they don't bring, how does this market that you sell to work, because they typically don't have that data or even the understanding of how that works. So in the Co creation process, you typically need to bring in more than just your client. You typically also need to bring in a researcher from that field as an external consultant, and typically another one more from the business practises that are outside of the company that is actually currently your your client to mitigate the bias to some degree or to see if the problems that they're that they're presenting if there is not already an existing solution to this that just this company is suffering the problem. But other companies don't. So it's just a problem at this company. Then you would like to have some external perspective of like, OK, this is how we solved it or we just never had this problem. So you you typically in a cocreation process need to go broader than just your development team, your design team and your initial client. And that often makes clients very uncomfortable because they are the ones typically providing some form of data or at least saying, hey, we have a problem that needs to be addressed. Suddenly you're bringing externals in so the the relationship with your client is then a little bit under tension because hey, there's this other company that might even

be a competitor. Looking at our our nightmare scenario that we're trying to solve, we're not particularly comfortable with them knowing about this kind of information. So it can be a very tense scenario by bringing in additional experts, not doing so creates indeed, as you mentioned that, that very biassed context. Sometimes you just need to accept that and hope that you can understand their problem well enough as a designer and then to familiarise yourself quickly enough with their industry to make some of those judgement calls yourself. But yeah, that's typically where where a lot of junior game designers struggle with this challenge is that they need to pick up. How does tourism work? How does you know bread manufacturing work? I didn't know these things. I had to, really dive deep into them and that's and I mean, we see this in in entertainment games as well, right? Like if you're making Assassin's Creed's Valhalla, you suddenly need to update your knowledge on history, mythology and the like.

0:43:41.755 --> 0:43:41.835
Researcher
Mhm.

0:43:42.530 --> 0:44:29.470
Participant
But there's more tolerance for (...) Very fantastical or deviating from. Normal processes and this is the interesting one, right where this is where that realism comes in again, where everyone has this. In order for them to accept this game is (...) A useful tool, a good training, et cetera. They need to have the illusion of realism. But in reality, you actually don't build a realistic system. Most of the time, but they need to be convinced first that it's realistic enough to accurately represent our industry, even though they don't have the data and it actually doesn't matter for the game experience, but they often need to be convinced of this step.

0:44:30.685 --> 0:44:45.165
Researcher
OK. To quickly jump back for a moment, you mentioned that often bringing in an external person, possibly even a rivaling company, that it could create some tension.

0:44:43.670 --> 0:44:43.750
Participant
Mhm.

0:44:46.245 --> 0:44:57.365
Researcher
Would in that case, for example, making sure that everybody signs some sort of NDA or a likewise agreement would that solve this or?

0:44:58.340 --> 0:46:29.790
Participant
Yeah, that is definitely a thing that can be done. Typically it can be solved by just having a good conversation with the people involved. You don't per say need to go to these legal processes. But if need be, that can be done (...) Does that happened very often it. I mean, I've seen it once that they needed to actually sign it. An agreement on this. Typically, like, especially in a research context, you are part of a consortium. These agreements of like, hey, we're going to collaborate on this have been made prior to you actually start designing the game per SE. So then typically that problem doesn't come forward. I'm I'm imagining that in a more for profit context of these kind of game development cycles that it's more of a concern, but then they probably wouldn't even bring in the external.

Because they don't care about the objectivity. They're just paying for the thing that they want to have, which, if it's biassed, all is all hell. They're like, yeah, sure, not a problem. I got paid. It's not about validity of the training, it's not about the the effectiveness of it. Do to give you an example. Is BP British Petroleum the the gas company oil company has funded several of those educational games about sustainability. Those games are completely inaccurate and they don't care, because the only reason they make these games is so that they have a media press moment of look at us being good making the next generation aware of sustainability. It's complete greenwashing and has nothing to do with them actually giving a shit about sustainability. It's just a PR move. So the accuracy of the game in their eyes is completely irrelevant.

0:47:10.115 --> 0:47:10.315
Researcher
Mhm.

0:46:59.665 --> 0:47:9.625
Participant
So it also matters a lot in the context of when and how are you making these games and with whom are you making these games, or where is the funding coming from. And now we're talking about a way more complex process.

0:47:10.115 --> 0:47:10.315
Researcher
Yeah.

0:47:11.195 --> 0:47:22.395
Participant
That's that's largely outside of the design of the actual game. They do matter to the design, but bwa is that a different ballpark of design considerations?

0:47:23.235 --> 0:47:56.505
Researcher
Alright. And then to Jump forward from the last question, but back from now. You mentioned more tolerance for deviating from the normal processes. And you linked it to the realism aspect and why it shouldn't be realistic. What do you say it should then? (…) Would you say you can just use the the term stylized or is there a difference with what you mean in that term?

0:47:59.325 --> 0:50:6.915
Participant
That's an interesting one, because stylized implies some kind of visual representation of it, and I'm talking more about how realistic do the game mechanics mimic the subject matter. So for example, Monopoly moving around the board landing on the space to be able to buy it is not how the world of a tycoon works, right? Like you don't go to the location to buy the location. Then the mechanic does not represent how the industry works at all. (…) So that that's actually a major. Part where you know, monopolies dare to teach how monopolies work and how capitalism gives an effective tool to to create a monopoly. It teaches that relatively well its mechanics are nothing like how that system actually works. In the same way, with that factory thing. We use Duplo bricks to build the factories. That is not what factories look like. So from a visual arts point of view, it's not at. I don't think realism is really the thing that we're looking for, nor is stylized per SE necessary. People enjoy a well polished game because it looks more professional and it deals with that. Hey, I'm a professional. Why am I playing a game? So by having a very

slick visual representation, it helps with the onboarding. But in the end, if we're talking about how efficient was this game in reaching its goals, the style the, the art quality. Really doesn't matter that much. It's far more about the effectiveness of the design, and that's also where I think the realism argument comes in the most is like how well does the game mechanic translate to the real world scenario.

0:50:9.215 --> 0:50:9.855

Researcher

Alright.

0:50:11.235 --> 0:50:45.25

Participant

And also that one is exactly in the same way right where (...) people think it should map 1 to 1, but it really doesn't have to in my experience, to get the point across that we're trying to teach, or trying to convince them of. But it it matters at the start of the game to get them on board with the game in the same way that the visuals matter at the start to get them engaged to connect them to the subject matter. (...) To to show that this is a serious simulation and not just for fun.

0:50:46.165 --> 0:50:57.285

Researcher

Then we have one blank card left. I did write some suggestions

0:51:1.845 --> 0:50:2.225

Researcher

Mhm.

0:51:2.365 --> 0:51:4.285

Researcher

from throughout our our conversation in case you need a bit of inspiration or help with coming up with the last one.

0:51:4.395 --> 0:54:30.855

Participant

Give me a second to think about it, but I am indeed already struggling with figuring out which one this should be. (...) yeah, I think duration. (...) As in, how long does this thing last? Is that here or is that somewhere else? (...) Let me see. (...) I think the duration is fine, but there is something else. I'll switch in a little bit. Yeah, the duration matters. In the context of what you're trying to do with this. (...) Serious game and it highly depends on the activity of the game and therefore needs to be very, very thoroughly thought about of like how long is this activity? How long can people engage with it? Should this be multiple sessions? Is the single session? If it's a single session, how long should that session take? How much information are we bombarding at them? What is the pacing of the game? So it should be duration and pacing really. Pacing. A spacing. Because a lot of these games, you know, you, you you've played board games. You know how those work. They can be slow where you're waiting for your turn, and if you're doing a serious game with 20 people. You need to really keep in mind what is the pacing of the game to make sure that people are. Continuously busy with activities and not waiting 19 other turns to get their action in the game again. So designing around that pacing is in this case exceptionally important, more so even than in entertainment games, because in entertainment games we we try to set up games most of the time with a You're just continuously doing something, and there's confrontation with either Npcs with AI based Npcs or with other players, and they are constantly busy. In the serious and applied

games, that's typically different because you want to give people reflection moments where they're thinking about what they're doing, how they would do it normally, how they would do it differently. So you want intentional breaks in, in their action taking, but you also don't want that to take too long, that boredom starts setting in and that they're not engaged anymore. And that's actually substantially harder to do well in serious games than it is in entertainment. Focus 'cause there's just. Keep them engaged. Times and you know you're doing it correctly.

0:54:29.715 --> 0:54:29.915
Researcher
Mhm.

0:54:30.895 --> 0:54:53.815
Participant
In serious games, that's not the case. You often want to intentionally interrupt the flow state for them to reflect cognitively about the thing that they're doing and thinking about it. So you're actively disrupting that flow state to make sure it happens that the reflection has time to happen. And then you want to re engage them again so that pacing is all over the place.

0:54:55.725 --> 0:54:56.165
Researcher
Right, right.

0:54:56.495 --> 0:55:6.635
Participant
And it's it's actually one of the hardest things to do, to do well and I I definitely haven't nailed that one down yet in the design process.

0:55:8.755 --> 0:55:12.955
Researcher
Right. So would you like to rearrange the Q-sort?

0:55:13.335 --> 0:55:17.775
Participant
Yes, I want to move the realism and the venue one.

0:55:18.735 --> 0:55:18.935
Researcher
Mhm.

0:55:22.875 --> 0:57:6.695
Participant
And that is because (…) A little bit semantic in this case, but the venue is so unpredictable that it's really not a design concern other than make it work everywhere. So you're intentionally not designing for space, whilst realism like what we've argued a few times now is it's actually quite important. But not in the way that people think it is. So it's it's about managing the expectations of people in the development of the design. So realism is not important, but people perceive it as important. So it's actually important to properly talk about realism in your initial design process to make sure that your client remains engaged. Let me see. Are there other things I want to swap around? (…) Hmm (…) No, I think I'm actually quite happy with the current sort. The only one that I've been considering changing is the social elements and the set precise measures and goals.

0:57:7.765 --> 0:57:7.965
Researcher
Mhm.
0:57:8.485 --> 0:57:27.735
Participant
Precise measurable goals. I do think social the social element is the most important element in these type of games. And I would almost put a, you know 1.5, because I do think set precise measurable goals is more important than the motivation.
0:57:30.835 --> 0:57:32.155
Researcher
Yeah.
0:57:30.555 --> 0:57:56.135
Participant
So there is a distinction there for me between these two. It's not huge though. (...) And on the zero, I'm quite happy that all of these are definitely important, but they're roughly as important. They're definitely not more important than the other ones, and with the last free, I'm also quite comfortable that they are overrated or you cannot actively incorporate them in your design due to practicality.
0:57:56.835 --> 0:57:57.155
Researcher
Yep.
0:57:59.415 --> 0:58:2.175
Participant
So yeah, quite happy with this sort currently.
0:58:3.115 --> 0:58:3.875
Researcher
Alright.

QSORT – META CRITERIA

Performed:	15 March 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

For novice designers:

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Identify scope & limitations	Industry independent	Self-explanatory	Effectiveness	Stimulates creativity
	Quick results	Validated	Generic	
		Ease of use		

For experienced designers:

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Ease of use	Industry independent	Self-explanatory	Effectiveness	Stimulates creativity
	Identify scope & limitation	Validated	Generic	
		Quick results		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

- Stimulates creativity
  - Bit a part of effectivesness, but actually more
- Quick results
  - Gives a servisable answer quick rather than having to go through 16 questions first
- Industry independent
  - Model does not rely on particilur topics, can be applied to anything that is considered a serious game

Qsort evolution

Self-explanatory: 0
Effectiveness: +1
Ease of use: -1
Generic vs specific: +1
Identify scope and limitations: -1 (considers it a -2, and a 0 with his own definition)
Validated: 0

Stimulates creativity: +2
Quick results: 0
Industry independent: -1, moving ease of use to -2
[no rearrangements made for experience designers, the following evolution changes the result from experienced designers to novice designers]
Industry independent: -2
Ease of use: -1
Identify scope and limitations: -2
Quick results: -1

Ease of use: 0
Industry independent: -1

QSort Transcription

0:58:14.215 --> 0:58:32.335
Researcher
Then I have a second Q-sort prepared, so this was about the content of the game
0:58:33.475 --> 0:58:33.515
Participant
Mhm.
0:58:33.625 --> 0:58:35.335
Researcher
and now we will look at the meta criteria. So what are important parts to think about when creating the framework that will design the game?
0:58:35.475 --> 0:58:35.515
Participant
Mhm.
0:58:35.995 --> 0:58:44.355
Researcher
So with this (...) The first one I have is self-explanatory.
0:58:33.475 --> 0:58:44.000
Participant
Mhm.
0:58:47.275 --> 0:59:4.395
Researcher
And what this it means that the model the framework should hold all the information and that you should not have a framework that links you to different sources or different ways before you can have all the information that is required.
0:59:8.975 --> 0:59:30.695
Participant
So how important is the framework that it is the self-explanatory? (...) Well, that's a tricky one. (...) I can definitely think of 10 things that I think are more important.
0:59:32.115 --> 0:59:32.195
Researcher
Mhm.
0:59:34.125 --> 1:0:20.365
Participant
I'm gonna put that at a 0 'cause. I don't think it's super important, but I don't think it's trivial either. (...) Like, I wouldn't fault a model for not being or if if (...) The framework for not being fully self-explanatory and often by relying on external reference it kind of strengthens the model or at least people's perception of the model. So there is a benefit to some degree just relying on external sources for the model and not per SE being fully self-explanatory (...) I guess not 100% confident about this one yet. It might move.
1:0:21.455 --> 1:0:38.25
Researcher

Alright. Then for the next card I have effectiveness so. (…) The model should. Help the designer in the process of designing the game and how effective is the model in doing so.
1:0:39.255 --> 1:0:48.295
Participant
Right. Do you mean in terms of the model would suggest something and that is included in the game or as a ideation tool.
1:0:49.555 --> 1:0:50.875
Researcher
More of an ideation tool.
1:0:51.195 --> 1:1:8.395
Participant
Right. OK. (…) Then that is a +1 I think, it's not the most important thing. But it's definitely the one of the main aims of a good framework.
1:1:19.545 --> 1:1:26.955
Researcher
OK. (…) Then for the next one, I have ease of use.
1:1:27.525 --> 1:1:27.725
Participant
Mhm.
1:1:28.665 --> 1:1:41.525
Researcher
With this I mean that the framework or the model to pick up and use and then don't assume any experience on the part of the designer.
1:1:42.625 --> 1:1:42.825
Participant
Mhm.
1:1:43.305 --> 1:1:47.225
Researcher
So also in a way, cover the basics of design of board game design.
1:1:48.305 --> 1:2:5.195
Participant
Yeah. Yeah. But OK, like, where does it start in terms of complexity? I think that's less important. Ease of use in this scenario. (…) I mean, obviously it would be nice if it can.
1:2:6.555 --> 1:2:6.755
Researcher
Mhm.
1:2:7.215 --> 1:3:18.875
Participant
What I think in the vast majority of cases, you would never, as a junior researcher, be fully responsible for. The entire design of a serious game, so although it can be a useful tool set to have, there is likely someone that is more experienced also involved. That can explain to you the foundational bits. So these tools that would primarily I I at least, I would imagine a. Framework for series game design would mostly be used by senior more senior designers. To improve it even further. You could argue you could make a serious games framework for novices. (…) But then I question would they be able to deal with that and wouldn't they benefit from just learning general game design skills first

from you know, our existing knowledge base of game design books and the like. I'm not sure if a framework would be the right way of introducing them to that information.

1:3:21.775 --> 1:3:42.395

Researcher

OK (…) So you mentioned that it should be mostly aimed or most likely will be aimed at more experienced designers rather than novices. Does that mean that in your opinion it is not possible to create a framework that would serve both?

1:3:49.795 --> 1:4:3.355

Participant

That's an excellent question. Is that possible? It probably is possible. It is probably more than possible to guide game designers well enough. Regardless of experience,

1:4:4.115 --> 1:4:4.315

Researcher

Mhm.

1:4:49.795 --> 1:5:51.875

Participant

I do think you'll likely sacrifice something at the top end of usefulness for the senior designer by also including a lot of the yeah duh moments of game design that they're already familiar with. So although I think it's possible, I do think you might be limiting the effectiveness of the framework by making it very junior friendly in that way, because you would not go complex enough for senior designer to say, oh, that was really useful to me. They might use it as a early quick way to get started kind of context, and that might also be beneficial. But they would. They wouldn't find the entire exercise per SE useful. And what I then worry about is then would people even bother continuing using the framework? So that would potentially be a risk to the usefulness of the framework in the first place. Maybe it's two different frameworks, one for initial one, one for more advanced one where one connects to the other, but you can also use them separately. Might be a solution there, but then we're talking quite complex frameworking all of a sudden. So from a gut initial I would say (…) The more specific one would be more useful because there are other ways currently already in existence to learn the generic information about game design. But there are not many good ways to consider the more complex subjects that happen during serious games design specifically.

1:5:54.75 --> 1:6:4.75

Researcher

Yeah, OK. Interesting. 'cause. The next one is about generics vs specific.

1:6:5.45 --> 1:6:5.245

Participant

Mhm.

1:6:54.75 --> 1:6:7.75

Researcher

So with this card, I would like to first let you choose whether you want it to be generic or specific.

1:6:5.45 --> 1:6:5.245

Participant

Mhm.

1:6:8.595 --> 1:6:29.455

Researcher

And the idea is what it covers. So for example generic would be generic enough that it would be useful for any board game. It would just focus on board game while specific would for example be (…) simulation based series board games. It's like very specific to one subcategory of a generic field of board games.

1:6:29.635 --> 1:6:40.175
Participant
Yeah, yeah. So not domain specific, so not for tourism, for transportation, for whatever. But as a subtype of specific (…) serious games.

1:6:41.55 --> 1:6:41.495
Researcher
Yes.

1:6:41.825 --> 1:9:25.765
Participant
Yeah. OK. The interesting thing here is that I would actually say generic is the one that I would go for and the reasoning behind that is if you use a framework to design A serious game, you don't know yet. What specific one you are going to use until a later state? If you can pick them, the framework that you want to use for your specific series game, you already made a bunch of design choices at that stage. Right. If if you say, oh, it's going to be a serious game with as a simulation. (…) With this and this stakeholder, yada yada yada, you already made a bunch of design decisions. You're kind of already halfway to framework at that point. So to then have a specific one be introduced when you're already at that stage. I'm not sure if that is the right moment to introduce a framework into your process. You would likely want to have that at an earlier stage already. To even make you think about should this be a simulation? Should this be a stakeholder conversational game? Should this be a purely educational kind of system? I think that's definitely part of what a good framework would help you determine. (…) And that's an interesting one because in the in the context of what we previously discussed regarding, OK, how specific or in terms of how (…) How novice friendly does it need to be in those kind of things? Is that the question "What type of serious game?" we need to ask, Sounds like a simple question. It's like what type of system should we use? Sounds like a very, very simplified question of oh, it's a simulation game. Oh, it's a this type of game. That question is actually incredibly important and hard to answer correctly, and I think it's also where a lot of juniors screw up that question. Where they say, oh, obviously that's going to be a simulation game and I think that very first question they ask, they often answer incorrectly. Or is like, Oh yeah, we need to do a training thing for this company. It's going to be a simulation game. It's like. How did you make that choice? Why did you make that choice? Often that consideration isn't lacking, so even though it sounds like a novice question, it isn't.

1:9:26.825 --> 1:9:27.25
Researcher
Mhm.

1:9:27.655 --> 1:9:47.765
Participant
Is it incredibly complex question to be able to answer, so I would say generic first, but my God is that not a generic simple question. (…) It's actually far more sophisticated of a question that people realise and I think that's exactly the beauty of a good framework is that it can showcase why that is such a complex question.

1:9:49.135 --> 1:10:13.395
Researcher
Yeah. (...) To kinda like try to find a solution for what you've been talking about. Would it be? Ideal to have maybe a generic framework as a base and then have like specific additions to it's expansions to that framework?

1:10:13.985 --> 1:10:14.305
Participant
Yeah.

1:10:14.755 --> 1:10:15.395
Researcher
because you kinda like allude towards it.

1:10:23.475 --> 1:11:16.605
Researcher
Mhm, I think that that might be a. Not sure how feasible that is within your master's context, but I do think that if we're talking a very good type of usable framework, then we're talking about something that helps you with those very large in the end still complex questions, but very large early questions and then drill you drills you down into a branch of, oh, OK, we're moving into a simulation game. What type of consideration should be applied there? And then you drill down further into more specific subjects and drill down further into specific subjects. And I think that's different from how most frameworks nowadays operate. They typically are that kind of card game deck where it's just here are 50 questions to think about and I think that's short selling. How quickly these kind of games have very complex questions that need to be answered that are not part of those typical generic Card games.

1:11:17.605 --> 1:11:17.685
Researcher
Mhm.

1:11:17.905 --> 1:11:52.5
Participant
So although you want to start with that card gamey like super generic, ask broad questions. Most of these frameworks then stop. And the actually tricky questions that are super in depth never get touched on in these design frameworks. And I think the most important function of a design framework is actually those super in depth questions. So they never touch touch on them. Really. I think from a, from an academic point of view, there are very few models that even. Get to that stage, let alone give meaningful advice.

1:11:54.25 --> 1:12:2.725
Researcher
You mentioned very few models. Does that mean that you have experience with models that do get to that stage?

1:12:7.555 --> 1:12:56.165
Participant
How to explain this? I've used a few of these models and I have a training as a game designer, so there is this interplay of them being vague. But me getting stimulated in a creative way of, oh, if they if I interpret it this way, look now it's giving me specific advice, but that's a little bit like reading into Fortune telling cards and cold reading is you are attributing meaning to a model that really isn't giving you that meaning, but

you're just playing with the model to stimulate creativity. (...) I don't think that's a particularly good way for a model to function. That's just me as a designer just doing my job.

1:12:56.905 --> 1:12:57.265
Researcher
Yeah.

1:12:57.575 --> 1:13:10.875
Participant
And the model is more of a fun thing to play with, but it's not really giving me meaningful suggestions. So I think there is a large opportunity there to have far more specific advice.

1:13:13.125 --> 1:13:19.885
Researcher
OK. Then yeah, before we can move on to the next cards you have in placed this one in the Q-sort yet?

1:13:20.135 --> 1:13:42.245
Participant
Yes. So I think that's an incredibly important one. I don't know exactly. Well, we had that entire 10 minute rant was the answer, I guess, which is it depends as any good question. So yeah, I think it's it's a quite an important one, but I'm not sure. How exactly you can effectively deal with it.

1:13:42.495 --> 1:13:42.695
Researcher
Yeah.

1:13:46.715 --> 1:15:8.555
Participant
In the process to identify scope and limitations and how should we adhere to them? Well, considering the vast majority of this is, in the end client work. (...) I would put this at a 0. With the reasoning that. (...) If you identify your scope and limitations accurately. (...) It defines all your other priorities. (...) And if you put that too low in its in in terms of its, how important is this? You are gonna have a hell of a time during development if you put that too important. It actually puts a huge amount of constraints on the freedom you have in your game design process. If you fully with the constantly have the mindset of oh we need to stick to our scope, we need to stick to our scope and oh these are all the limitations. You're limiting your design space. Incredibly harsh at the start, so it's very much a balancing one. So how important is it? spot in the middle, Is really where it should end up.

1:15:9.455 --> 1:15:21.445
Researcher
Mhm. Now you jumped a gun on this one a little bit, so I'm interested to see, like, if you could define this card, what would you say you understand under the like scope and imitation.

1:15:24.225 --> 1:15:44.265
Participant
Well, what I identify scope is how well do I understand my clients what they want? And does not match the agreement we have made to prevent initial problems in the the early stages of the project and also when we deliver the project.

1:15:38.775 --> 1:15:38.975
Researcher
Mhm.
1:15:45.765 --> 1:16:14.575
Participant
The limitations I understand as what. Context is the client in and what limitations come from that. But also in terms of the scope and the goals of the projects, what limitations does that bring in in terms of where can we go? Where can we not go in this game design, either from a what are the aims of the project point of view or from a resources point of view if we don't have the budget for that, we don't have the time for that.
1:16:15.355 --> 1:16:15.555
Researcher
Mhm.
1:16:16.95 --> 1:16:23.135
Participant
So that's more of a production methodology point of view of what do we mean with identifying the scope and limitations in that sense.

1:16:23.875 --> 1:16:27.35
Researcher
Yeah. So I'm gonna move it back outside of the Q-Sort for a moment.
1:16:28.655 --> 1:16:29.15
Participant
Yeah.
1:16:29.875 --> 1:16:50.885
Researcher
So with that definition, you give it a 0. So the definition that I originally had in mind was that. More looking at the framework aspect of it. So if you say like oh. (...) Identify scope and limitations so it should mention where in the process will it help. Will it be very? The very start of the design would more help towards the end of the design
1:16:51.285 --> 1:16:52.645
Participant
Ah, OK, OK, yeah.
1:16:49.455 --> 1:17:5.655
Researcher
and that the framework should also mention what it does and doesn't do so that the designer could immediately identify. Oh, this framework. Let's look at it, it does this. It doesn't do that. OK is it useful? Yes or no?
1:17:7.285 --> 1:17:14.45
Participant
Mhm, In that case, I don't think that is very important. I'm even considering that putting that at a -2.
1:17:14.895 --> 1:17:15.95
Researcher
Mhm.
1:17:20.155 --> 1:17:44.315
Participant

One because I don't know. I I know there are not that many useful frameworks out there anyway, so just making a good one will make it relevant compared to everything else. So in your current scenario, I wouldn't worry too much about oh, I need to be super explicit what it can and cannot do because most of them are garbage. So any level of hey, it works really well, will very rapidly spread.
1:17:45.285 --> 1:17:45.765
Researcher
OK.
1:17:47.75 --> 1:17:50.915
Participant
So I'd I'd almost not care about it.
1:17:54.905 --> 1:18:7.585
Researcher
To build on that, the next card is validated, so when the the model the framework is tested and verified in its effectiveness.
1:18:8.315 --> 1:18:33.115
Participant
Yeah. (…) Specifically, in the context of serious and applied games. This needs to be decently done. It's not a super high priority item. But in the context of that industry, they do care. (…) If this was an entertainment game, I would have put this in -2 instantly.
1:18:33.745 --> 1:18:38.745
Researcher
Yeah. And what about just general serious games?
1:18:39.555 --> 1:19:34.515
Participant
The same that that industry just cares about. Verifiable results? Measurable results. (…) Yeah, it's it's the core industry, right, they they deal with the business to business side, a lot less about consumer to business or business to consumer. So they they need efficiency, they need demonstrable results for them to be willing to engage with your framework with your potential products, because a lot of companies use a framework to justify why they designed the thing in the first place in a particular way. If it then doesn't work. Your reputation is shattered, so also from your your point of view as a framework developer you want that thing to be validated, otherwise they will basically put your name to shame. If it doesn't work.
1:19:36.705 --> 1:19:45.305
Researcher
OK. And then we come back to the fun part of the Q sorts where I will give you blank cards.
1:19:45.965 --> 1:20:41.625
Participant
Mhm. (…) What is the most important thing here is that already on the board or can I think of something else that is more important when it comes to good frameworks? That's a little bit part of effectiveness, but I would like to make it a separate card 'cause. I think it's so important that it's actually more. Stimulates creativity. (…) I think in the end. That is the most important thing that any framework can do.

1:20:42.615 --> 1:20:43.95
Researcher
OK.
1:20:46.255 --> 1:22:14.645
Participant
Because in the end you're already dealing with either a game design professionals that already understand what they're doing to some extent.And they might just be stuck on their design problem. They are basically like writer's block, right? Like they're out of ideas. They can't crack, crack the shell that they're trying to crack. And there's a framework here that inspires gives a new perspective. And suddenly you go like, ah, I don't agree with the model, but this is how I would solve it. Now that I have thought about it. So it's not even about that they use this solution. That comes out of your framework, but that it unstucks their thinking. Based on the things that were you that you presented that you basically you you stimulated the creativity and regardless of if your framework did give the answer or not, you solved their problem and that will make them come back to your framework of a hey, that thing solved it in the past. It might do so again whenever I'm stuck and I think that's actually the most effective and most worthwhile framework that it's for professionals stimulates the creativity for juniors I would say and that's a little bit less important that really ties into the effectiveness part that we initially discussed is that it gives effective suggestions. (...) But I think that's actually one step less important than that it stimulates creativity.
1:22:16.795 --> 1:22:17.235
Researcher
OK.
1:22:27.215 --> 1:23:20.35
Participant
Let's see (...) There is something regarding the speed of you. So not per se ease of use. But how rapid it (...) Quick results. (...) Think that goes here.
1:23:20.905 --> 1:23:21.105
Researcher
Mhm.
1:23:24.195 --> 1:25:8.315
Participant
And what I mean with that is that the framework can spit out at least a serviceable answer. Relatively quickly, it's not a oh, do this, then do that. Then do this and then do that and then maybe you get an answer that you agree or disagree with. If that is too long of a chain of I need to make 16 steps or questions. (...) It becomes overly structured. It becomes too much of a formal process and conflicts with the the stimulates creativity part right like you want the people to get a yeah, OK, I see where this is going. I like where this is going. Let's go with that direction. And then the framework's job is mostly done. But some of these frameworks have this entire tree of decision making that (...) That doesn't actually help in answering it the the question or problem that they have is just a very long decision tree. And that also removes a bit of the flexibility of how and when you can use one of these models so that that's a tricky one to consider, and I know that's also a little bit in the opposition to what I said earlier where you want specific answers, but you do want them quickly because if it takes too long. Frustration will set in. The model will be perceived as frustrating to work with, et cetera, et cetera. So I think

the quick results is really the slightly more important part of ease of use because it's not per SE, it has to be easy, it has to be quick.

1:25:9.105 --> 1:25:9.425

Researcher

Yeah.

1:25:12.905 --> 1:26:28.425

Participant

Could argue Quick is a subset of ease of use but OK. (...) is there a? hmm (...) Or no topic independent. (...) That's not how you write topic, [Name of participant]. (...) Though it is not a model that relies on particular topics. As in, this framework can be applied to anything that is considered a serious game. I don't think that's super important. (...) I definitely think that that is more important than ease of use.

1:26:30.935 --> 1:26:39.935

Researcher

I'll let you continue with placing it. How does topic independence differ from the generic card?

1:26:43.865 --> 1:28:7.115

Participant

That the generic card is more about. Does it give me on a game mechanical point of view, very specific or generic advice? Whilst the topic independent is oh, it applies to tourism, it applies to? So maybe topic should be industry independent. I guess in in terms of proper terminology. It's more about industry independent. It can be applied to any topic in serious and applied games, but the generic specific is more on the systematic advice it gives of like OK, is this a simulation game? Is this a blah blah blah. So the the more technical game design elements. Whilst when we're talking a a model that it could be OK, this is a model for. I don't know. Tourism focused, serious games. I don't think that's a super important thing, but I can imagine that there can be models for very specific industries. That would likely then give very tailored advice to certain topics. I don't think for this type of framework that you're considering right now is particularly important. But it would still be more interesting than the ease of use.

1:28:9.845 --> 1:28:14.805

Researcher

OK. Would you like to alter the placement of cards further?

1:28:19.205 --> 1:30:49.575

Participant

Hmmm. (...) Description depicted this and then the. And then quick results. Self-Explanatory. (...) I am contemplating this self-explanatory. Being lower, I'm just not sure what I would move up and my reasoning why I'm considering this one is in in relation to what we discussed earlier. Who is this framework for? If this is more aimed at experienced designers, developers and the like? I don't care about it being self-explanatory. I'll quickly read your paper and understand how your framework works, because as a senior more senior designer you can relatively easily. Learn how to model works and it doesn't have to be that intuitive. Then again, if this model is broadly applicable with junior designers also being able to pick it up, suddenly that self-explanatory matters more. It needs to be more intuitive, it needs to be more on the ease of use. And it is less about industry. So there is a contextual question I'm asking myself

here is like, who is the audience for this framework? Because that determines a little bit those in the let me see the ease of use, industry independent, self-explanatory and scope identification. (...) Those kinda get mixed up depending on which of these two cases is the scenario. Is this for more junior designers or is this more for more seniors? Those four shift around if that scenario is different. (...) So I think this currently is from the perception of it's aiming at more experienced game designers and I would flip some of those around if it was more for junior developers.

1:30:50.315 --> 1:30:55.875

Researcher

OK, so let's first finish the Q-sort for the situation of experienced designers.

1:30:56.65 --> 1:30:58.825

Participant

Yeah, yeah. Then I'm happy with this one.

1:30:59.355 --> 1:31:6.715

Researcher

OK. So then switching back to novice designers, How would they switch around?

1:31:7.535 --> 1:33:2.355

Participant

Yeah. Then I would move the industry independent and (...) I also would move the quick results. (...) This doesn't matter anymore. Is it still industry independent? Let me think. (...) Quick results becomes less important. Ease of results moves up. (...) Let me see. Am I happy with this one? (...) Yes. Then I would put it like this. A little bit. The reasoning is that the usability becomes more important, ease of use, and the clarity of how the framework works because they're more in a learning context of learning how to design better games and then having a very self-explanatory model that is easy to use helps them become better designers faster. Whilst, if you're doing it for more experienced designers, it's not about becoming a designer. a better designer per SE it's about. Getting better results at the end. While a more junior focused. One is about teaching them how to be better designers. And then those priorities shift to some extent. I do think that the core, the most important bits in both scenarios remains the same though. that it's about effective results and stimulates creativity and that there is, you know, a useful specific outcome that you actively can use. I think that's regardless of target audience, that those are definitely the most important bits. It's just that the shifting of the slightly less important topics that moves around.

1:33:3.345 --> 1:33:9.95

Researcher

OK. Alright, so with that locked in

INTERVIEW

1:33:10.535 --> 1:33:14.735
Researcher
Now to move on to a little interview/discussion.

1:33:15.255 --> 1:33:15.615
Participant
Yep.

1:33:18.795 --> 1:34:1.935
Researcher
Normally I would. Analyse the survey answers beforehand, so let me just quickly. (...)
Look at those. (...) I see that you mentioned to the question if hypothetically you would
have to design A game alone, how would your process change and in what way? you
answered; I have no clue what you mean with this question.

1:34:2.645 --> 1:34:2.725
Participant
Mhm.

1:34:6.355 --> 1:34:15.435
Researcher
So. Since you answered a previous question with a mostly designed these games within
a team.

1:34:16.725 --> 1:34:16.805
Participant
Mhm.

1:34:16.885 --> 1:34:45.785
Researcher
There's like a certain team aspect to it. So let's say that you are now doing it solo instead
of a team. The process should change. And how would that be so? Since you maybe
didn't understand the question, does that apply imply that? You are the sole designer on
the the projects usually and the rest are just purely the developers.

1:34:47.745 --> 1:34:55.265
Participant
No, I've I've worked with in in projects where I was the only designer and I've worked in
projects with multiple designers.

1:34:55.955 --> 1:34:56.155
Researcher
Mhm.

1:34:59.795 --> 1:37:37.735
Participant
And that collaboration? It suffers a little bit from the cocreation problem, but less so
because they're typically we're all game developers, when we're talking purely game
design, then that process. (...) You could quite easily argue with each other to a
meaningful answer relatively quickly, so then, and once that once is chosen, then it
doesn't change much anymore. It's it's really when when tricky design change happens
is when you have your Co creation with externals or with subject experts that don't
know game development so they don't understand per SE why you argue a particular
stance of hey, we need to do it like this. And they don't understand the technical

implications. They don't understand the game design relevance in that thing. So that's why they typically bring in new advice at stages that really aren't design stages anymore because they're. (...) They're not happy. Where where things are going and they don't understand the decisions that have been made. So they tend to then try to change things later on in a process where we in game development would have said no, we are feature locked, we just continue development at this point and they are still going like but this and that and that and that that's where change suddenly becomes incredibly difficult in a solo context. (...) Depends on how you define solo context. If if you're still working for a client. That might still happen. Because they're they're still going to be shouting that they want changes. If you're purely doing independent development without a client or you're self funding the thing you're just trying to push something to market without external influence. Would that change anything? (...) Probably would be a lot faster if you don't have these annoying additional opinions all the time. The quality of the game might be lower because you made some stupid choices that nobody helped you with. So I think you would have a longer. Alpha beta stage in testing in that sense because your your clients didn't spot the obvious mistakes, you'll probably have a more expensive development cycle in the end as well because you need to fix them at the end of the project instead of early on. (...) So that's mostly from an efficiency of making the game. Does that change? Because you didn't do your proper due diligence in bouncing ideas, testing with the target audience early enough.

1:37:46.285 --> 1:37:54.155

Researcher

Okay. I see that you usually do not use frameworks, templates or guidelines.

1:37:54.955 --> 1:37:55.35

Participant

Mhm.

1:37:56.85 --> 1:38:6.325

Researcher

You also mentioned during the Q-sort for example that you believe that majority if not all frameworks that are out there are not effective or not good.

1:38:7.115 --> 1:39:31.35

Participant

Yeah. I I've when I have to use frameworks, it's typically because the client or the external expert brings in a framework and those are typically frameworks from another industry of like oh, this is how tourism functions from a framework point of view. I'm like cool, this is way too little detail to build a game system on because a lot of these frameworks are like 1 pagers. Because they typically focus on things like we just mentioned ease of use and. Typically don't go very deep, but if you're building game systems that are simulation based, for example, you need a lot of different variables that are very specific in depth numbers and the relationships between variables that. These models tend to not give you, but for game development you definitely need, so they tend to guide you the first. Three steps of the game design process over like, OK, we're going to make a simulation game. It's going to involve tourists in a particular city, and we're doing it in a multiplayer context with stakeholder. So some of those very generic game design topics might be completed through a framework. But then you get to the nitty gritty. OK, how do we simulate a city question?

1:39:32.115 --> 1:39:32.315
Researcher
Mhm.
1:39:32.205 --> 1:39:53.435
Participant
And then the framework just stops. It just cannot answer those questions. And that's actually where the most complex problem lies. Because game developers have no that level of subject knowledge, they often do not have. I have no clue how tourists in Amsterdam behave, for example.
1:39:53.315 --> 1:39:53.515
Researcher
Yeah.
1:39:55.115 --> 1:41:38.125
Participant
And I have no way of quickly learning how that works without going super in depth in it different industry than I am from. And that's also where you you notice the tension in these kind of collaboration Co creation processes because then you have someone that is a tourism expert, maybe even from Amsterdam. So really knowledgeable about Amsterdam, but they don't understand game design. So they might have a lot of answers of like, yes, we typically see Airbnb people do this in Amsterdam. Okay cool, you have some understanding of how they operate. Do you have any numbers in terms of how many are in the city, how many are going to Airbnb? How long do they stay? You know, numbers you would need to create an effective simulation. They typically don't have. And that's where the cocreation becomes incredibly difficult. That's where the tension really starts building in these kind of collaborations. Because they what you typically as a game developer expect Is that this expert brings that information. They don't. And they expect you to be able to build a simulation with the data that they have, which we can't. And then typically a framework is used to try and bring these two parties to a state where they can use something that they can collaborate on. They have the same language on. But when it gets to those really nitty gritty details, most models just cannot deal with that. They can deal with the what type of game, what type of workshop, what type of experience, but not with the complexer side of the final game design.
1:41:39.685 --> 1:41:59.865
Researcher
To me, what you explained, it sounds a bit like the models are specific to the fields and therefore are sort of resource. When it comes to the topic, but the models are not really a resource when it comes to the design of a board game itself.
1:42:0.515 --> 1:42:7.595
Participant
Exactly. It cannot translate the domain specific information into meaningful game design actions.
1:42:9.465 --> 1:42:26.165
Researcher
OK. And then to. Get your opinion on the game design models that are out there, like the frameworks. For example, you mentioned like a deck of cards or a deck of lenses. What is your opinion on those?

1:42:30.535 --> 1:43:18.955
Participant
They are great for novice designers because it forces them to consider things they have not seen before. They also tend to work decently well for more experienced the game designers because it's a creativity stimulus where they're like, oh, right, cool. Yeah, I know how this mechanic works, I just hadn't thought about it in this context. So it's a great reminder, creativity stimulus. What's interesting is that it's also useful. For those externals from another field by giving them that kind of card deck, which is nice and easy to use for them to get a quick grasp of what are the things we should be thinking about now that we're designing a game which I've never done before.
1:43:20.285 --> 1:43:20.485
Researcher
Mhm.
1:43:21.725 --> 1:45:19.655
Participant
So in terms of well from an entertainment perspective, in terms of these type of card decks, they're actually better suited to help with serious game design. Then the current serious game design frameworks that are out there, or at least the ones that I have used I probably haven't used all of them. Because the process of how they deliver the information is more intuitive for the external and juniors. And it stimulates creativity for the more experienced game designers. And that is what I typically miss. In domain specific frameworks or in serious and applied game design frameworks, they they lack that playfulness. That is typically associated with those card decks. That doesn't mean card decks are without flaws. I do think there are some issues with them as well. They tend to also not be great for that really in depth mechanical kind of conversation. They also struggle with this. And they also struggle with sometimes certain fields, so for example again that tourism example is. (...) It might not be able to deal with all the facets that are relevant to tourism, because those are just not a thing the model was built to deal with. So that domain specific, very niche specific things it might struggle with in terms of dealing with. (...) So I actually do think the current entertainment ones are a good basis for what maybe some of these serious and applied games framework should be looking at in terms of format, not per SE that the framework isn't important, but how they disseminate the framework towards people that actually need to work with it.
1:45:21.195 --> 1:45:41.105
Researcher
Yep. And you mentioned that there's a distinction between like entertainments, design decks or frameworks and those for serious games. Do you have (...) Possibly an example of a serious game framework that you know of?
1:45:41.925 --> 1:45:47.405
Participant
Serious game frameworks. Oh, I need to look those up. I do not know them by heart.
1:45:50.395 --> 1:45:51.115
Researcher
Okay.
1:45:52.915 --> 1:46:10.615
Researcher
Quickly check if I have more questions (...) So if a framework would exist

1:46:11.335 --> 1:46:11.535
Participant
Mhm.
1:46:11.615 --> 1:46:46.45
Researcher
Based or like specifically for the game design aspect of serious, serious games or serious board games, and it is made-up in the way that we discussed earlier of like a basic generic model that covers like the base of game design, and then you have like additions on top of it that are more specific to what you would need. That's also fulfilled the criteria that you mentioned. Would that then be something that you would incorporate in your process?
1:46:48.125 --> 1:47:48.325
Participant
I would likely just have one lying around specifically for the cases where I'm stuck, right? Because a lot of game design is just I know how this works. I have some ideas of how to do it. So really those frameworks, or at least in my experience, these frameworks come forward. Once you're stuck when something doesn't make sense, when you're stuck in your creative process, when you're stuck in your, how do I communicate this effectively? That's where they really shine. Again, in my experience, I assume other people use them in different ways as well, but that's where for me the added value really lies. Being able to just go like OK, Hello client, let's do this card deck together and let's discuss why we like certain things and why we don't. So it's also a good communication tool in that sense or we've been butting our heads around this. You give me a a tool to. (...) Deescalate the conflict with my client to some degree.
1:47:54.175 --> 1:47:54.815
Researcher
Alright.
1:47:54.315 --> 1:48:54.5
Participant
I think I think there's a strong value there. And specifically in the more playful manner of a the design deck and those kind of things because that. That makes it quick. That makes it effective. That makes it a visual output instead of a Excel sheet with a bunch of terms that come from some super abstract. Theoretical model, although that's interesting from an academic point of view. In practise, nobody cares. In practise, they just care. How do I fix my design problem? (...) Like in a PhD they would care. But on my day-to-day in, I just need to get this design done tomorrow. Just give me the answer right. I want to be able to rely on the fact that you have tested the model and that the suggestions it makes makes sense. 'Cause I don't have the time to do that.
1:48:57.905 --> 1:49:4.505
Researcher
I have no more questions for the interview. I don't know if you have any closing statements or thoughts that you want to share.

[Turned into a feedback session after this point]

ANON DATA 03

Fields: Research

ID-Codes

- Participant
- Researcher
- // observational notes
- [comments] e.g. SBG = Serious Board Games

SURVEY

Performed:	10 April 2024

Do you have experience with designing serious games? (Serious Board Games, Serious Digital Games, or both)
Yes, both serious board and digital games

Introduction Questions

How many digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
3-5
How many serious digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (serious Games)
3-5
How many board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
1-2
How many serious board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Serious Games)
1-2

Substantive Questions

Do you usually design/develop these serious games with multiple people in a team, or alone?
Always in a team

Substantive Questions – Team

What is your team like? Any specific team structure? (E.g. 1 game designer, 2 programmers and a dedicated playtester)
Game designer, subject matter experts, game developers, game researcher
Is there a structure when working with multiple people to design these board games?
Yes, an iterative phase-based process of research & design, prototyping & testing, development, evaluation/validation, training & handover
If hypothetically you would have to design a game alone, how would your process change? In what way?

Not much

Substantive Questions – Framework

When designing a serious (board) game, what are the steps you take in your current design process?
Same
Do you use any frameworks, templates or guidelines for this?
Mostly

Frameworks

Who created the framework?
Externally created
To what extent is the framework documented?
Partly documented
In case the framework is documented, how specific or generalised is it?
Generalised to be used on different projects
From your experience, what do you think is currently improvable from the process?
Not much to be honest, I'm happy with it

Background in the field

What was your prior education and the institute that you studied at before joining the industry?
[Redacted]
Have you spent time (for studies or work) in your career away from your cultural background? If so, what cultural region and how long (in years) did you spend there?

Only conference visits and short (one week) visits elsewhere in Europe or other Western countries
How many years of professional work experience do you have designing games? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
6+ years
How many of those years have you been designing serious games? (Serious Games)
6+ years
If you had to give an estimate percentage, how much of that time would you say was spent on serious board games?
10
How would you describe your current work position?
R&D project leader

Outro

What part of the design would you like to be further documented/researched?
Building a better understanding of the creativity involved in design

Interview – Warm-up

Researcher

Then for the introduction a few questions. (…) The serious games that you have made

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

To look at the survey, would you consider them to be educational serious games?

Participant

Yes, mostly yes yeah yeah I mean there is always in the past there is always been projects in which it went also beyond education in the sense that professionals of some sort would play the game and we would hope to see some change in their work, in the organization that they work, how they do their work, but still, in the end, it starts, it always started with learning,

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

and you learn and hope for some change. Yeah

Researcher

And I know that a lot of the projects here within Cradle, at least, they are (…) tested, or at least shown within a workshop kind of setting. Have you been involved with that, or have you just been on the project side? //rather than also on the workshop//

Participant

//No, no// with MSP Challenge, we've applied the game and game sessions with the target audiences, being students and professionals in spatial planning for the sea. Over 60 sessions we've had since 2018, thousands of people have played it,

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

for real. So it's not just for testing, but really to achieve our objectives with it. And I was involved in most of those sessions, and they were 80-90% of those. I either was a facilitator who actually led the session, or one of the facilitators, but actually, I think, probably 80% of all those sessions I was THE facilitator, 10% I was one of the facilitators, and 10% someone else did it. So I've done a lot of game sessions with MSP Challenge, in particular over the past six years.

Researcher

Okay. I'll get back to that

Participant

Sure

Researcher

at the end.

Participant

Yeah. Also with other games before that, especially when I was still at Delft,

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

we had quite some different simulation serious games projects there as well, which I helped out with facilitation and project management and research and design. Yeah

Researcher

Okay A bit of a jump,

Participant

Not a problem

Researcher

but you probably saw it in the presentation as well, the definition that we use.

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

So there's two main terms that this research is really about, and that's serious game and framework.

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

So let's first take serious games or serious games. What, in your perspective, is like the definition for a serious game?

Participant

Yeah, I like to keep things simple. So I like to just say any game that has not been designed purely for entertainment is probably a serious game. So It could be for education, it could be for some other kind of change, behavioral change, organizational change. (…) Even, I think you could still argue that games put on the web somewhere just to make people buy something in the end. For me, it still fits the bill. I know there's been over the years, Some debates, some might say a lot of debates on how to more specifically define serious games, replace it with other terms.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

In the end, I'm not that interested in those kinds of debates.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

I think you need something practical to denote a game that's not purely for entertainment. I don't like the term, but people seem to understand it in this respect.

Researcher

It's very similar to the definition that this research uses.

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

It's that serious games are games which are intentionally designed for the purpose of learning skill acquisition training, and they are driven by educational goals and not entertainment. It links very closely to what you said.

Participant

Mhm Okay

Researcher

Then for the second definition of a framework, how would you (...) //define that//

Participant

//Hmm Yeah,// I think a framework is always (...) I can't come up with a scientific definition, but I think it's a bunch of concepts, terms, fitting some kind of hierarchy or some kind of grouping, some kind of field with which you can view the world, something around you. So It's I guess my understanding of a framework is analytical in that sense, so that you can use a bunch of terms that a community of people have agreed on fit together to describe something around you.

Researcher

Yeah. This research takes a bit of an easier //approach to it.//

Participant

//Okay, yeah sure//

Researcher

Just like a system of rules and ideas that is used to plan or decide something.

Participant

Okay. (...) It's a bit more prescriptive also.

Researcher

Yeah It's a bit broader, keeping it a very simple

Participant

Yup, okay.

Researcher

Okay, You are familiar with what the research is about. It's about the frameworks for the design of serious board games,

Participant

Yes

Researcher

and what criteria are important for the frameworks, kind of what this research is looking into,

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

and this will be done via Q sorting,

Participant

Oh yeah

Researcher

just to give every participant the same level playing field that will explain what Q-Sorting is. So I have these models right here. I'll give you the content first.

Participant

Okay

Researcher

And preferably it's under the camera as well.

Participant

Okay

Researcher

I'll just quickly mention that. It //will help with my// data analysis.

Participant

//Oh yeah//, Makes sense.

Researcher

So yeah, you can place criteria from the -2 to the plus +2.

Participant

Yup.

Researcher

I'll have the little card that I can give to you. You just place them where you think they fit.

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

It's not really about giving it a score per se. it's more about placing the criteria relative to //each other//.

Participant

//each other//

Researcher

And the column, let's say for example column 0,

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

the three slots there, the top is not more important than the //bottom//.

Participant

//No no//

Researcher

They're all same importance. (…) I'll give them to you one by one.

Participant

Okay

Researcher

The criteria, I'll explain what the criteria kind of means within this research. If you don't agree, you can always say what you understand from the criteria or what in your opinion should be different about it.

Participant

Okay

Researcher

I'll also ask you each time why did you place there, if things move around, why did you move it.

Participant

Okay

Researcher

And at the end I'll also give you the opportunity to rearrange your final result for the Q-Sorting.

Participant

Okay

Researcher

And with that I will be taking notes during the entire process.

Participant
Sure
Researcher
You don't have to wait for me on anything, you can just go at your own pace.
Participant
Okay

QSORT – CONTENT CRITERIA

Performed:	10 April 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Fun	depth	moderation	Social elements	Set precise & measurable goals
	Venue	Essential experience duration	Motivation	

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria
/

Qsort evolution

Set precise & measurable goals: +2
Venue: 0
Social elements: +1
Fun: +1
Essential experience: +1
Motivation: +1, essential experience: 0
Duration: 0
Moderation: -1
Depth: -2

Rearrange:
Depth: -1, Fun: -2
Moderation: 0, Venue: -1

QSort Transcription

Researcher
Then for the Q-Sort, we're starting with the content Q-Sort, which is about the content covered by the framework.
Participant
Okay
Researcher
So it's very much targeted towards the end game as a result.
Participant
Aha okay, yeah.
Researcher
Okay, so the first criteria I have for you is Set precise & measurable goals. This is meant that what should the player achieve by playing this game, what should they learn, how should they have transformed by playing this project.
Participant
That is very important. I would for now put it right there.

Researcher

Okay, and you say it's very important. Can you elaborate?

Participant

Yeah, for me this is where it starts. You have to and end, it doesn't mean it's not a thing you just define once and then you're done with it. But you need to throughout the entire process keep thinking about what do I want to achieve, what do I want to achieve. And it generally doesn't start very precise and measurable at all. Of course,

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

it starts with some vague ideas. At the moment, to give you an example, the MSP Challenge project or else it's called, it's all about Sandex fashion. And yeah, we came up with four or five main goals that are not so precise, not so measurable yet, but it was the first thing we started to talk about with each other. You can come up with all sorts of things, but if you already have made an understanding within the team about what the goals are, then you can more quickly say let's not do this because it doesn't achieve. We don't expect it to achieve our goal. So it's very important. What do you want to achieve?

Researcher

Okay. Then for the second criteria, have

Participant

Venue

Researcher

venue. With this, I mean that how should the game be set up in what kind of like space, what is the configuration and are there any limitations due to equipment.

Participant

Yeah yeah

Researcher

So if you look at cradle games, for example, the facilitation of having it in sort of a workshop environment.

Participant

Yeah. Yeah, it puts all sorts of limitations and restrictions and obligations in terms of the room requirements for the room, hardware, network, whatever. Of course, we're talking about board games now. Yeah, in the end, it has to be in there. I'll put it on 0 for now.

Researcher

Okay. You already kind of like elaborate a bit and mentioned what falls under venue. I don't know if you have anything more to elaborate on that.

Participant

Yeah, I mean, if you're really talking a serious board game in a serious multiplayer board game at some in a (…) serious multiplayer board game in a sort of a workshop setting, yeah, then anything you can come up with in terms of venue in the end is relevant.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

You know, in the old version of this building, we had rooms without windows and wouldn't pick that kind of room for that kind of thing. Anything you can come up with will be relevant. Also, timing, access to catering, whatever, easily reached by the participants. It's all relevant because in the end, yeah, especially for this kind of setting

that you create with a board game, in the end, all these things do play a part. If people get up in the morning ill tempered, already will have an influence on how they play and value a serious board game.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

If only because they will probably not completely view it as part of their work, even though it might be an intervention for their work, they won't completely see that work,

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

which is what we want because we do want them to also feel like this is a playful activity, the entertainment, playfulness has a part to play. But then for that reason alone, I think then all these other things that you don't really design, that's just influential factors, like venue, play a part, not a super big part, but a play a part.

Researcher

And would you say board games versus digital games? For which one is venue, does it play a bigger role?

Participant

Yeah, probably maybe for the board games in the end, because they're all physically around the board. And with the digital game, I can imagine you also have a setting where people are going online from wherever they are, and you don't have an influence on that anyway,

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

even though it will still play a part.

Researcher

Okay. For the next one, I have social elements.

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

What social elements will be or should be in the game? Some examples are no social elements or teamwork, maybe just discussion instead. Kind of those kind of elements in your game.

Participant

So not necessarily creating mechanics to instantiate social dynamics, just relying on people talking to each other, working together.

Researcher

The idea is that the game facilitates this or makes this happen, but it could be very different. It can be teamwork,

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

just in that group, it can be teamwork like small little groups, it's individual and you just like discussing it.

Participant

Yeah, definitely should be in there. Probably on +1 for now simply because I've got the goals on +2.

Researcher

Yeah. Then do you have a preference or from your experience, what would you say is the best social element?

Participant

Well, I mean (...) the term element here is a little, I don't know how useful it is to be honest.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

I think it's useful to think of more specific social dynamics that you design for. So do you want to stimulate people to have certain kinds of discussions with each other or to physically do something together? Or exact opposite, do you introduce game mechanics consciously, not let people discuss in a certain manner with each other or do something physically with each other?

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

Yeah, for example in the MSP Challenge board game, at some point the facilitator introduces new little map A5 cards. Purposely small, there are little maps that relate to the big board which is one big map, the really big board is like three by two meters.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

And it gives a little bit of information, so you have to really relate. And then whoever gets that map, it's really publicly handed over by the facilitator to that person. So that people flock to that person because that person now has an information advantage. That's a very specific kind of social element that you want to then see happen. Someone gets an information advantage and you want to see other players representing other stakeholders trying to get their hands on that information. Anyway, so yeah, I think in the end it still boils down to a specific mechanic that you introduce to get a specific social response dynamic something. And it really depends on what you like, what you want. I think for a lot of the serious games, digital or board games I've been involved in, and there hasn't been many. But I think for most of them there was always this element of (...) competition versus collaboration in it. Because they're typically simulation games in which you want to simulate the fact that you've got different stakeholders that have competing interests with each other. But that still will benefit from collaborating with each other.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

And whatever you can come up with to make that happen, that people realize, okay I'm a stakeholder, I have a competing interest with you. And then also, oh right, but that doesn't mean that I should just ignore everyone and be this individual. We do have something also in common, we do have individual benefits to collaboration.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

That's come up a lot in these games. I hope that answers your question.

Researcher

It certainly does. Then the next one, it kind of //links back//

Participant

//Fun//

Researcher

to what you mentioned for the second one. Kind of like a playful activity,

Participant

yeah

Researcher

so fun. Kind of what I wrote down in this, how will the game be fun? And also maybe a bit of a point of discussion, if the game is not fun, then why would you choose a game experience?

Participant

Right, yeah, Fun, I never I avoid, consciously avoid the term fun and the perspective of fun as a word during a serious game project. We have looked at what are the intrinsic motivations of the target audiences in these design processes. To see what can we latch onto there, if anything. And of course in the end, if you evaluate, you always do ask a little bit to an interview or a survey question, how fun did you think it was to see what response you get. But as a design focus, I don't find it useful.

Researcher

Okay

Participant

It's just too abstract for me. I remember Raph Koster writing a book, A Theory of Fun, in which he sort of digged into the different kinds of fun. I think that helped. But in the end, when I look at play theory, people like Huizinga, [Kaluwa, dekovan?]Classic, really classic old school, 19 what is it, 40s, 50s, 60s and 70s game theory. Play theory actually, I find those more helpful in understanding what happens when people play and that they then like to call it fun in hindsight.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

Then as a designer, focusing on fun. So, giving, I think, when you are able to design an experience where people feel like they are stepping into some kind of an alternate reality, because it has its own rules, it's a bit like the magic circle, as Huizinga likes to call it. So they step into an alternate reality. They have a feeling of a play space in the sense of I've got all the options and freedom to choose my actions. It might not be super, super to choose a play space, but at least they have a sense of, oh, I have options to choose from. And then, yeah, feel like they can try and fail at those options because there is limited external consequence to their choice. The choices they make are firstly confined to that magic circle, that play space. So they feel like, okay, I can try things out.

Researcher

Yeah, experiment

Participant

Experiment, see what happens because there is immediate feedback or reasonably quick feedback on what they've chosen. Start to think about what other things they can try. If you have all that in order, the chances are pretty high, they will find it fun, whatever that means.

Researcher

Okay

Participant

I think, my opinion. Of course, that doesn't mean that any game or any topic is deemed fun in the end. But if you, especially also with some scaffolding, that becomes proactive to try something because it's not daunting, it's not too big. Or at least you create some kind of way to make it not too daunting, have some nice scaffolding in your design. It starts to become fun very quickly. And it's a term that people use to evaluate something in hindsight. I think that's what the usefulness of the term is. Sorry, this is a hard one for me. I am babbling too much. I think I would put this maybe on, well, -1 for now.

Researcher

You briefly left at the end of the presentation, I don't know if you were there for that comment. Probably not. People made a comment in the question round about how difficult the game is. And they used the term, I think, Kevin Missile or Kevin Mission. Because Kevin makes games that are very

Participant

Oh yeah

Researcher

difficult in a way. And you mentioned scaffolding. So you have the opposite of the Kevin Missile?

Participant

I don't know. But I do know that Kevin likes nice intricate systems in the games of the designs. I like them too. My first example that comes to mind is Pandemic Legacy, for instance. Or the Pandemic series of board games. They're nicely complicated. And I can imagine that for many people it's hard to call them fun because of the fact that they are not very well scaffolded.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

It's really, here are the rules. Read ten pages of rules. Do you understand the rules? Now you can play. It's not like, here's two of the rules to get you started. Do you understand it? Here's another rule. You understand it? Here's another rule. So in that sense, I mean, you can make a super Kevin-proof board game with scaffolding. And I'm sure Kevin would still find it fine. But I don't think Kevin necessarily does that. I hope he does scaffolding, I think. But I think it's a very important technique. I think with MSP Challenge we've tried over the years to improve on that because whenever you make a simulation game, especially the kinds of simulation games that Igor likes as part of his professorship, they are very complex because the topic is a complex system like maritime spatial planning is. And you simplify so things are a lot simpler and shortened also as in real life but then still here's the game, go play! And then it's quickly people get overloaded and there's all sorts of scaffolding things you can try to improve that

experience at least the first part of this. That's a very important thing for fun, I think for the evaluation of fun in my side.

Researcher

Talking about the experience, the next one is essential experience and that kind of means what game experience should the player have, what feeling should they have while playing, some example is they should feel powerful, feel powerless or they kind of should feel like they are playing the role of a minority. In a way

Participant

Mhm, Run that by me again, one more time.

Researcher

So what game experience should the player have, what feeling should they have while playing, examples feeling powerful, feeling powerless, feeling like part of a minority.

Participant

So this is much more about the emotional valuation of the experience overall. I see. (…) This is one of those things where I feel like it's probably more important than I give it credit than I do than I think about myself

Researcher

in general or

Participant

when I was working on games. (…) On the other hand, just thinking about the term essential experience, no, you do always think for instance the scaffolding did to make things not, to get people in the state of flow basically. It's not too hard, not too easy. That's part of this. It's always important to have moments of frustration in my opinion during gameplay. It has to be a bit frustrating as well. It's so easy I think for many people to think of, especially non-game designers, to think of games as something easy. That's one thing that many people also attribute to fun. Non-game designers. It's fun because it's frivolous. But actually no, games are not fun in that sense.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

This is another reason why fun for me is so annoying a term to focus on during design doesn't help. I'll put this on +1 for now.

Researcher

It's phrased as essential experience. It's defined as how the player feels. With that definition and wording, how would you say that compares to the general term of immersion?

Participant

Oh (…) Yeah, immersion is again one of those terms I think that had a lot of attention in the fierce game design community 15, 20 years ago I think. Also it's an entertainment game research community by the way. With a lot of focus on it for a long time because people used it left and right. It's been used as synonyms for a lot of other things like flow. I think many people in a more day-to-day use of the word common, kind of use of the word attributed as a lot. Just what someone like Jitzen Udhavi would say, that's flow, that's not immersion.

Researcher

Am I correct in assuming that you disagree with the use of flow and immersion as a synonym?

Participant

I think flow is a very psychologically, theoretically framed and positioned term because of Jitzen Udhavi. And the psychologists that then took it up and worked further on it afterwards. In immersion I'm not so aware of whether that as a term was picked up in a similar way. Ever since I finished my PhD basically and went to university of applied sciences I haven't been up to date in so much real theoretical development.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

I think immersion back in the day was mostly used to talk about people having focus and not being distracted by whatever you consider not part of the game. And flow for psychologists was much more about continuous engagement with the game because it's not too hard and not too easy. maybe immersion is more a term to explain the result of flow or an aspect of flow, not the pure synonym of flow.

Researcher

Okay

Participant

I haven't thought about these topics for a long time, these are just gut feelings.

Researcher

Now for the next one I have motivation.

Participant

Yes very important

Researcher

How can the game motivate the player and how can the game use that motivation?

Participant

This is important. Oh dear, now what? I'll have to move something. I think I will move an essential experience to 0 for now to put motivation here. Because in the end you can give all sorts of mechanics, options, whatever you want to call it to the player. But if you can't think about a certain motive, you have to also think about a certain motivation for players to pick something over something else. It's part of the dynamics that you then create. It's very important. motivation to actually play the game and motivation of the player also before they get into the game, intrinsic motivations, extrinsic motivations, it's all very important. Thinking also of point systems or some other kind of more competitive elements to extrinsicly motivate people, that kind of stuff. It is important. (...) Maybe social elements but also moves to put essential experience back into +1. I'll think about that as an option.

Researcher

Come back to the moving later. I will give you a few blank criteria for you to define yourself. I do see that we are already running out of time

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

with this criteria. So I can give you some predefined ones or I also have a suggestion.

Participant

Why don't you give me some predefined ones? Predefined ones are fine. I'm curious.

Researcher

Then we have duration. How long should the game be? How long should specific mechanics take?

Participant

I'll have to put it on 0 for now. We tend to develop games that are very lengthy. A lot of the times we are conflicted about it because people don't necessarily want a game that lasts the whole day. Even when you tell them upfront also it's always like, oh well you've got to see this game. Great, great, let's play it. Oh you need a whole day, all these people. If you want them to really learn something you can't just be done with it in an hour in this case. Anyway, I'll put it on 0 simply because I don't have enough space.

Researcher

Then I have moderation.

Participant

Oh yeah that's also important

Researcher

How will the game be moderated and how will the game be explained?

Participant

For now I have no problem in putting it on -1 because I think it is very important. It should be in there. The framework should cover this.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

But in the end, you could make a manual if it's good game, good mechanics, good dynamics. You know your target audience, you know the goals, it all fits together. Your essential experience is clear as you put it. Then the moderation shouldn't matter that much. So it should be in the framework. But how crucial is it? Maybe less than other things.

Researcher

Okay

Participant

I have no problem there.

Researcher

Next one. I forgot the print that I see.

Participant

Depth.

Researcher

Yeah depth. So how specific is the information?

Participant

Okay. That's it. That's what it's about. How specific the information is?

Researcher

Yeah. So I was mostly thinking about (...) the topic of the game. Something that uses the subject matter experts for. And then the information of that field, let's call it. How in depth should that information be?

Participant

Ah, okay. (...) Yeah, this is a difficult one. I don't think I have a big problem putting this on -2. (...) Because I wonder how useful it is to formulate it like this and include it in the framework. In any of the series games I've been involved in, of course you always have

in the end discussions about depth. But you can have (…) So in MSP Challenge there are certain aspects of maritime spatial planning in the game, whether it's board game. Well let's stick to the board game. Let's stick to the board games. MSP Challenge board game. The big board, three by two meters. The depth in there is concerning some aspects of the process of spatial planning to sea.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

And then other aspects of MSP are totally ignored. So it's a very

Researcher

Pick and choose

Participant

specific picking of aspects of this complex system with which you can still feel that the complex system as a whole can be represented. Or at least part of it. So the actual plan that you make, the spatial plan for the sea that you make in the board game is totally irrelevant. It's a big board and it's a map and you put things to say this is it. So it is, you feel as a player. You're making a plan for the experience. It doesn't matter at all because the board game is actually completely about how to organize yourselves to get there.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

And how efficient is that in terms of time? How effective is it in terms of different uses of the sea? In terms of the official political process that you have to legally go through etc. So the depth is on those social aspects almost. I think you could summarize that. So there is always depth but you can't approach depth as a general thing for the subject matter.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

You have to, for the kinds of games that I've been involved in, it's always been a complex system and you want the complex system to be represented knowing that you can't go and copy it in the game. So you take the depth. That's all I can say about depth. So I think it's less useful as a topic in the framework.

Researcher

And now that all the criteria have been placed, would you like to rearrange them?

Participant

Ah maybe (…) Maybe I should switch these two. So, fun and depth. It feels like the fun thing and the depth thing deserves that. (…) So thinking about what venue was doing in the middle there. It's pretty important but on the other hand, if we're talking about where is moderation, moderation I put there. You could usually also argue that a really good board game for your target audience with all the mechanics that lead to the dynamics that lead to the goals of paraphernalia, everything in order. Yeah, okay, moderation becomes a bit less important than why would venue be that important? Do I switch these two? Maybe I'll switch them. If you have a good moderator in a crappy room, it will have more effect than a bad moderator in a beautiful room.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

To put it very bluntly. This is difficult. I think to be honest if you were to ask me tomorrow and I hopped out of bed differently, maybe I might have come up with a different end result. I think this is it for now.

Researcher

Alright

Participant

This has to be it. Yeah, it is very important to get the gold fight. I love how board games are always social and that you can have to use social elements in your design, motivation for picking options, mechanics. Super important to get people into the engagement. Then you have a moderator, you feel a certain way throughout the experience and it has to take a certain amount of time. Then it becomes a bit less, okay, the whole depth of the system you're representing. It's not a useful concept for me.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

Then you could have all this in a crappy venue and it would still work. And fun is just another term I find useful. I think this is it.

Researcher

I'll move that to the sides.

QSORT – META CRITERIA

Performed:	10 April 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Self-explanatory	Validated	Ease of use	Specific	Effectiveness
	scaffold	Phase of design/development	Identify scope & limitations	
		Co-creation		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

- Phase of design/development
- Scaffold

Qsort evolution

Self-explanatory: -2
Effectiveness: +2
Ease of use: 0
Specific: +1
Identify scope & limitations: +1
Validated: 0

Co-creation: 0
Phase of design/development: -1
Scaffold: -1

<u>Rearrange</u>:
Scaffold: 0, ease of use: -1
Phase of design: 0, validated: -1
Ease of use: 0, scaffold: -1

QSort Transcription

Researcher
Next one. Alright. For the meta criteria, that is about the way that the framework itself is structured.
Participant
Ah, okay.
Researcher
So we're just thinking about the game more about the framework.
Participant
Okay.
Researcher
Then the first one I have is self-exponential. So the framework holds all the information and no external sources are required to use the framework. Kind of like pick-up and use.

Participant

That's too easy for me. No. It's like, come on people, if you're going to do this, study it. You're going to do this right or you're not going to do it at all.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Yeah. I hate that kind of idea.

Researcher

Would you say there's a limit to it or is just like any external source, should sources be papers? Should there be like huge books?

Participant

Yeah. Of course you do. I mean, why make a framework if you first have to study it for a year? Then, okay, you've lost some kind of usefulness. But self-explanatory, you can just see and fully... You know why this triggers me? Because about 10 years ago,

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

15 years ago when gamification came up, people started talking along these lines. That thanks to an easier understanding of mechanics involved in games, you can now pick and mix game elements, game mechanics, points, badges and leaderboards and just apply them on your websites or on some other product that's not a game or some other experience that's not a game and it's gamified and hey presto, you don't need to think about it. Just smack a leaderboard on your social media platform and it's gamified and people will love it. That's where this hooks into my head and I'm like, yeah, it's just too easy. People should be willing and able to think a bit further about what it is that you're doing

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

when you're designing a game. So, yeah, there's limits but I know now from here I have to... There's limited space for things so I'll put it on -2 for now.

Researcher

Alright, Then for the second one, I have effectiveness.

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

Does the framework help the designer design or help in the design process?

Participant

That has to be +2 for now. Whenever you make a framework it has to be effective for the design process otherwise you really don't need to make a framework.

Researcher

Yeah. (...) The third one is ease of use. It's kind of like cover the basics and assuming the obvious to make no assumptions to the level of experience of the user of framework.

Participant

Yeah, pretty important. I think I'll put it in 0 for now.

Researcher

Do you agree with that terminology and definition?

Participant

Yeah, I mean it's like also when you're making any kind of software, something in usability, ease of use, as always. And that's in the end what this framework also is. It's meant to be a tool, something that supports. So there has to be an element of ease even though it's fine to ask people to dig in first and understand some of the underpinnings and assumptions involved in game design. And that's also the framework. In the end, once you've done that first, digging into some stuff subsequent use of the framework should be easy.

Researcher

Okay, then for the next one I have generic or specific. So the choices up to you, which one you believe is more relevant. And kind of the explanation of it is should it be generic and broadly applicable to all serious games or should the framework be specific and be for like for example, simulation serious board games like a very subcategory of games.

Participant

Yeah, that's a difficult one. My gut feeling is saying specific.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

Because simply because there are by now really different subcommunities identifiable in serious games. If only because of the people using different terms. Some people really oppose using the term serious game, talk about applied games. Some people really indeed like you also do and it's fair enough we talk about serious games being purely educational or firstly educational and learning.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

And other people say like design a game to immediately generate behavioral change. Then there's perhaps more really clear pure learning involved. So then yeah, we talk about different things. So I think in the end it has to be specific just because of how the community has developed over the past decades. And simulation games of course dates back to the 70s and I know of quite some people that you know either explicitly or implicitly ignored that tradition as well. Many people don't feel like you know I remember you know there's people that develop games to learn a language. For instance right, could be digital games, gamified digital experiences, apps to learn a language. Yeah that's of course very different from a complex system board game or simulation game.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

So yeah you do approach it differently. So specific I think I have to go with specific. Yeah?

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

Yeah because it's specific and has to you know be explicit about the specificity right, don't have to be there.

Researcher

Okay and a bit of a suggestion you want to like your opinion on what if you had a multi-

framework structure and you had like a base framework which is very general and broad. And then you have frameworks on top of that which go specific to it.

Participant

Yeah that would work, that would work. I once wrote a white paper for a project in which I tried to explain to people working in logistics. You know if you invite a game designer into your company and you say I've heard of gamification, I've heard of series games and simulation games to improve how this factory works. What could you expect as a non-expert, you know, a manager or just owner of this logistics company, what could you expect from such a person?

Resear

Yeah.

Participant

You invite into a company. And basically what I said in that white paper, yeah of course it depends. Do you get someone who's been trained in simulation games from the 1970s then you could expect something like this, this and this. If you're getting someone who's recently graduated from Breda University of Applied sciences or HKU University of the Arts in Utrecht, then you might get a person with this background, this frame of mind, these tools.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

And I think behind them there's still of course some commonalities and you could define that in the framework for sure. And it would be useful enough already, but well it would be insightful, not useful I think. You would need to get the sub levels in there as well. Okay. Yeah. But I like the idea actually.

Researcher

The next one is identify scope and limitations. So what does the framework cover? What doesn't it cover? And where in the process of the game should the framework be used?

Participant

Yeah, I love that. That's very important. That's very important. Also to say very explicitly this framework does not cover these things, but you can read about them here or could still be relevant there or yeah, this is important.

Researcher

It's a personal frustration that I made that criteria.

Participant

Good. I like it.

Researcher

And then validated.

Participant

Validated.

Researcher

Is it proven to be effective and possibly is there research back in this framework?

Participant

Yeah, it's nice to do that, but I think in the end validation is mostly relevant to the actual game you design with the framework. And you know, the framework itself, yes, of course, it should have some kind of validation.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

But you don't have to, you know, you can go nuts on validation, especially if you're a scientist, you know, coming from a certain background. I wouldn't go overboard on validating the framework in that respect, because what's the most, what's the, what's the goal of the framework is that it leads to a serious game. And does the framework guarantee that the serious game is valid and effective that comes out of that use of the framework? I don't think you'd have to stake that claim because that's not the goal of the framework.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

That's still up to you to then research after applying the framework leading to a game. Maybe then start to apply with your target audience. I would, I would feel it's stupid. Let me just put it bluntly. I would feel stupid if someone were to come up to you or anyone else saying this framework is shit because the game that I developed out of it didn't do what I thought it would do. That would be stupid. So that's why I put it here.

Researcher

Okay. So. Give you a blank one. So looking at the Q-Sort model in front of you, there are three open spaces, but if we briefly ignore that it's like one 0 and two -1s open, what criteria do you think are currently not covered but should be covered?

Participant

Maybe something, ah, that's the nice thing, the smart thing about the use of these terms, you can think of all sorts of things that fit under these terms. You can think of, just if I were to think of frameworks, right? Okay. It's something that's written up sometimes. Visualized and maybe a flowchart or some kind of diagram. Yeah, okay, then you're talking about something specific with an user-use and understanding. If it's cards that you're picking and facing, yeah, ease of use, okay. The scope, limitations, framing in whatever you're reading to explain the framework. Effective, yeah. It comes from somewhere. (…) I can't think of anything about the structure of the framework. (…) Yeah, I mean, I could use different wording to explain some of the things I just covered. I don't think that's necessary. So this is good. I'm happy with this right now. So maybe help you on your way.

Researcher

Co creation. So it helps communicate within the team. It kind of also serves as a communication tool in a way.

Participant

I didn't think about that because that doesn't necessarily say for me really clearly that's a structuring of the framework. Just how you choose to apply the framework in a group. Okay, sure. I would fill up this final middle slot with that then. It seems a bit more than just structuring the framework. (…) But why not? Because, you know, in that sense, I guess you could also fit under that header things like team composition, so disciplines covered in your design team. Yeah, fair enough. Fair enough. That's something the framework could at least talk about. Yeah, it's funny. Some things seem a bit taken for granted at some point. Yeah, of course you need different kinds of disciplines. Yeah, but

why not make it explicit in the framework? Yeah. Yeah, you could then maybe also argue something about phases. Can I write that down?

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

Something about phases. Phases of design and development.

Researcher

In what way the phase of design is developed?

Particioant

Yeah, so think of a first phase of design and research. Iterative, you go through first ideas, first generic things of design and the research from which it comes. Thinking of the goals, the system that you're maybe representing the target audience. Then you've finished that. You go on to sort of a prototyping phase, prototyping and testing, you could call it. Again, iterations of developing and prototype, testing it out internally, testing it out with the target audience, going back to the drawing board, new prototype, maybe you already made a bunch of different prototypes at the beginning and test all of them with the team and with the target audience to see which one seems to work better. And then you can get into, especially if you have a real client that needs to sign off on something, you can really start the actual developments and apply it subsequently, validate it, maybe, or just evaluate those kinds of phases.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

Typically every phase being iterative. Simply because you can scrum everything, you can agile the hell out of everything. But at some point, especially since you're probably doing this with a client or someone who's paying the bill, they'll want some kind of a sign off to keep going to the next level until you finish product.

Researcher

And to maybe suggest another criteria, you mentioned that the phases are/should be iterative. What about the framework itself?

Participant

Hmm. (...) I'm not sure I understand.

Researcher

Should the framework be structured in such a way that it promotes iteration of the same framework? So do you go through it and then you have to go through it again?

Participant

Is this a gamified framework? Maybe.

Researcher

Could be a separate criterion.

Participant

No, I do like the practice what you preach element of that, right? That the framework itself helps you do the design in a certain way because it only fully (...) becomes available or whatever you want to call it once you do it that way. So it's not just something you can read, cards you can draw, but it's actually something that evolves with you as you go through the phases of design. That's interesting.

Researcher

And if you had to put a therm on that, how would you print that?

Participant

Hmm. Emergent? I don't know. Oh, you're doing your... racking my brain here. I'm racking my brain here. I don't know. Is it sort of or just in time kind of? (...) No. I'm thinking emergent. Emergent quality to the framework or something. No. Maybe scaffold it again. Maybe that's it.

Researcher

Yeah, so the game should be scaffolded and the framework as well.

Participant

Yeah, because it is also of course, I mean if you're going to argue, yeah, that's a very good point. I like it. You have good ideas. Scaffolded. If you're going to argue that a good experience is a scaffolded experience, then why wouldn't the experience of using a framework also not be scaffolded? But now I put it on -1. Maybe that's not what I want. Maybe it's (...) Yeah, it is on the other hand a little bit part of ease of use, isn't it? But okay, let's do that.

Researcher

In a way it's related, but according to you, if it's important enough, it can always be considered two criteria.

Participant

Maybe I would do this. Maybe I would do this. (...) Let me have a good look at this now. So we've bought a framework that is effective. You can at least uphold that this framework leads to a game, a serious board game, of a specific kind, I like that, with scope and limitations. When you work with a team, go through phases, scaffold it, maybe it should go back. Maybe it should go back to the end. The sense of ease of use for the design team is most important. They have to be willing to dig into it. Validated in the sense of. But up to a certain point, so it's not super super super important. Maybe this has to be it. Yeah, I think this has to be it.

Researcher

And then, because we talk about scaffolding and scaffolded a bit, if you had to define it, how would you do it?

Participant

Yeah, it's a metaphor, right?

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

So a good scientific definition doesn't hold up, but the metaphor is really You've made a scaffold, so to go up to the top of the building, you go from plane to plane, scaffold to scaffold, up to scaffold. So it's about making something daunting, especially if you were to present it as that, making something daunting, less daunting, making something difficult, less difficult, because you don't focus on the totality, you focus on the steps, the first step to get there, and the next step to get there.

Researcher

So in a way, it's breaking it down,

Participant

breaking it down and consciously choosing not to show the end goal or the end result, but to show this is what I need you to do right now. Good. Now you can do this. Good. Now you can do this. Good. Now you can do that. Look at where you've come.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

So you don't show this, a friend at all. You show this first step.

Researcher

And would that mean that at the end there's a sort of reflection? Do you need to be like, look at what you've done?

Participant

Maybe you don't need that. I think you don't need that per se. Yeah, it might be, it depends, I guess, on your target audience, whether that's an important part of the objectives. It might be, but if you just want people to feel like they achieved a lot, you probably don't need to make it explicit. They don't realize it themselves.

Researcher

Okay. If you're happy with that ranking,

Participant

Yeah

INTERVIEW

Researcher

Let me look at the notes I took from the survey.

Participant

Oh yeah.

Researcher

So, (…) you mentioned that you mostly use frameworks when you

Participant

Yeah, one way or another.

Researcher

Yeah, which ones? Can you like...

Participant

Well, I'm a big fan still of the classics. Richard Duke, I think his name is Vermeulen and Jacques Geurts. Ivo Wensler also worked a lot with Richard Duke. Yeah, I think it's fair to also say that Igor Mayer also now has a pretty important role to play in this publication. But he also draws heavily from the classics. I think he alsoI don't recall reading anything from them, but he also often also mentions Jacques Phoenix. So there's an interesting mix in thatIn those classics there's an interesting mix of Americans and Dutchmen that found each other in the 70s for some reason.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

And (…) I think (…) No, those classics I liked. There's some publications, books and articles that came out from that era that I still like. And also, you know, people picked up and made their own through the decades. I worked with a guy back in Delft, Casper Harteveld. He made his own triadic game design model, I'm sure you've heard about.

Researcher

Yes, I believe Igor was his mentor.

Participant

Yeah, he was his supervisor. And there's been people who basically took the same approach at roughly the same times without necessarily knowing each other. There's always in these kinds of fields, you know, the sort of holy trinities and easy two by two diagrams lead people to all sorts of little diagrams, frameworks, whatever you want to call it, to explain what happens when you start to dig into serious game design.

Researcher

Yeah. And are all of these serious game design or is it game design in general?

Participant

No, these people I've been talking about right now are really simulation and serious games people. Yeah, not entertainment game design, but I'll think a bit later. In the 90s and the 2000s, people like, well you mentioned Jesse Shell, we've got Raph Koster on the day of all of it as well. Katie Statenman and Eric Zimmerman, huge Bible rules of play that they wrote. (…) Yeah, and I'm also thinking of Ian kogost maybe? Although he was a much more philosopher. I think I remember him from conferences where he gave keynote speeches. He always liked to present himself as a game designer, but I always found him more of a philosopher. You do notice over the decades that this notion of providing frameworks or tools, supports to game design, entertainment or serious game

design, that whole idea of course is vague enough to approach it from a whole sorts of disciplines.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

People that come from pure simulation then start to think about how can we make those simulations actually playable. People who come from psychology and go nuts on the idea of how can we get people into the state of flow.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

People who come from, yeah, just software engineering for instance, and start to step out from there and to look at the experiences they design, human-computer interaction and all that kind of stuff. Psychological in a way, so not just that. Anyway, you start to see that there's lots of commonalities I think in the end. When you really look at the resulting frameworks tools, whatever, there's lots of things that they share. But you do always see, or at least you can appreciate, where it's come from and then where the differences are. If you look at the people who made them. I'm babbling, stop me, continue.

Researcher

From the data you filled in the survey, it seems to be that your career is 100% educational in serious games.

Participant

So far, yeah. Yeah, since 2007. Yeah, okay, 100% main north because my PhD wasn't about serious game design. My PhD was about how people organize themselves when they play multiplayer online games.

Researcher

Yeah.Okay. And then in the team structure question, you mentioned that there is a step considered training, which is kind of towards the end of the process.

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

What kind of training? Yeah. The theme is a training a moderator.

Participant

Mostly training the moderator. So the thing there are people other people than ourselves who will take the game and make sure it's played. And that could be the client. If there's if this is really a project that has a clear client, it could also just be someone else entirely that's just super interested and wants to go nuts with the game. But yeah, there's always some kind of moderator facilitated training involved in the project.

Researcher

Maybe to link it to the criteria.

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

The moderator, is there like certain limitations to it or something to keep in mind? For example, should it be somebody close to the client? Should it be somebody independent? Does it not matter?

Participant

Well, if I think, I think. No, I have no research to back it up whatsoever, but I think if you're. MSP challenge again, board game, especially the board game, I wasn't, I was, I was mostly involved in the research and the actual facilitation of the board game.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

You could call that part of the design team. You could argue that small at all part of the design team. But anyway, I've been involved there. And what I liked about the success of the board game is that it's been handed over to people who are a part of one way or another, are part of the MSP community, the maritime spatial planning community.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

So it's not some consultant has no clue what MSP is and just goes somewhere. And says, I just game would you like to play? Here's my bill. Right. It's part of the community. It's been played by the community. I think that's important that the moderator is accepted and seen and respected by the players as part of the community. It's just some external bozo. I think this happens a lot with simulation games. Representing something very complex. A moderator is ideally someone from that community.

Researcher

Okay. All right. That are all my questions. I don't know if you want to make a closing statement or something.

Participant

No. This is great.

Researcher

Okay. Then I would like to thank you for your time. Thank you for the interview.

ANON DATA 04

Fields: Research

ID-Codes

- Participant
- Researcher
- // observational notes
- [comments] e.g. SBG = Serious Board Games

SURVEY

Performed:	09 April 2024

Do you have experience with designing serious games? (Serious Board Games, Serious Digital Games, or both)
Yes, serious board games

Introduction Questions
How many digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
0
How many serious digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (serious Games)
0
How many board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
3-5
How many serious board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Serious Games)
3-5

Substantive Questions
Do you usually design/develop these serious games with multiple people in a team, or alone?
Mostly in a team

Substantive Questions – Team
What is your team like? Any specific team structure? (E.g. 1 game designer, 2 programmers and a dedicated playtester)
Depends on the game. Normally I dive into the content. Kevin develops most of the game dynamics. I make sure they still fit reality. I do the majority of Client contact, the after discussion and facilitation of the game.
Is there a structure when working with multiple people to design these board games?
I coordinate, do the research, another builds the prototype and another the designs.

If hypothetically you would have to design a game alone, how would your process change? In what way?

I would have to do it all myself which I did in the past and it was fine but using the strengths of others often results in better games.

Substantive Questions – Framework

When designing a serious (board) game, what are the steps you take in your current design process?

- **Client intake**
- **Playtest and example with the client**
- **Content research**
- **Developing prototype**
- **Improving the prototype in playtests. Often around 10 iterations**
- **Develop an introduction and after discussion**
- **Play prototype with clients**
- **Scope for art types. Often three styles. Choose one**
- **Produce the game**
- **Hand over to the client**

Do you use any frameworks, templates or guidelines for this?
Half the time

Frameworks

Who created the framework?
Externally created, adapted internally
To what extent is the framework documented?
Partly documented
In case the framework is documented, how specific or generalised is it?
Documentation specific to a project
From your experience, what do you think is currently improvable from the process?
To be honest, we have quite a good team that can produce good games very fast. Pretty much always work with the same people and we have very complimentary skillsets. What we often see is that clients struggle with facilitating the game after the handover because they are not that experienced. Despite an extensive manual and a training session. Its just something you have to get over with I think but the is often a bottleneck.

Background in the field

What was your prior education and the institute that you studied at before joining the industry?
[Redacted]
Have you spent time (for studies or work) in your career away from your cultural background? If so, what cultural region and how long (in years) did you spend there?
3.5 years in Tsjaad, 3*.05 in Kenya I've bin to 36 countries so far for holidays or work

How many years of professional work experience do you have designing games? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
3-5 years
How many of those years have you been designing serious games? (Serious Games)
3-5 years
If you had to give an estimate percentage, how much of that time would you say was spent on serious board games?
4 hours a week?
How would you describe your current work position?
Research and digital reality coordinator

Outro
What part of the design would you like to be further documented/researched?
A method to document the effect of the game

Interview – Warm-up

0:21

Researcher

How are you doing?

0:25

Participant

I'm doing well, it's pretty busy morning and yeah as usual.

0:32

Researcher

Okay, alright. Let's see. I'm quickly double checking if everything on my setup is set up correctly. Looks to be fine. Alright. Well, let me start off with saying thank you for taking the time to participate in my research. And we planned in an hour, is that like a strict one hour? Can it run out a little bit?

0:58

Participant

If it run out a little bit, that's no problem.

1:01

Researcher

Okay, just so I know at what kind of pace I should go through. Okay. (…) Let's start off with a few introduction questions. So I already looked at the survey answers that you send in and I'll come back to those at a later point in the interview. But would you say that the serious games that you've worked on, that those could be classified as like educational serious games?

1:30

Participant

My motto is that I don't want to build a wealth for rich people. I want to build games that matter. So if it's only cool to build something, I'm not that interesting. So most of them have an educational purpose to teach them about big complicated complex concepts and then make it, yeah, people will let them almost experience intuitively like what it means to be in a certain situation.

1:58

Researcher

Okay. And I've seen it on the cradle website, for example, you are also the contact person for the Zero Hunger project.

2:07

Participant

Yeah

2:09

Researcher

What is your involvement with the workshops of the serious games?

2:14

Participant

What do you mean with workshops? Like if you organize them, who's facilitating them?

2:20

Researcher

Yeah. So facilitating, for example, if you take the Zero Hunger game, I saw pictures from I think like the ground floor here at the campus that people were playing it.

2:28

Participant

Yeah. I've been facilitating games since I was 18. It was actually my student side job. I did a lot for the climate game for persectivity might also be nice to speak with them about games and board games. So I've hosted more than 60 sessions, I think. I feel pretty confident with hosting sessions. I'm a comfortable speaker. I'm pretty good at making nice presentations up front. Really think out what are the learning goals? How do we get them there? How do we do this in a bit interactive manner? And also how do you get people out of their comfort zone? Yeah. So my style of facilitating would be a little bit teasing as well. I like to tease people a little bit out of their comfort zone and confront them with their own behavior and what you're saying.

3:13

Researcher

All right. Then quickly, two little key terms on this research. And I would like to ask you what your definition is and I'll give the definition under which this research uses them. So for the first key term is like serious game. What's your perspective on serious game and how would you define that?

3:31

Participant

For it to be a game, it has to be fun. If it's not fun, you probably didn't develop a game. But if it's only fun, then what's its purpose for society? So serious game needs to be fun. Preferably educational, teach them something or like a big concept. How to do certain things. Teach them what are the buttons of the mechanism that you could turn to change something.

4:11

Researcher

The definition that this research uses for serious game is that serious game is a game that is intentionally designed with the purpose of something more than entertainment. For example, learning skill acquisition, something along the lines.

4:28

Participant

Pretty much in the same direction as my definition. Mine is a bit less clean than this one.

4:38

Researcher

That's as to be expected of research definitions that I had printed out. (...) Then the second key term for my research is the term framework. What kind of definition would you give for that?

4:58

Participant

Framework can mean anything in any context. So it really depends on the context. So it can be a framework on how to develop a game from start to finish. And then think about the intake that you have. It can be defining the variable space on literature studies, which we normally do. Build this interacting mechanism, gamify it to iterations. Then if you think this is good enough, test it with your client. If they like it, do some last rounds

of perfection and make it look pretty. Preferably host a lot more game sessions and validate the results and write a report about it.

5:34

Researcher

The definition that this research uses for framework is very broad in that aspect as well. And it's just defined as a system of rules and ideas that are used to plan or decide something.

5:57

Participant

Okay

5:58

Researcher

So it's very broad and general.

6:03

Participant

plan or decide something. Like how vague do you want it to be.

6:11

Researcher

To apply it to what this research is about, I'll give a quick introduction. I'm not sure if you were able to attend any of my cradle presentations so far?

6:22

Participant

Unfortunately I wasn't, last Wednesday I really wanted to but I had to be in Eindhoven for a groeifonds meeting. So I haven't seen them.

6:31

Researcher

That's fine. So the research is about a design framework for serious board games. So kind of like a sort of set of guidelines that can help you in the process. And what criteria do experts find important for that?

6:42

Participant

Okay

6:45

Researcher

I would also like to mention I have papers scattered all around here with various information. So I'll be looking around and taking notes. You don't have to wait for me. You can just go at your own pace and explain your opinions. Alright. Then I will send you the link to the Miro board. I'll do it through the chat of the meeting. (...) If it sends, yeah.

7:43

Participant

Using a little bit of a Q-Method here.

7:46

Researcher

Yeah, Q-Sort method, yes.

7:48

Participant

I did a Q-Sort myself as well on Urban Digital Twins. So then you were also influenced by Igor Mayer.

7:57

Researcher

In a way, I had a quick discussion with him, but my supervisors for this project are Kevin Hutchinson and Thomas Buijtenweg. So those were the biggest influence. So you are familiar with Q-Sorting, but I'll give a quick introduction just to make sure that every participant has like an even playing field in a way or the same information that they got. So with Q-Sorting, I will give you criteria on the little card, which will be here on the side. And then I'll give you the definition of what this research sees within this term and a bit of an example. And then you can place them within the Q-Sort model. The criteria can be placed in there. It is not really about (…) the score that a certain criteria gets. It's more about the relative score compared to other criteria.

8:50

Participant

Yeah.

8:52

Researcher

I will be giving them to you one by one. And at the end, I will also ask you if you would like to rearrange the criteria that were given.

9:02

Participant

Can I also do that in between?

9:05

Researcher

Yes, you can rearrange them, but at the end I'll also give you the opportunity to completely rearrange stuff if you want to.

9:07

Participant

Okay

QSORT – CONTENT CRITERIA

Performed:	12 April 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Set precise and measurable goals	Motivation	Venue	Social elements	Essential experience
	Duration	Fun	Content analysis	
		Options to simulate certain steps		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

- Options to simulate certain steps
- Content analysis

Qsort evolution

Set precise and measurable goals: -1
Venue: 0
Social elements: +1
Fun: +1
Essential experience: +1, Fun: 0
Motivation: -1

Options to simulate certain steps: 0
Content analysis: +1, Essential experience: +2
Duration: -1, Set precise and measurable goals: -2

No re-arrangements at the end

QSort Transcription

Researcher
So the first Q-sort we will be doing is on the content criteria of a framework, with this I mean that what should the framework cover, and it's mostly aimed towards the game that results from it. So content of the game.
Participant
Okay.
Researcher
Okay. I don't know if there are any more questions before we start with Q-sorting.
Participant
No, it's clear to me.
Researcher
Okay. All right. So yeah, the first criteria set precise and measurable goals. The definition that I gave for this was kind of like what should the player achieve by playing this game? What should they learn? And how should they have been transformed in a way?

Participant

Yeah, I already placed it.

Researcher

Mhm. A -1. Why do you give it that score?

Participant

Well one my personal experiences is that the learning goals become quite obvious after you facilitated the game once or twice. And they might be different to what you see as the definition upfront. Since a lot of these learning goals are really social, they're also quite hard to measure. So if all groups are saying sort of the same things, then they learn something. If this is exactly measurable, that's very hard because they try to quantify something quite complex. And I don't think that's the most important thing.

Researcher

Okay. All right. (...) The second criteria I have, venue. What does that mean? How should the game be set up? In what kind of space? What would the configuration of the game be and are there limitations due to equipment?

Participant

Yeah, place it in the middle.

Researcher

Okay. At 0. Would you care to elaborate on that choice?

Participant

Yeah. You have to make quite a lot of decisions on how do you also make it affordable to produce this game. So it's mostly in the production of it. Venue is not that often a big issue. But if you always need a very big room where people can run around, then you might have a very nice game that works perfectly. But it's hardly ever been played. Same as you can quite easily add other objects. But I mean, you also need to produce them. And they also therefore are raising costs. So these are things that I take into consideration from the start. (...) it's not the most important thing.

Researcher

Okay. For the next criteria, I have social elements. So what kind of social elements will be in the game? Some examples given are like none, teamwork or like discussions.

Participant

Yeah, very important.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

I really believe that most of the learning happens within the group. And the knowledge that is gained within the group and discussions that people have about it. So I also don't try to tell them this is what you see. This is what it is. I really want the group to figure it out themselves. What it means that something is the way it is in the game. And that's also my style of questioning them. Like, don't give them the answer, but ask them in the right direction. Give them questions in the right direction for them to figure out.

Researcher

Yeah. You said it's very important, but you give it a +1 not a +2. Is there a reason that it's...

Participant

It depends on the other cards that are going to come. There's a good chance it will end up in the most right corner, but I don't know yet.

Researcher

All right.

Participant

I filled in quite a couple of Q-sorts, so I know you just started in the middle and moved from there.

Researcher

Okay. For the next criteria, I have fun. So how will the game be fun? And kind of the example given is like if the game is not fun, then why choose a game experience?

Participant

If it's not fun, it's not a game. So if you build something that isn't fun, you didn't build a serious game. And that's very important. Then you are doing something else.

Researcher

Okay. And (...) If I may try something out. So you are on the positive side and you indeed kind of agree or think in the same way as the example of like, oh, it's a gamified experience. It should be fun in a way otherwise why have a game for it experience at all. If you were to be in the shoes or kind of try and see the perspective of people who would like put as us -2, for example, what kind of argument would you say those people would have?

Participant

I think it's more of a definition question. For me, it's very important that for it to be a game, it has to be fun. It doesn't mean that if it's not fun, it's something bad, it could be amazing, could be a great educational tool. But it's probably not a game you developed. So it's a very close definition that I have of a game. And it doesn't mean that it's a bad thing if it isn't fun and just don't think it's a game. And therefore, if you talk about framework for development of serious games. Yeah, it's crucial.

Researcher

Yeah. Okay. (...) Next one is essential experience. For this is like what game experience should the player have? What feelings should they have while playing it? Some examples are to feel powerful, to feel powerless, to maybe feel like they're a part of a minority. (...) Okay. So you place that plus one and you move one down one row.

Participant

The reason for that is for me, this is very close to what that I find social elements important because this is indeed what I hoped that will occur. I come from a research background in which you write papers. So you spend half a year to write a publication and twenty people read it if you're lucky. And then I came to the conclusion like these numbers doesn't really make people feel something in games do have that ability. So if you want to make impact, it's very important to combine research with making people feel something in order to create any change because I don't think we're rational beings. I think we act a lot upon emotions. And serious games can have a very positive contribution to that. I think my work becomes more impactful with my work with serious games.

Researcher

Mhm. Okay. (...) Then I have motivation. How can a game motivate the player and how can a game use that motivation?

Participant

What do you mean, motivation? Motivation to do what?

Researcher

Motivation to take action, to take on a certain role. Motivate the player to maybe take the game even serious in a way.

Participant

Yeah, I place it there for the reason that my experience, if you develop the good game, people just love it and start working on it. I don't think there are a lot of rules that can say, if you do this, this and that, people will be motivated because you don't know who you have in your group. There is a chance some people just don't like it, whatever you do about it, because they really don't like games. Don't bother too much about it. You could even be one to the left, depending on the other parts that are coming. So, least of my worries. A game has to be good.

Researcher

Right. Then now you've had six of the nine criteria. So now I will give the floor to you. I will give you blank cards. I do have suggestions ready in case there's some struggle, but I would like to ask you to define criteria that currently are not in there and that you still find important and then to place them.

Participant

So I wrote down options to simulate certain steps. If I look at a framework, we read a lot about it, we know how it should work in real life. Then we try to see if you can mimic this in a game and that's always figuring it out. And one of the risks that you see, that people often come back to the same solution because that's their style of game making and therefore you start to get games that look quite a bit like each other. So, to get ideas of how to solve certain things could be interesting. That would be something that I would look for if I look up a framework.

Researcher

Okay. So that explains the criteria and what explains the placement of the middle, the 0 column.

Participant

Lot of cards, could be that I'm moving them, but I really think that the ones on the right are more important and the ones on the left are less important.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

Okay, I should come up with something else. (...) I think we should think about the names of the cards. (...) So, I wrote down content analysis. I think this is often missed by a lot of game designers that they don't really know how the complex issue is working. You need to understand how it works. Otherwise, you can have a very nice game, but it's not mimicking reality. So, I think assisting game designers with a framework in a way to really cross this complexity, how to do that step by step could be helpful.

Researcher

And what is the very important part of it? Because I heard a few things in your definition, for example, like realism. Is it very important that the game is realistic, that it simulates reality?

Participant

Well, if you can develop an awesome game with learning outcomes that might be your own learning outcomes for what you actually tried to explain. And that doesn't make the game bad, it doesn't make learning outcome bad, it makes the design of the game and

your content analysis on forehand bad. Or interactions just doesn't make sense. For me also, like if something should work in the real world and it doesn't work like that in the game. And I play it and explain me why the game is wrong and also explain me how it could be mimicked. I tend to follow their suggestion, even in the game, because that's where a lot of learning has happened. Someone thought about the problem, came up with a good solution and said, okay, this is what should happen. That's the highest level of learning. And it also means often that we didn't do our homework properly enough if it is a very new thing. So always leave this room for new rules in as long as it doesn't break the game. That's up for the game leader to decide. But preferably you don't end up in a situation that you already did your homework well enough and that all the simulations are, the right things are influencing the right things.

Researcher

Okay

Participant

You have a suggestions for this correct?

Researcher

Yeah, let's see. (...) Let's take this suggestion. Duration. So this is about the time. So how long should the game in general be? How long should like specific mechanics be certain steps of the game?

Participant

So I moved set precise and measurable goals completely to the left for the reason I explained before. Duration is important though. I do think the other ones are important. I think it's more important the motivation. Yeah, it's a bit closer related to venue, but I think fun and options to simulate certain steps is more important. So if I had the option it would be at 0 and motivation would be alone and -1.

Researcher

Okay. would you like to rearrange your final answer?

Participant

No.

Researcher

Okay.

QSORT – META CRITERIA

Performed:	12 April 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Co-creation	Validated	Ease of use	Simulates creativity	Effectiveness
	Self-explanatory	Specific	Identify scope & limitations	
		Industry independent		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

/

Qsort evolution

self-explanatory: +1
effectiveness: +2
ease of use: 0
specific: +1
identify scope & limitations: +1, self explanatory: 0
validated: -1

industry independent: 0
co-creation: -2
stimulates creativity: +1, self explanatory: -1, specific: 0

QSort Transcription

Researcher

Then I will move over to the right side for the next Q-sort. So this one is about meta criteria, so this is purely looking at the structure of the framework, how it is set up, how it is built, and the content for that, and the criteria for that. (...) So the first one I have is self-explanatory.

Participant

My first comment on this question is there is no one way to do it. There are multiple good ways, so also feel the freedom to do it in a way that suits you. Because what works perfectly for 20 people might not work that well for another 15 people. It doesn't mean that it's a bad structure, it just means people read and learn in a different ways. But preferably self-explanatory, but it also depends a bit on the complexity. Very complex issues are often not self-explanatory.

Researcher

Mhm, to also kind of gives the definition that this research uses. It's like the framework holds all the information, no external sources are required to use that framework in a sense it is like pick up and use.

Participant

Yeah, preferably it does.

Researcher

Okay, all right. And if we try the simulation of perspectives again, let's put ourselves in the shoes of somebody that would place it at -2.

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

What would you say their argumentation is for that?

Participant

Some stuff is very complex and just not self-explanatory. It doesn't matter how you try to explain it. For a lot of things, people really need to put in the effort to learn something. That's one of the reasons people are not reading anymore. Because it's effort. Until you can see it easier because you do it a lot.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

And I do agree with that to a big extent.

Researcher

Second one is effectiveness. Does the framework help the designer with the design process?

Participant

Yeah, if it is not effective, then why bother?

Researcher

Yeah, Okay. Then the third one is ease of use. For this, it is meant that covers the basics and the seemingly obvious. So there are no assumptions made on the knowledge that's the user of the framework has.

Participant

It's very dependent on who is reading the material. On who is using the framework. So for some people, it might be very easy because you already know a lot of the steps compared to bit like cooking. But I think games are a bit like cooking. That's two words together. Some people are pretty good cooks because they have a lot of experience. And they read two lines and know what to do. And others really need to follow by the letter and still end up with a least, not as good dish.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

It's just how it is.

Researcher

The next one, (…) you have a choice. So generic or specific. I'll explain them and then I'll allow you to choose which one you would like to place. It is on the level of the framework on what kind of category of games it should cover. So for example, generic or broad would be like series games and specific would an example be like simulation based series board games. It's like very narrowed down to a type of game.

Participant

Can you explain it again?

Researcher

So you have like generic, which would be like series games as a whole, all of them. And that information and a specific is like serious simulation based series board games, for

example, it could be different categories, but it's kind of like the axis that we're playing with.

Participant

Okay, I think it should be specific and not generic because if it's there's no one message that works everywhere. And the more you take it and more narrowed your audience is, the more helpful it is for that specific audience. And generic manuals are very easy to find. You can ask ChatGPT to write you a generic manual. You're probably going to get very generic answers. It's not going to be much helpful. So I would go for specific.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

But in terms of my answer, if I put generic down, and I put it at -2 then I have more room to use the other side. Would that work aswell?

Researcher

Well, let's go with specific then. Since that's your preference.

Participant

Yeah, It might be difficult to analyze this if you give people choice.

Researcher

It is the Q-sorting is one point of data, but the opinion that they have is like very rich data that will be used for most conclusions.

Participant

Yeah, that's how we do this as well. But it might be very difficult to analyze it. Are you going to do an inverted factor analysis?

Researcher

I am afraid that I don't know what is meant with inverted factor analysis.

Participant

That is the statistical analysis of this Q-sort. And if you give people choice into questions, then it doesn't work because they're not identical. You can't place them anymore than cross normal distribution as you try to do here. So if people choice is going to make it more difficult to do the quantative analysis part of your study.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

Am I the first interviewee or do you have still time to change it?

Researcher

You are currently the second excluding the test runs. But a simple fix for this would be that this criteria will not be compared with the rest, but it would be compared with the blank criteria, for example. Because those are also not the same for every single participant.

Participant

Do you know how the first one made your choice in generic or specified? Because if details are specified, you can make a choice now and make your life a lot easier. (…) But you can look at that later.

Researcher

Specific, yeah.

Participant

Then I would skip to generic one.

Researcher

Then one more question I have regarding generic and specific. If we think about a framework, so let's say it would be a multi-framework kind of setup with the base being generic and then layers on top that are specific. What is your opinion on such kind of framework model?

Participant

And that's what is set with this post-it.

Researcher

So that is unrelated.

Participant

So you mean use a generic basis with some specified modules to make it more applicable to which to try to do. (...) Theoretically, everything can work. So it might be an option. It has to be (...) Then the reader must make very easy, must grab a very good understanding of which choice it's making and which way to look for. So maybe a bit of an intake and then give them a tailor made action list. You could do that with a quick survey in front and then really select modules out of your personalized game development framework structure. That's something that could work.

Researcher

Okay. And then we'll come to this card, this criteria. So to identify scope limitations for this, it is meant that what does the framework cover and where in the process should it be used?

Participant

Should be used in the first page. There should be a paragraph. I'm mentioning the scope and limitations of the study and reports because if people say, okay, this is not fitting what I tried to do, then they can choose not to read it or continue reading. You don't want to figure this out after reading 30 pages that are irrelevant for you. (...) So it should at least be in the linear on the first page, and then there might be an entire chapter later on, but it should be mentioned on the first page.

Researcher

I definitely agree because since there are no general criteria for framework for serious games, these criteria compared to the previous ones are made up for this research. And we're kind of testing this. And this specific criteria also comes from personal frustration with indeed reading half a model to realize it's not useful.

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

The next one I have validated. Is it proven to be effective and is there research backing that framework? Possibly.

Participant

Okay. (...) You're still selecting it so I can't move it

Researcher

There you go

Participant

How do you validate it? That's very hard to do. Like we develop 10 games with this framework and they are all nice games and then your framework is awesome? Or would it just be that you are a very good game designer. (...) It's very hard to distinguish what parts of the framework help developing the game because some could just be artistic

expression that work really well, a gut feel, and some parts could be really heavily dependent on structure. And distinguishing this is very hard there for also validated structure. It doesn't really... Like how do you validate it? So what's the meaning and the worth of saying it's validated?

Researcher

Yeah. (...) Then we go once again to the blank criteria cards. I also have suggestions prepared for these as well.

Participant

Let's go with suggestions.

Researcher

First one that I have is industry independent so that it is not dependent on the field or the topic that the serious game is covering.

Participant

So you could use this framework from multiple industries. That would be nice.

Researcher

Okay. You moved it from -1 to 0. Is there a reason?

Participant

Yeah, because if you only make like serious games, it's really a little bit of a niche. If you... It's a niche within different fields. So if you make one niche that is only working for manufacturing industry, then you've spent probably a lot of work to develop a framework that's going to be used 10 times and that's it. Because it's still a niche. So there are for your other more generic framework like this is my to go to framework if I develop a game and then specify it depending on your needs before someone's observing.

Researcher

Okay. Did notice that you made the argumentation that a bit of a more generic framework would be nice so that it's multi-usable. How would you say that compares to your placement of the criteria of it being specific?

Participant

Yeah, it's what I said a little bit. So if you develop an entire framework that only works in one industry, it's not really the impact of it's going to be very little. So why bother? If you figure out how to make it fit specific needs, for example, with a short survey on the forehand and then get your tailor-made reports coming out based on your survey, it can be a bit both. Then you have the opportunity that you build an entire framework. It's actually going to be used. Also, if you use something that only works in one industry, it's not going to be effective. But if you use it, it should be specific enough to cover the needs that you have.

Researcher

Okay (...) Next one I have is co-creation. Does it help with communication within a team? Does it kind of also serve as a communication tool in the framework?

Participant

The problem with this one is that you use it in two different categories. So the ones within a team and the other one is for communication, communicating the tools within a team. And you immediately have a bit of co-creation if you're actually working together. And that is nice. I don't think the team should be, yeah, if you have 10 people, it's already a bit too much in my opinion. So I've created a work with quite specified teams and the team is normally like three or four people. And that works really well because then

everybody understands every part of it. Co-creation as a means for communication. Yeah, these are two different things.

Researcher

Mhm, and seeing it as like the framework should stimulate the team to communicate about like the design. Would that change the answer of the replacement?

Participant

That's very nice for the community. Could be nice for the user as well, but it's not a must.

Researcher

Okay, all right. Then I don't know if you have a suggestion?

Participant

I got no preference.

Researcher

Then for the last one, it stimulates creativity. So it helps the designer to think creatively and kind of like helps in this process.

Participant

How do you distinguish ease of use and self-explanatory? If something is self-explanatory, it's probably going to be easy to use, right? What's the distinction?

Researcher

So with self-explanatory, I mean that all the information required is within the framework. So rather than referring to external documents that you first have to go through before using the framework and ease of use covers all the basics. So it doesn't assume that you as the user know the basics of game design, for example.

Participant

Quite a shuffle there.

Researcher

Okay

Participant

I think it should stimulate creativity. I think that's pretty important because otherwise we're not going to use it. I think because it's a creative process. If limits your creativity, people are not going to like it and it's probably going to result in less, yeah, and not as good games. I think as specific and industry dependent are now combined because I think it should be a mix of it. Easy views, I think more important as self-explanatory. If you click on other links within documents, it's fine. For me, that's not a hassle. It can actually help to make nice condensed reports and people that want to look more into specific details use the links.

Researcher

Okay

INTERVIEW

Researcher

Okay, all right. Then to wrap it up, I have a few questions for a final interview.

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

So you mentioned in your survey that you use frameworks (...) and like about half the time you said and then that they are external and internally adapted.

Participant

Yeah, so you use the game design document something that Igor developed in TU Delft and brought it with him to BUas. It's something that in some projects is used as the backbone and with other ones you just start sketching and prototyping and then at certain points something cool happens. It's also really dependent on how good the team knows each other and everybody knows what to do. So at a certain moment you have covered that part and you can start free rolling. You don't really need to look at the document anymore because people know what to do what's expected of them and know how to work together and where the information is stored. And then it becomes more of a product document instead of the way to go to.

Researcher

Mhm, (...) With that, because you mentioned the framework that Igor made. Are there any others, maybe some frameworks that you would say that I should also know about?

Participant

To be honest, we don't use a lot of frameworks.

Researcher

Yeah, that's kind of the start of this research because Kevin mentioned to me that indeed cradle does not have frameworks for the creation of these games.

Participant

Yeah, it's a big part is Kevin. Kevin is making very good games really fast.

Researcher

Okay, I'll make sure he gets the message.

Participant

He knows, I tell him

Researcher

On the survey you also mentioned that you did not work on digital games. So does that mean that your experience within game design, game development is purely serious board games?

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

Then for your current process, I had a question about that because you mentioned that your second step is to play test with the client. But that is before making a prototype of your game. So what are you play testing at that point?

Participant

What we do normally is we have first talk with the client to say we're interested in a budget. Okay, that's great. Then we plan a session and then we normally play a game on the topic that already exists to give them a bit of an idea of what is currently available.

And what can we add to it? What are the elements that they like that they don't like? Because most people have limited experience with serious games and by first letting them experience something, it becomes a lot easier to get a bunch of great. This is what they like. This is what makes them feel energized and passionate about something. And these are the elements that just suck within this game. We can do better. So that's what I mean with it. So if a nice network of game developers, so I do a bit of Google search, first thing is always Google is does it already exist? And then if something in the right direction really exists, we play that. Yeah, so it's not the our own game that you played first time. It's a game you get from somewhere. And then we start developing prototypes. And then if you think it's good enough to show the client, you show the ugly version. And then after that, we are going to spend the money to make it a pretty.

Researcher

And is that playing of existing games? Is that purely limited to existing serious games? Or do you also take existing board games and then kind of be like, hey, these mechanics, and we will do this with it?

Participant

So far with clients, I was always able to find a serious board game. (...) If we find a very nice entertainment game and think this could already work, there's a chance that we might play it. But the difficulty in that is that you don't really get that fingerspitzengeful. And that feeling of this is what they like about it. And they show them that they are going to eat for example, like this is how it could work. And then they find it very hard to visualize. Okay, this is how this mechanic could come back in the question that I have. So I rather place here is getting this bit trash and not really fitting their scope. And I showed them what they actually want, then playing an entertaining game where they need a lot of fantasy to make it fit to their scope. And then show them this is how this mechanism could work. Because if they don't understand how the entertaining game could help them, it might be difficult to trust the process that we're actually on the right track.

Researcher

Okay, all right. And from your stuff is that process as you described it, it seems that the client is involved in the pre-production phase. And then nothing through the production and then at the end they get the game handed to them. Is that correct?

Participant

There are first we have an internal chat. We have a chat with them. Then we do the play test, we get like our list of needs. Then we start developing and I often give them updates, show them a bit of pictures in the meantime, a little chat. Hey, we did like the second play test was pretty fun start to come together. Don't really show them anything concrete. And then if we get the feeling again now we have something to be playing ugly version with them. And based on their feedback and their critiques, you make some adaptations. Preferably do some play tests to validate it with stakeholders. Yeah, the target group. And based on that we normally do some other annotation. And then we start to make it look pretty and hand it over and give them an entire handover document with all the files and everything and production guidelines and rules. And sometimes do a training session with them, train trainers and then it's theirs.

Researcher

Okay. (...) So for the question about the estimated time spend on serious board games you mentioned that you have like 3-5 years of experience within the field, and then you

also mentioned 4 hours a week. Is that 4 hours a week throughout those 3-5 years? Or does is fluctuate?

Participant

No it's in the last 2 years. I normally, coordinate around four to six projects. So this is just one of them.

Researcher

And then towards the end of the survey, you mentioned that for future research, it should look at the method to document the effect of the game. What specifically, like should it test like the learning capability of it or.

Participant

Well, that's something I'm curious about. Like, we normally develop a game and then you get the question like how good does it work? What are good methods to evaluate together? Nice list of suggestions like these are effective methods used in other publications to validate the effect of the games. That's something I would look at in the framework. You see, okay, now we build something to test it out how to easily set up an experiment, see how good it works. So that would be for me very valuable. (…) Yeah, and a bit of an understanding like what are others doing to validate their games. And they probably will find and not a lot of parties are really doing this. I would like to have a closer, better idea of what are the ones that are doing it and are doing it pretty, pretty good.

Researcher

Okay. That brings us to the end of this interview and methodology. I don't know if you have any closing remarks or comments you would like to make.

Participant

I think you are well prepared, so kudos for that. You're doing a good job. You're asking good questions. I would study the Q-Method a bit more, because otherwise you have the risk that you have very nice interviews and a rubbish Q. And that might be troublesome for you later on when you need to write a report. Then luckily you still have your interviews and it's a very nice way of interviewing. I really like it. I also want to go to tools as well. But the quantitative part helps you to structure and write a report. It's harder to go from qualitative and then add to quantitative details. So if we look at how can I make sure that the quantitative parts actually work properly. And I'm used to this basis. If you want I can send you a report we did on Q. Before I can also send you the handover document that you wrote for the Zero Hunger Game. And it's what I thought everything a client would need if they get it in the end. And these are probably also things that you want to cover in the framework.

Researcher

That would be nice.

Participant

I have it both English and in Dutch. I can send you both.

Researcher

Both will work. In case something is unclear I can always double check. With that I would like to thank you for your time to participate.

Participant

Thank you.

ANON DATA 05

Fields: Research

ID-Codes

- Participant
- Researcher
- // observational notes
- [comments] e.g. SBG = Serious Board Games

SURVEY

Performed:	11 April 2024

Do you have experience with designing serious games? (Serious Board Games, Serious Digital Games, or both)
Yes, both serious board and digital games

Introduction Questions

How many digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)

0

How many serious digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (serious Games)

3-5

How many board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)

0

How many serious board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Serious Games)

0

Substantive Questions

Do you usually design/develop these serious games with multiple people in a team, or alone?

Half in team, half alone

Substantive Questions – Team

What is your team like? Any specific team structure? (E.g. 1 game designer, 2 programmers and a dedicated playtester)

1 engineer, educationalist, coaches, 1 tester, 1 designer

Is there a structure when working with multiple people to design these board games?

Limited

If hypothetically you would have to design a game alone, how would your process change? In what way?

Speed would go up

Substantive Questions – Framework

When designing a serious (board) game, what are the steps you take in your current design process?

The intended (learning) outcomes, the interventions, IX/UI

Do you use any frameworks, templates or guidelines for this?

Mostly

Frameworks

Who created the framework?

Internal created

To what extent is the framework documented?

Partly documented

In case the framework is documented, how specific or generalised is it?

Documentation specific to a project

From your experience, what do you think is currently improvable from the process?

Risk that it depends solely on me

Background in the field

What was your prior education and the institute that you studied at before joining the industry?

[Redacted]

Have you spent time (for studies or work) in your career away from your cultural background? If so, what cultural region and how long (in years) did you spend there?

Ireland 1 year, Norway 2 months, all across Europe (when I was a consultant)

How many years of professional work experience do you have designing games? (Entertainment & Serious Games)

3-5

How many of those years have you been designing serious games? (Serious Games)

3-5

If you had to give an estimate percentage, how much of that time would you say was spent on serious board games?

limited

How would you describe your current work position?

Lecturer IT & logistics

Outro

What part of the design would you like to be further documented/researched?

/

Interview – Warm-up

Researcher

So thank you for participating in this interview.

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

To start off, have you been working on any recent projects that are kind of related to the research by chance?

Participant

Well, I'm quite familiar in the world of serious games. We're building the experience supply chain game, which is a game that students play here within the first year. But also some more serious games like simulation games regarding supply chain management. So, T-challenge. I just played T-challenge last week for a full week with students. I am certified in quite some games (…) in change. So the cool connection, triple connection, fresh connection, I don't know if you know them. Well, those are all related to my domain in logistics. And I also did quite some research regarding how can you use gamification elements or serious game elements in order to improve the acceptance of technology. So I published some parts there in Slovenia as well and I wrote a chapter together with Igor Mayer and Harald regarding serious games, so the bricks and the mortars of serious gaming.

Researcher

Before we get into the interview, I would like to ask what you think of the key terms of this research and I will also give the definition that this research uses. We took key terms being serious game and framework. So what is the definition that you use?

Participant

A serious game. Well, there is a clear distinction between serious game and gamification, right? For my point of view, because gamification says that you are going to use game elements in a non-gaming context. It could be an educational, it could be a work context, whatever. A serious game means that you have an end-to-end story from the beginning until the end where you actually have a storyline and finish at the end with a game. So there is a clear outcome. So it's not just using certain elements, but it's a full game from start to end. And the fact that it's a serious game means, at least from my point of view, is that there is a second goal there. So instead of just playing, having fun, it's also about developing certain skills, could be educational things, but it could also be work things, whatever. So it's not directly applied to education, it could be training, whatever. As long as there is a second goal, that the players are going to reach, a learning outcome basically.

Researcher

Yeah, The definition that the research uses is quite similar.

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

In a serious game, there are games which are intentionally designed for the purpose of some kind of learning or skill acquisition. And serious games are driven by educational goals rather than entertainment.

Participant

Yeah, well, and that's I think Sebastian Deterding, I'm not sure whether I'm correct, but he said also that educational limits to the field of education while learning a certain skill could also be a serious game. For example, in professional soccer, there are clubs that are actually playing serious games to improve the soccer skills. Just an example.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

So that's not in an educational setting. Or companies like Samsung are playing games to make sure that their warehouse operators are getting better and better and better. For example.

Researcher

Yeah for training and skill acquisition

Participant

Yeah, exactly. So, yeah, well, that's a definition thing, but is training the same as education? Well, could be different.

Researcher

Yeah, okay. And for a term framework, what is your understanding of that term?

Participant

Well, it's in the most, at least from my point of view, in the most simple way, it's a conceptual model that shows how you can simplify a situation by looking at the situation. Framework could be a step-by-step approach.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

So, like, there's a framework that says design signs, okay? We have a practical situation. We have a body of knowledge. And somewhere in between the practical situation has a problem. We want to fix that. And we want to use the body of knowledge there, but we also want to add knowledge to the body of knowledge. And add practical implications there. That's Hefner, for example. But it's a, for me, it's a simplified way of looking at the world in order to get structure there.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

But, yeah, that's not a scientific answer, but that's the most practical. I said most of the people use it as a step-by-step approach, or at least a structure, to make sure that people understand the steps that are involved in order to get somewhere.

Researcher

Mhm. So, for this research, it's very broad and a bit more nuanced. A system of rules and ideas that is used to plan or decide something.

Participant

Yeah, yeah it's the //same thing//

Researcher

//It's the same thing//, but it's very broad. Okay. Then, as a quick introduction to what this research is about.

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

So, I'm looking into design frameworks for serious games. And what criteria do experts find important on both the contents that it covers for the eventual game that comes out of it, as well as the structure of the framework itself?

Participant

Yeah, okay.

Researcher

And that will be done through ...

Participant

And you already did some literature research, and that's how you got some really nice articles, probably, already.

Researcher

Yes and no. When it comes to existing frameworks, I have not found any good ones for serious games. I found a lot for games in general.

Participant

Ah okay

Researcher

Serious games are harder to find.

Participant

There are some really nice articles in MES Quarley. You know, MES Quarley, I can actually give you some examples outside of this interview. Just walk with me and I'll show you. And those frameworks are rated as, well, the best articles there are so far, because they gave a really clear total overview of how it looks like. And it also gives a clear distinction between mechanics, dynamics, a system, the interactions within the system, et cetera. (...) But, yes, this is all more on a conceptual level, and the real frameworks for actually the step-by-step approaches there, how to do that, those are more linked to information technology. But I can also show you some interesting ones there that we're actually using.

Researcher

Yeah, I'm not familiar with those yet. I'll have to interview you.

Participant

Yeah, I'll show you, no problem. I don't have my laptop right now, but I can show you the ones that are my holy grails.

Researcher

Okay, all right. So yeah, then for the criteria we'll be covering today,

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

that as well, not a lot of research has shown like these are the criteria necessary. So that's kind of where this research comes to play. And it kind of like suggests some criteria and tests the importance of those.

Participant

Okay

Researcher

That will be done through Q-sorting. You already have one in front of you, so that is the first one.

Participant

Just so that every participant has the same level playing filed, I'll quickly explain Q-sorting. So like the model in front of you, I will give you criteria one by one, and then you have to place them. The important thing is it's not about giving the criteria per se a score, it's more about giving them importance relative to the others.

Researcher

Okay. Okay, so you start out with 0 and then can be -1, can be +1, and then can be -1, +1.

Participant

Can always start anywhere on the field. So I'll give you a criteria and can, for example, say this is for me, but the importance is on +2 compared to other criteria.

Researcher

Oh, that's nice. Do you have a pen for me? I've printed them out and I also have a pen for you.

Participant

Oh, I can put them all? Okay, so I don't have to write down. Okay, that's great.

Researcher

I will give you a criteria. I will also give a bit of an explanation on what I mean with that criteria. You can always mention how you use the different or if you disagree with something.

Participant

Yeah, clear.

Researcher

I would also like to ask you to kind of think out loud in a way. When you place it, kind of give the

Participant

arguments

Researcher

arguments on why it's placed there compared to others. And if you move things around, criteria around, also explain why it lets this all of a sudden become more or less important.

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

At the end, I will also give you the opportunity to rearrange your final answer. Okay. With that, are there any questions before we begin?

Participant

No.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

Let's begin.

QSORT – CONTENT CRITERIA

Performed:	12 April 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Resources needed	Design principles	Potential activities of the player	fun	Set precise and measurable goals
	venue	Motivation	Essential experience	
		Social elements		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

- Potential activities of the player (rules)
- Design principles
- Resources needed

Qsort evolution

Set precise and measurable goals: +1
Venue: -1
Social elements -2
Fun: -2, social elements -1, venue 0
Essential experience: +1, set precise and measurable goals: +2
Motivation: +1

Potential activities: -1
Design principles: 0
Resources needed: 0

Re-arrangements:
[Moved most cards off the model to come to the final result as shown above]

QSort Transcription

Researcher
Then the Q-sorting in front of you is about the content criteria. So these are the criteria regarding the content of the game that's eventually a result of using the framework.
Participant
Okay.
Researcher
Yeah. So the first one is to set precise and measurable goals. With this, it is meant that like what should the player achieve by playing this game? What should they learn and how should they have been transformed by playing this game?
Participant
Yes. Okay. So this is about the (…) outcome that they must achieve with this game, measurable goals.

Researcher

Yeah. So the framework helps you in the design process. It tackles this subject and eventually that ends up being a part of the game.

Participant

Well, it depends on, well, that's a strange one. It depends on the goals that you have with your game because a serious game can have more focus on the outcomes of the goals, so measurable goals. When you have a game, for example, in a warehouse environment of Samsung, well, it's all about measurable goals. But when you are in an educational setting, it could be that, well, the goal is a little bit of a direction, but I'll put it in +1 right now.

Researcher

Okay. So the second one is venue. How should the game be set up? In what kind of space should it be played? And what configuration and are there limitations due to equipment?

Participant

Oh, that's a really operational one. That's when the game is finished. What's the context that you should play? I'm going to put that because it's yes, it's part, but it's less, I think it's more adaptable to the operation. So I would put it in -1.

Researcher

Okay. So it is indeed a bit more operational one, the venue, but also it's part of the design

Participant

Yeah, totally. But you can, yeah, well, yeah, okay. Yes, it's part of, but it's the final phase.

Researcher

And then for the third one, social elements, what social elements will be in the game? For example, none, some teamwork or maybe just discussions individually?

Participant

Yeah, well, this is a more general one because you could also say what are the elements in the game? And social is just a sub element that could be there or couldn't be there. So that's it. I would put that in minus, well, even in -2. And it is important. Having said that, I think that the social, the fact that there are elements is more important than the fact that it's a social element.

Researcher

Yeah. The kind of idea behind it, I guess, is that with a lot of serious games, especially serious board games, it's in a sort of group environment that the game should be used. And that way, (...) maybe training like compared to each other, if you, if I may give an example. You have trainings for companies, let's say IKEA or something. And then the entire team has to play it. And then maybe the boss is a different role than the employee.

Participant

Yeah, so I think it's definitely a really important element. Social, the social part is also a really big element of acceptance of technology. So research shown that doing multiplayer challenges or whatever, it's a really important one. But it's so much implemented as a element itself that I'm wondering where it should be in a framework or just named as one of the elements.

Researcher

Okay. And I'm going to try something a bit different. Let's assume you were have to be, you were put in the shoes of someone that had the opposite opinion. That would place this on the +2. How would you criteria, how would you argument that choice?

Participant

I think, I think social elements are really important in serious games. Yeah. But it's a element and there's a lot of different elements. And the moment that you start naming social elements, then you also should name a lot of different other elements. And then the question is how simplified is your framework because then you're going to put a lot of things in the framework and it gets really complex. And in the end, you want to make it, you want to keep it as simple as possible.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

So I would say it's an elaboration on elements.

Researcher

Then the fourth one is fun. So how will the game be fun to play? Kind of the example would be like if not fun, then why is this a gamified experience or a game experience?

Participant

Yeah. So again, fun is like in the core of serious games. If you don't have fun, you don't play game.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

So it's a core element of the definition in my point of view of what a serious game should look like. Question again, if you want to have a framework, is this then a step in this framework? And I would say, well, it's again, it's something that is like a prerequisite that you should cover that. So I would propose that in the lowest one. Okay. When it comes to this framework, right? Not that it's not an important one in the serious games. Then I would post it like in the +2.

Researcher

Quickly as a side note to Q-sorting, it's (…) one criteria per square.

Participant

Oh, so do I have to move? Okay, then I'm going to move. No, no, that's okay. That's okay. Fun. I'm going to do it like, well, it's an (…) that is affected. So then I'm going to do it like this.

Researcher

Just makes it a lot //easier for the data analysis process later//

Participant

//Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, I get that. I get that.//

Researcher

Okay. The next one is about the essential experience. So what experience should the player have and kind of on the (…) topic of what feelings should they have while playing? Some examples are to feel powerful, to feel powerless, or to maybe even feel like they are part of like a minority.

Participant

Yeah, so talking about experience, this is just the experience in the storyline. And then I would say I put it between venue and measurable goal . Now, is this possible?

Researcher

That definitely looks possible. Yes.

Participant

Okay. Awesome.

Researcher

Good. Then for the motivation, the sixth one, motivation, how can a game motivate the player and how can the game use that motivation?

Participant

Yeah, this is the core of actually doing some actions. So motivation would be just below the goals. Like that.

Researcher

So, where, so to clean up the plus side of things.

Participant

Yeah. Number one, set precise and measurable goals. Number two, make sure that there is a clear motivation to reach the goals. Number three, what are the, the, the experience that the, that the player has to have in order to get the right motivation. Number four is then the venue. Number five are the elements, the social elements, which the elements are really important because it's part of the experience. And then the fun part is in the definition of serious games for, for my point of view.

Researcher

So currently then set the precise goals with the +2 //motivation and essential experience +1//

Participant

//Yeah, okay. So, so// like this and then.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Like that. Yeah. All right. Sorry. Yeah. Okay.

Researcher

No problem.

Participant

Okay.

Researcher

And then I'll give the floor to you. A blank card so you can identify a criteria that you currently find important, but it's not on the board yet. I do have prepared ones in case you get stuck.

Participant

Yeah. So we have the outcomes that we can measure. We have the motivation how to make people get into action in a game. We have the experience which basically also covers the actually possible actions that a player have. (…) But how's the, well, if you have the experience and you, so, so you have the, the, the real actions, right? So the, the, the activities. (…) Potential. (…) Which we are called plus rules. So I would say the potential activities, including the rules that a player has to, to, to, to get into that. So that's the, and I would say this is actually linked here to the elements. So I would put it there.

Researcher

And that is as in all the mechanics in the game? So the choice of the game?

Participant

Well, the, the, the, the dynamics of the game and the mechanics of the game. So a

combination of those two. Well, you can put them separately, but for, if I look at the, the conceptual level of the different things that are written here on the page, I would say put them together as potential activities.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

Okay. Just to get back the framework has the goal to.

Researcher

Okay. So the framework is to help you design and create like a serious game. In this case, it would kind of be about serious board games.

Participant

Yeah. So there should also be the design principles. (...) This is like even before all the elements that you have to put in the principles that link to the elements. This is, it feels a little bit more like you have to first have to do this and then you have to do that. So it's not the matter of importance anymore, but it feels a little bit more like a line.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

But at least design principles should be in there as definitely. If you want to design a game, you need design principles and that's not, you must do this, you must do that, but more the level of freedom that you have in order to design a game. So if you play soccer match, you know that you have a field of 50 by 100 and there is 90 minutes. And just to give you a clear outline of what are the, what is the level of freedom that I have for my design.

Researcher

And where would that be placed?

Participant

I'll put it in the middle. In the middle? Yep.

Researcher

And then for the last criteria.

Participant

Is it the framework to design until operational?

Researcher

It is to help design. So it would most likely be used in like a pre-production phase.

Participant

Yeah, but you already need to have a clear overview of your resources needed. Resources needed and resources. (...) I'm going to put that in the middle as well because this is, well, if you are going to design a game and you want to make it a success. Yes, you're looking at the outcomes. Yes, you're looking at the goals. But if you want the resources needed or no one can give you the resources, this game will not be designed.

Researcher

Right. Would you like to rearrange your final answer?

Participant

Yeah, well, when I started out with the first ones, I had the feeling that it's a more conceptual model and now I'm looking at it's more an elements of design. So this is really hard because the fun part, I'm still putting that as the lowest, but it should definitely be an element of a seriouss game. If there's no fun, it doesn't work.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

But the fun could also be part of your motivation. So the level of the different, I have a feeling that the conceptual level of different things here on the table could be a little bit different. So I'm going to accept it in the way it is right now.

Researcher

Mhm, all right. And if we then take a look at the elements of the game, so if you like switch it up for a bit. So now we're really thinking from the game point of view. If you said fun is then more important, how are they done?

Participant

If you said this should be a part of a serious game like that.

Researcher

Mhm Yeah. We went with that.

Participant

Is this possible? Yeah. (...) It should be like this one like there. And this one is like that. Mhm. Yeah.

Researcher

Okay. All right.

Participant

So still the measurable goals are the most important ones. You want to achieve something.

Researcher

Okay. I'm going to take a quick picture for a data analysis later on.

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

So I remember. All right.

QSORT – META CRITERIA

Performed:	12 April 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Co-creation	Specific	Ease of use	Industry independent	Identify scope and limitations
	validated	Self-explanatory	effectiveness	
		Can/how be validated		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

- Can/how be validated
  - When I'm using this framework, how can I measure the success of my framework?
  - Can it be validated? How can it be validated?

Qsort evolution

Self-explanatory: 0
Effectiveness: +2
Ease of use: +1
Specific: -1
Identify scope and limitations: +2, effectiveness: +1
Validated: -2

Can/how be validated: 0
Industry independent: +1, ease of use: 0
Co-creation: -2, validated: -1

QSort Transcription

Researcher
Okay, then I'll move that to the side and give you the next one. (...) Okay. So now the meta criteria are based on the structure of the framework itself.
Participant
Mhm
Researcher
So if we go with the first one, for example, self-explanatory, the framework holds all the information, no external sources are required to use the framework. So in a way it is pick up and use.
Participant
I'm going to put that in the middle because currently I have no idea what the other ones are. I think any framework should be so simple that it's self-explanatory. It doesn't mean that you don't need external resources in order to use the framework, but it means that you actually understand what steps are.

Researcher

The second one is effectiveness. Does the framework help the designer with the design process?

Participant

Yeah, if it doesn't help, it won't be used.

Researcher

The third one is ease of use.

Participant

This is more technology acceptance parts.

Researcher

So this one is meant that it covers a basic and seemingly obvious. Pretty much it makes no assumption of the experience level of the user.

Participant

Yeah, it's really important having said that. I think that the ease of use depends on the conceptual level of the user (...) always.

Researcher

The next one. So it's printed out as specific or generic, but that's how it's specific for example. So how specific should the framework be? In an example, the framework is made for specificly simulation based serious board games. Should it be very narrow to the field that it's using or should it be...

Participant

It's depending on the goal of the framework, but I would say make it more generic because if you make it more specific, it all of a sudden becomes a method.

Researcher

Then the fifth one is to identify scope and limitation. So what does the framework cover and where does the framework help in the process?

Participant

Yeah, that's even before the effectiveness, it should be really clear. It should be really clear. This is what it does and this is what it doesn't.

Researcher

Yeah, the sixth criteria is validated. Is the framework proven to be effective and is there research backing it?

Participant

Yeah, chicken and the egg story. The moment you create a new framework, you should first validate that and then say, hey, we need to validate more and more and more, but it's more some parts of the process. I would go for -2. It's really important, but it's more part of the process of creating a framework.

Researcher

Then back to the blank ones. You can make your own criteria or I have prepared one. In case you get stuck.

Participant

Yeah, I'm writing something down while I'm actually thinking. And it's not, I don't think my words are correct, but the question is how can it be measured? So, when I'm using this framework, how can I measure the success of my framework itself? (...) I'm going to put that on a 0. But it's not totally (...) You want to, you say validated. No, it's not, is it validated? It's, can it be validated? Should I write it like that then?

Researcher

Sure.

Participant

Can how be validated? (...) I think I'm going to keep it with this. Social influence, structured, yeah. Okay.

Researcher

Alright, then I have some suggested ones to fill it up.

Participant

Yeah, yeah

Researcher

Next one is industry independent. So, the framework is not dependent on the topic that you covered. So, for example, if you make a game for logistics, then the framework will not be, only for logistics, it will be for serious games in general, or not.

Participant

Well, that's the scope of the total research, so it depends if you want to have a really applied framework only for your industry, then I would say this is a serious gaming framework for the industry of logistics, but then the content could also be a little bit different. But if you want to generalize that, well, it's on top, because (...) But that's the goal of the research. That's the goal of, so there's no right or wrong there, as long as it should be clear within the scope. So this is directly connected to each other.

Researcher

So then some things would have to be moved down?

Participant

Ah, yes, yes, yes, yes. Like that. (...) Yes.

Researcher

The next criterion is co-creation. It helps with the communication within the team, and the framework also serves as a form of a communication tool.

Participant

Yes, it shouldn't be, it could be nice to have that, but it shouldn't be part of the structure. I guess.

Researcher

Are you happy with your final answer?

Participant

I'm happy.

INTERVIEW

Researcher

Okay, so that was the Q-sorting, now I still have a couple questions.

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

So looking at the survey that you filled in, there are a few answers that I would like to ask some elaborating questions on.

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

So from what I understand is that your experience is purely within board games and not the digital games?

Participant

No, actually it's different. Well, I have some experience in board games, but most of the games are actually physical games. They have the definition, if you run around in a building, right? You actually play a game on the soccer field. Is that a board game? Because there's a board definition? Or is that a game that is a physical game, but digitally noted? So most of the games that we design are supported by a digital system, where you can put in your (...) decisions that you make. And it actually creates data. So for example, we are playing in this block of games, they're creating their own company and they have a digital dashboard where all the parts of the company have to input data and it gives beta back. So we have a dashboard where does the live saying, hey, what is your customer satisfaction? Because they have to run around, bring the goods to the customers and they will be rated against whether they're on time. They're complete, the quality is right, and they have to buy goods at the suppliers, so they have to pay money. So there's a bank account. So the system itself, the engine there, for example, is totally digital, but the game itself is played in the physical world.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

The other hand is that we also play simulation games, serious simulation games in a digital world, where the only thing that the students have to do is make decisions, calculations, etc. And then we will calculate based on their decisions what the outcomes are in the world of supply chain on different fields. So that's a purely digital game. But I'm not familiar a lot with actually playing a board game like a Monopoly or a game like that. I have limited experience in that field.

Researcher

And is it true that the assumption that I made was that your experience is mostly in serious games rather than entertainment?

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

Structure to working with other people you mentioned limited.

Participant

Yeah. In the design phase.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Well, playing a game means that you will at least the implemented form here will be played with 100 students. And we have approximately 10 coaches walking around for a long time to guide them through the game. But the design part of this game, the technical design part, we do it with a limited group. So that means that there's some experts in the different fields that come together and say, hey, these should be the things that they touch upon, the subjects that they touch upon with this game. These are the Internet learning outcomes. And how can we make a technical system that actually serves these goals? And then we have an elite engineer most of the times in the experience that I have is that if you keep the lead, the engineering team small and the assignment for the engineer really clear that the speed will go up.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

But that's my experience.

Researcher

Is that also related to the answer that you gave for, for example, if hypothetically you would do it solo, you mentioned speed would go up. Is it because the team is so much smaller that the process would go fast?

Participant

Yes, because the lines are shorter and but again it depends. Well, if you create a fully digital game, the complexity of the actually engineering part is really high, right? So you need a team and you need to have some some some some some sprint planning to say, OK, which which use case are we going to implement this week, which use case are we going to implement that week? You make a lot of decisions there and you actually start sprinting until the end. But the moment that you say, well, basically it's one big sprint because the game is physically but it's it's supported by technique, then the system itself is smaller. And the experience that I have is that most of the games that we design or play are a combination of a physical game and a digital game. And the moment that you play it physically, you don't need a big big team. You can just set up the rules and create the things that you need to create and speed will go up. But it's more the the field and the experience that I am in.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

Right, because I can imagine that I know quite some serious games who are fully digital that resource planning on your engineers is one of the biggest challenges and make sure that the engineers are actually online to the technical part. That means a total different thing. You need each other.

Researcher

Yeah. OK.

Participant

Not even talking about UX UI design is right because those are vital important for any game. Does it make sense, my answer?

Researcher

Yes.

Participant

OK.

Researher

And then when it comes to the use of frameworks.

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

So you mentioned at the beginning of this interview that you have a few frameworks that we will go after this.

Participant

Some Google Max. But on the survey you mentioned that you use internally created frameworks. Yeah, but then the question when we are now talking about a framework, we're talking about a conceptual framework on how to design a serious game. We are not talking about frameworks like the digital frameworks that we use. So the techniques that we use. For example, in one serious game we use a framework of Angular for the front end. Right? But most of the things, yes we use the of the shelf solutions, but the moment that you create some specific things we created based on Python. We create something and then the front end could be an Angular, but all the things itself are designed by ourselves. And then part of that could be that we're using a (...) technology from Kafka for streaming data, which we then adjust based on our needs, which is then again, well, the definition are we using standard framework, are we creating ourselves? I think we're creating it more ourselves. But again, the question is, is it a technical framework?

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

Right? So are we going to use a framework of for front end standards? Or is it a step-by-step conceptual framework for the design of a game, which involves a lot more than technique?

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

And this is something that I'm still struggling with a little bit of the definition. And while he gave a clear explanation there, but I'm still struggling on the conceptual level of the framework.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

You with me?

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

All right. If not, just tell me because I can explain.

Researcher

Yeah, no problem. (...) All right. Then if we need to go more towards the direction of like conceptual framework.

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

What would you think of having a sort of conceptual framework for the design of games and activities in your case, in a sense? If the, (...) if it was multi-framework model-like instructions, the base, for example, would then be very generic. There would be like the general principles. And then on top of that are like extra layers that are way more specific. What would you...

Participant

Yeah. Well, depending on what's at the top, what's the bottom. I think that, for example, the implemented outcomes that you have, so the measurable goals could be different per context, per sector, per whatever. So those are not implemented. Sorry, those are the implemented goals.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

On the highest level, there's an ontology, which means that it's not implemented yet. You can do it. You can implement it in any way. So yes, the layers would be making a lot of sense to me. Yeah, definitely.

Researcher

Okay. All right. Those were my questions. I don't know if you have any final remarks.

Participant

No, I hope it is clear. And like I stated, it's for me sometimes hard to see what is the clear definition of the framework. And talking about frameworks, this is something that in the University of Applied Sciences, it's always discussion because everybody has his own assumption on what a framework is. And if you talk to a professor in an academic world, they have a complete different definition of a framework. So this is something that it's always a challenge.

Researcher

Yeah. Okay. All right. Well, thank you for having an interview with me and the recording cleanup. Then we //can go//

Participant

//I can show// you some things. And hope this was of value.

Researcher

Yeah, definitely.

ANON DATA 06

Fields: Research

ID-Codes

- Participant
- Researcher
- // observational notes
- [comments] e.g. SBG = Serious Board Games

SURVEY

Performed:	01 May 2024

Do you have experience with designing serious games? (Serious Board Games, Serious Digital Games, or both)
Yes, both serious board and digital games

Introduction Questions

How many digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
20+
How many serious digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (serious Games)
20+
How many board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
6-10
How many serious board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Serious Games)
6-10

Substantive Questions

Do you usually design/develop these serious games with multiple people in a team, or alone?
Mostly in a team

Substantive Questions – Team

What is your team like? Any specific team structure? (E.g. 1 game designer, 2 programmers and a dedicated playtester)
1 designer – researcher, 1programmer, 1 artist, 1 project manager
Is there a structure when working with multiple people to design these board games?
Light scrum
If hypothetically you would have to design a game alone, how would your process change? In what way?
Not much

Substantive Questions – Framework

When designing a serious (board) game, what are the steps you take in your current design process?

Defining the problem space by making prototypes

Do you use any frameworks, templates or guidelines for this?

Never

Frameworks

Who created the framework?

/

To what extent is the framework documented?

/

In case the framework is documented, how specific or generalised is it?

/

From your experience, what do you think is currently improvable from the process?

/

Background in the field

What was your prior education and the institute that you studied at before joining the industry?

[Redacted]

Have you spent time (for studies or work) in your career away from your cultural background? If so, what cultural region and how long (in years) did you spend there?

?

How many years of professional work experience do you have designing games? (Entertainment & Serious Games)

6+

How many of those years have you been designing serious games? (Serious Games)

6+

If you had to give an estimate percentage, how much of that time would you say was spent on serious board games?

10%

How would you describe your current work position?

Social impact game designer

Outro

What part of the design would you like to be further documented/researched?

Communication practices with clients on iterative design

Interview – Warm-up

Researcher

So let's start off first of all, thank you for taking the time to participate with my research.

Participant

Sure

Researcher

I will get into it a little bit later to kind of explain in further detail what it is about. But first, a few questions about your experience in a way. So (…) I have seen on your LinkedIn that you have a few projects that you featured and those were all serious games but mostly digital. I'm not sure if you also work in other mediums, for example, like board games.

Participant

Sort of, yeah, it's kind of broad, I think.

Researcher

Okay, would you say that those serious game projects that you've made, would you classify them as educational or what would you classify them as?

Participant

Um, that's kind of a hard question because I'm trying to create games that help people (…) to change their, they're not particularly educational, they're more trying to create playful dialogues between people about certain subjects.

Researcher

Okay, and have you done sort of like workshops with these serious games? So what I kind of mean with this is the usual (…) way workshops are done or what it is done within BUas at least is that they are facilitated events for people to come and play these serious game projects. Have you done something like that in the past with your projects?

Participant

Yeah, we've done a lot of workshops, especially with Samen Spelen, the project that we tried to fight learning us amongst elderly through small, What's app like games. So we had to explain to them how to use it, how to install it and stuff. And also with the other games that we did, we did a lot of workshops, especially with trainees or with, so we do train the trainer programs to help people use the game. We also do (…) how do you call it, escape rooms. And that's also a trainer-trainer program. And then they do then they run the escape for us. So we're typically not directly in contact with the end user, normally not. Well, (…) we are doing the design process, obviously, but that's in the end when the project is finished.

Researcher

Okay. Then for this research, there are two key terms that being serious game and frameworks. So I'd like to first ask you what you see as a definition for these terms. And then I'll give the definition that this research applies to those. So if we first have a look at serious game, how would you define that?

Participant

Well, I don't really enjoy the theme serious games. I typically call them social impact games because you always start to make an impact on social level. So basically, it's serious games are games that are designed to have a different impact than pure entertainment. (…) I think that's it.

Researcher

This research uses a very similar definition. It is that serious games are intentionally designed for a purpose other than entertainment that can be learning, skill acquisition, training, something like that.

Participant

Yeah, That sounds reasonable, right?

Researcher

Okay. Then for the second key term, that being framework, how would you define that?

Participant

I don't understand what you mean with framework.

Researcher

So kind of like sort of synonyms would be guidelines or a template (...) specifically for the design process in this case.

Participant

So you're wondering if there are frameworks or design processes for serious games in particular?

Researcher

So that's what I'm looking at. How would you in that context define framework?

Participant

I think it's a really weird question. So you want to know what the recording is? What do you want to know?

Researcher

Kind of like how you see the term, and then I would give the term that this research uses, that way every participant is on the same playing field, in a way. But otherwise, I can just give the definition of the framework,

Participant

Yes please

Researcher

that being a system of rules or ideas that is used to decide something. It's very broad and vague.

Participant

Yeah, pretty much.

Researcher

Yeah. But then to link it back to what this research is looking at, I'm researching serious games, and then specifically for the medium of board games, just to like limit the scope a bit. The design process of those is not very well documented, at least not within the BUas departments that are working on it. So could a framework or like a set of guidelines be made to help in that process of designing it, and what criteria are important for said framework?

Participant

Okay, that's good. Yeah, it's still a little bit vague. So you're looking for guidelines, or what are you looking for with framework?

Researcher

I am looking at the guidelines, and specifically I'm asking experts who make these games what criteria they find important for an eventual framework. So it's kind of more based on your opinion and your experience.

Participant

So you want to design frameworks?

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Okay, got it.

Researcher

All right. Then this will be done through a Q-sorting method. I will share a link with you. (…) for a Miro board.

Participant

Sign up for Miro. Do you have like a normal? Do I have to sign up for this?

Researcher

Let's see if I can find another.

Participant

No, I'm already in. Requesting access.

Researcher

There we go. I have an email. (…) Should be accepted. So possibly there's a message sent to your email. (…) Yes, okay. All right. So a quick explanation to Q-sorting. I'm not sure if you are already familiar with it, but we have this structure in front of us.

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

I will give you a quick overview of the structure. So you can put a few cards with criteria on them and then a definition to get the context of what a criteria means and what I mean with it. And then you can place them on the (…) Q-sort structure in front of you. It is important to know that you are not giving a particular score to the criteria per se. You're giving them a relative score compared to other criteria. With that said, you have multiple columns. If we have a look at the column with the 0 score, for example, the cards sort at the top is not more important than the bottom. They all same level within the same column and each square can only have one card in it.

Participant

Okay

QSORT – CONTENT CRITERIA

Performed:	12 April 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Set precise measurable goals	Duration	Venue	Autonomy	Empowerment
	Fun	Essential experience	Social elements	
		Motivation		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

- Empowerment
- Autonomy

Qsort evolution

Set precise measurable goals: +1
Venue: +2
Social elements: +2, venue: +1
Fun: 0, Set precise measurable goals: -1
Essential experience: +1, Fun: -2, Venue: 0
Motivation: +2, Social elements: +1
Duration: -2, Fun: -1
Empowerment: +1, Essential experience: 0
Autonomy: 0
<u>Re-arrangement:</u>
Motivation: 0, Autonomy: +1, Empowerment: +2
Set precise measurable goals: +2, duration: -1

QSort Transcription

Researcher
Let's have a look at the first q-sort, and this would look at the (…) content criteria of the framework and the set of guidelines. So what the framework would cover when it comes to the topics, this is mostly aimed at the eventual serious game that comes out of it, out of the design process.
Participant
Mhm
Researcher
And then the first criteria I have for you is (…) to set precise and measurable goals. So what should the player achieve by playing this game? What should they learn? And how should they have transformed by playing this game?
Participant
Sorry, I don't get a question. I need to put this on a scale, right?
Researcher
Yes

Participant

Plus one, this is most important, least important.

Researcher

Yes.

Participant

I think it's somewhere in the middle.

Research

Okay. And why would you say it's in the middle?

Participant

Because the goal settings are typically not really smart formulated, right? They don't have to be measurable, it's always soft scales, always getting people to talk. And sure, it's not that I don't care about the results of the game, right?

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

But I think the process is more important in that regard. So I think it's just too much focus on measuring things that are hard to measure.

Researcher

Okay. And you mentioned that they are not smart formulated. Is that like the smart method of like specific?

Participant

Mhm (…) Maybe I should move it over here. It's not the most important thing in there.

Researcher

Okay. At the end, I'll also ask you if you would like to rearrange your final answers. So (…) not set in stone yet. (…) Okay. Then the next one I have is venue. How should the game be set up? In what kind of space? What kind of configuration does the game have? And is there a limitation due to the equipment?

Participant

I would rather call it context.

Researcher

Mhm, Okay.

Participant

When it comes to context, that's prime importance, I think that's really important. So that would be +2.

Researcher

You can place them.

Participant

Oh, Right.

Researcher

And you would rather call it context. Does that mean that there is more covered by the term context than the term venue?

Participant

Yeah, because it also includes the people, the relationships people have to each other. Their inclusive theory that they have been concerned towards the game or towards the issue that should be taken in account.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

So that makes it really hard to design these games because it's sort of (...) It's a complex system. You need to have all the stakeholders involved. You need to have everybody on the same page. I think that's the hardest thing about designing serious games. The game itself is not so (...) It's actually not so important.

Researcher

The game is more a tool and the experience is essential.

Participant

Yeah, in the end you're just working to get people on board and get it on the same page. Sometimes the design of the game is more important than the actual product that comes out of it.

Researcher

Okay. Then for the next criteria, I have social elements. So what social elements should be in the game? Some examples are none, teamwork or one-on-one discussion. (...) Okay, you give it a score of +1

Participant

One of the most important things, basically you're designing for that. So if it's then that would be like this, I think. Yeah.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

All the games that I design are typically designed to create social conversations or communication amongst participants to (...) To discuss tough subjects or to come up with their own solutions. If the game is not social, I don't care much for it.

Researcher

Yeah. And do you have a preference or do you, from your experience, see that one social element in a way works better? For example, like teamwork. Is it (...) one-on-one? Is it like discussions?

Participant

No, as I said, I try to create playful dialogues. So it means it needs to be open, free, autonomy supportive games that help people talk about tough subjects.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Or make something more explicit that was implicit.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

So it's always social. There's not a thing like it's not about.

Researcher

Okay. And then the next one I have for you is fun. How will the game be fun to play? Kind of with a certain example assumption being like, oh, if the game is not really fun, then why would you go for like a specific gamified solution in a way?

Participant

I think that's a stupid word. So it will be engagement instead of fun.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

Sometimes you need to talk about really tough subjects. So we made this game for sexual abused children to talk about the experiences. No fun. And it shouldn't be fun either.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

It should be engaging and motivating to do so, but not particularly fun. It should be important, valuable, serious, (...) respectful. And those are not particularly fun that don't have balloons or I don't know, gimmicks on them.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

But it's obviously like everything needs to be attractive and nice to use.

Researcher

And once again, you prefer a term engagement. So is there something that is extra to the term of engagement that isn't on the term of fun? Because you mentioned, of course, it's more than fun and it's not really about fun per se, but

Participant

Because fun is such an empty term, but it's also really focusing focus term in a sense that it suggests that it's something should be. Because it's close. It's short of funny, right?

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

And not everything is funny. Not everything has a joke or something. And I think that fun is really distracting word because everybody has a different meaning of fun. And I actually only care about are people engaged, are they actually doing stuff.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Are they enjoying it? Because I do care about enjoyment, but sometimes that's something something you have to do are not really enjoyable. And you don't have to make them more enjoyable.

Researcher

Okay. Then for the next one, I have essential experience. So what game experience should the player have? What feelings should they have while playing some examples to feel powerful, to feel powerless or to maybe even feel part of a minority?

Participant

Right. So that will be then a better word for fun. I think if you design something, you really need to understand what you're designing for and you're designing for an experience. So you need really need to focus what kind of experience you want to design for. So then it will be like this.

Researcher

So you give it a score of +1 relative to the other ones. So social elements is still more important than the essential experience.

Participant

The most important.

Researcher

Why would you say that social elements is still more important than the feeling the essential experience of the player?

Participant

Because we learn from each other. And I don't think game designers or teachers should have the arrogance to think that people learn from them. And people learn from each other. And that's where knowledge is constructed and changed and created and perspectives are made and understood.

Researcher

Okay. (...) Then for the next one, I have motivation. So how can the game motivate the player? And how can the game use that motivation?

Participant

So I can put it (...) I can put them on the second row too right?

Researcher

Yes. (...) And you place it at +1 because?

Participant

Well, that's the whole reason why you make a game, right? So maybe you should turn it around that this is the most important one. So motivation suggests the willingness to act and the game should lower the barriers to act in a sense. Make people engage, do stuff, and get it done. And you do it through really clear, defined experience. Try to make it a social experience. Basically, that's what you do. (...) At least that's what I do.

Researcher

Okay. Then the next one is duration. So it is meant that how long should the game be and how long should specific mechanics take, specific parts of the game?

Participant

It depends on what you're designing, right? It doesn't matter. That's not something you care about much here.

Researcher

Okay. And would you say that from the projects that you have worked on, that has not been important?

Participant

I think it all comes down to context duration of a game. So it depends. We tried, like with the loneliness games, we tried to foster really short moments of short social communication, and it was too short eventually. But I don't think it's about time, that much duration that makes the difference. If we make something that hits you once and it's really good, then it's fine too. It depends on what you're designing for. So I don't see (...) It's part of the (...)

Researcher

Okay. (...) Then the next one is a blank card. So I'll leave it up to you to define a criteria that is currently not mentioned, but that you, for example, would find important.

Participant

I would say empowerment, I think.

Researcher

I'll type it out. Okay, there you go. And where would you place that?

Participant

Oh, there's it here. Okay.

Researcher

Then before I ask you why you placed it specifically there, what would you (...) say empowerment encompasses? What would you say it's about?

Participant

So most of the games that we create, like we're also creating citizen science games, do you know those?

Researcher

Um Let's see. I might have stumbled upon those.

Participant

So basically we try to change the research to... scientific research, turn it into a game, and have people play it. (...) That empowers people to do something they would normally not be able to do. And I think that's also what we try to do, basically all the games. Like the loneliness games would empower people to connect on low barrier manner to their family and loved ones without (...) the feeling that they are annoying or a bit much. The game that we created for parents to help them become more therapy compliant, empower them to connect to their children and to do something they would normally not do. So basically all the games, people, you give... And also as a designer, you should give away your (...) You're the author normally of the game, right?

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

But you should abdicate this authorship to the players. (...) And then listen to them and design something that they want, not what you want them to do. So that's why I hate the set precise measureable goals, because it's always in the state of flux. You have this sort of broad gesture they want to go to, and the only thing you want to do is people engage somehow or motivated to do so or empowered to become... And if you set precise measureable goals, then it becomes a focus on the end project and not on the design process and not on the actual playful activity of the players themselves.

Researcher

Yeah, Okay. (...) And then you have one remaining card, which will also be a blank card.

Participant

I hate that. (...) It's a bit cold in here. 16 degrees, so I should have just put on the thermostat. Get a little bit warmer and nice. (...) So I need to fill in this one too, right?

Researcher

Yes

Participant

Ugh de tering, (...) It's not not important. If I choose between these things, (...) it's basically close to each other. So this and this. Motivation is such a big string and hard to define. During my PhD and my research, I figured that autonomy is one of the most important needs of people and are best satisfied through games, better than any other media is able to do so.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

So I want to make games where you should be damn sure that they support an autonomous experience for the player. And autonomy means that you have an internal

locus of causality or the idea that what you do matters, which you have in games, because if you do something, something happens.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

And that gives you... And that's sort of... I think... So you decide how you play, why you play and what you take out of the game. So that's why I'm not so focused on those set precise, measurable goals and stuff. I make sort of hippie games, I think.

Researcher

Yeah, Very much player focused.

Participant

Very much.

Researcher

Yeah. Okay.

Participant

Yeah. Very much emmergent gameplay focused.

Researcher

Are you happy with this final resort or would you like to rearrange?

Participant

I think it's good.

Researcher

Okay.

QSORT – META CRITERIA

Performed:	12 April 2024	

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Validated	Industry independent	Self-explanatory	Identify scope & limitations	Incite dialogue with other professionals
	effectiveness	specific	adaptibility	
		Ease of use		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria
- Adaptability
- Incite dialogue with other professionals

Qsort evolution
Self-explanatory: -2
Effectiveness: -2, self-explanatory: -1
Ease of use: +1
Specific: -2, effectiveness: -1
Identify scope and limitations: +2
Validated: -2, self-explanatory: 0, specific: -1
Adaptability: +1
Industry independent: -1, specific: 0
Incite dialogue with other professionals: +2, ease of use: 0, identify scope and limitations: +1

Re-arrangements:
[No extra final re-arrangements]

QSort Transcription
Researcher
All right, then if we move over to the right, we see the second q-sort model. This time it would be on the meta criteria, so that is more focused on the framework structure itself.
Participant
Alright
Researcher
So then for this one...
Participant
You said one and a half hour, right, for this session?
Researcher
Yes.
Participant
But I really only have one hour, so...

Researcher

That's okay, okay, then I'll speed things up a little. (...) There we go. So the first one we have is self-explanatory. So the framework calls all the information. No external sources are required to use the framework. It's kind of in a way pick up and use.

Participant

It's a hard business and it's a hard art. It's an art, right? Like it's a job. So you don't have to make it really simple because it's super hard.

Researcher

Okay, then for the next one I have effectiveness. So that the framework helps the designer with the design process.

Participant

I don't care about that.

Researcher

Okay, and you mentioned it (...)

Participant

How are you going to measure it?

Researcher

Yeah. Mhm.

Participant

Like how do you... How will you measure if your framework works? Your framework only works if people talk about it and use it. And so that's effective, but it's not really something you... That's easy to measure, right? But the end you hope that people change your framework. Make it their own.

Researcher

Yeah. That's indeed a problem that I've already run into with my research. Trying to figure out a way to verify existing frameworks. (...) Now for the next one I have ease of use. So that the framework covers the basics of game design and that there are no assumptions on the experience of the user.

Participant

That's good. Yeah, that makes sense.

Researcher

Now you were originally going to place it at -1. So what made you change your mind?

Participant

Because I thought I didn't understand that it was focused on the end user. If it's focused on the end user, that's fine.

Researcher

Mhm.

Participant

Well, specific. All right.

Researcher

Yeah, specific. So an example would be that this framework is focused very much on simulation-based series board games rather than a framework for serious games in general. It's like specific to a genre in a way.

Participant

I don't think that the framework should help you to (...) define your problem space to help you to get all this shape, stake. I think it doesn't matter what kind of game you make. So if specific, it'll be like this then I think. I don't think it has to be specific.

Basically, you're creating a framework for a good design process. (...) And that relates to anything. It's not, I don't feel that designing a game in that sense is much different than designing an intervention that has no game elements to it. It may be, may use some different vocabulary, but that's basically it. And your focus may be a little bit more on the autonomy of the player, but that's it.

Researcher

Okay. So would you say that you would prefer a framework to be generic in a way, rather than specific or?

Participant

Yeah, I think so. It would be nice to have a framework to help you step by step, but to sort of streamline your design process and also be able to make your stakeholders understand how much time things take and how much and where in the process you are. And also with designs like this, this is what we left behind when I'm moving forward to this.

Researcher

All right. Then identify scope limitations so that the framework mentions what is covered by the framework and where in the process that the framework should be applied.

Participant

I think that would be the most important thing.

Researcher

And why?

Participant

Because it helps you, like the framework could help you communicate your design process with everybody else, right? And also get everybody involved. And it's good to understand that you're in a specific point in the framework. Like if you do alpha testing or beta testing, you know what you're doing, right? This is the framework to make people understand where in the design and the process of producing the game you are and what kind of feedback people need.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

If that would really clear, if those processes could help and how much money you need and how much people you need to get involved in, how long it will take. All those aspects, those are really important for them. That would be really important for designing the other things.

Researcher

Okay. Then the next one I have is validated, so proven to be effective and then possibly research backing the framework.

Participant

You see, I don't really care about studies, because studies just bullshit. You basically need something that works for you as a company or as an little designer. If it helps, then it helps. If you are able to change it, that's great. Who's got to validate it? Who cares? Validation is always the long-winded process of people saying, oh, it might work, it might not work, it might not work, but what not, it's kind of skill based on some people's meaning. There's a lot of studying and work done for nothing, if you ask me.

Researcher

Okay. Then a suggestion, I would like to see what your opinion on this is. Let's say a framework existed that was multi-layered and you had a base layer, which is very generic, like basic game design, and then you have specific layers on top specifically for your genre or type of game. What would you think of such a framework?

Participant

That would be really nice.

Researcher

Okay. (…) You also alluded to the fact that you believe that the adaption of frameworks is very important.

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

Would you say that every framework should in a way be a little bit generic so that people can personalize them in a way?

Participant

No, that can be really specific. I don't care as long as I can change it to my, and if it offers that to help you change it.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

So, adaptable would be a really good point for this framework.

Researcher

Okay. If we turn that into a card, the adaptability, where would you place that on the model?

Participant

I see (…) here.

Researcher

Okay. (…) Then I have industry independence so that it helps regardless of the industry of the topic. So, if we take a few examples, one of the games you made, I believe it was VilleDeu, that is the industry would be psychology.

Participant

I think it would be, I think those would be the layers on top of it, right? So you talk differently to other psychologists. Okay. So it will be great to, you talk differently to psychologists than to (…) teachers or surgeons or surgeon assistants. So there's, it would be great to have some (…) That's true? I'm not sure if that's true though. That's something you have to find out. I don't think you can put it in a framework. But what you need to understand when you're designing things for people is that you really get to know these people and their culture.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

That's sort of hard. So, yeah, it will be industry independent. So basically, yeah. So that will be the then (…) I think it automatically is.

Researcher

All right. And then I have a blank card for you.

Participant

Ease of use, that's just a prerequisite. (…) I think this will be the most important thing. Well, what it should do is not incite the dialogue between your stakeholders in the project, but also with other game developers. So if you, and then you can adapt the system and make it better and reframe it, refine it together. So I think it would be great if you could come up with a base and a system that helps you adapt and change it so it can slowly build towards a sort of industry driven designed framework for designing serious games. That would be awesome if that was there.

Researcher

Okay. Would you like to rearrange your final answer or are you happy with the results?

Participant

Yeah, I think I'm good.

INTERVIEW

Researcher

Okay, (...) then let's see. Talking about frameworks. So have you had a lot of experience with working with frameworks for your projects?

Participant

No, I wish we did more, especially when it comes to, (...) we do have a sort of structure when it comes to designing, but it seems we're always starting, (...) it's all in our head, right? It's never formulas.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

We do have a sort of scope design document or something, the documents are stupid because you cannot change them. It will be nice to have like, oh, we're going to enter this product, let's take a little bit of this, this and this and design your own timeline, who do you need to get involved at what moment, when you do the iterations, how are you going to, and then put them on the scale and get a scope. And if people are like, okay, this is too much, then this will cost too much, it will take too long. So that sort of delimits the quality because that's basically you always work with time budgets. So if we take this out, then the quality will be less, but at least we'll stay within the time limit or, (...) so yeah, that won't be great to have a sort of dynamic framework where you could like, get blocks in and out and then switch them around according to (...) what the project needs.

Researcher

Okay. And do you know of any frameworks that might be interesting for me to have a look at or?

Participant

No.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

I designed my own framework like we put this more design strategy than framework. So yeah, it's more strategy than framework.

Researcher

Right. I actually do have a framework to maybe suggest to you. So it is the transformational framework by Sabrina Culyba. It used to be a free PDF online, I can't find the link. It doesn't seem to work anymore. But it is from the same company from Shell Games. So behind the book of lenses of game design. And it kind of goes, kind of looks at what you were describing. It's more focused towards the stakeholders, how to communicate, when to communicate and kind of helps in that process. Kind of like pre-designing it.

Participant

But the stakeholders, I mean also the end users, because they also stakeholders in the process. So you basically need everybody on board. Otherwhise it is just Phil, what's the name of her game? Can you write it in the chat?

Researcher

Yes, it's in the chat. It should be.

Participant

There you go. Awesome

Researcher

I'll have a look if I can find the PDF again and then I'll maybe send that as well. It's a rather short book and it's also very quick read because it's like one page which is mostly like an infographic and a bit of text explaining it.

Participant

Yeah, I found the PDF.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

It would be great if you have a tool, right, in which you can do this. You can dynamically change your, that is sort of automatically calculate some money, and that's the reason, but not. You can get a better scope of understanding the whole system. Documents are nice, but it's all text. Text is stupid.

Researcher

Okay. I'll add it in my future work section of my thesis. (…) All right. I don't have any further questions. I'm not sure if you would like to make a final closing statement.

Participant

It would be great if you create a framework that is focused on communication with each other as professionals, and will be dynamic and adaptable, and would easily square it out like, it's a lot of planning and things like that. This is a lot of work being missed, so yeah, that would be nice.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

And with a lot of images in it, not a lot of text.

Researcher

Yeah. All right. With that, I would like to thank you for your time in participating in this research.

Participant

Sure. Sure. Interesting. When are you going to finish?

Researcher

Most likely it will be done around the time of August, roughly.

Participant

Can you send me your thesis at the end?

Researcher

That is a possibility. So that's also something I would like to remind you of. I send you a link to the demographic survey and a consent form, if you could still do that after this interview. So the consent form indicates your preferences on how the data from this interview are used and the anonymization of it. And then at the end of the consent form, I also ask if you would like to be kept up to date with the results of this research. The standard would be through email, but you can suggest other contact methods if that's preferred.

Participant

Awesome. Well, thank you.

Researcher

All right. So would you like to just get the thesis or would you prefer a different form of the data, maybe just like a presentation with infographics or something?

Participant

Oh, that will be even better. Yeah, just the infographic part.

Researcher

All right. I'll write it down.

Participant

Awesome.

Researcher

Okay. Well, once again, thank you for participating and have a nice day.

Participant

Yeah, you too. And enjoy the almost getting better weather.

Researcher

It's getting somewhere.

Participant

Yeah, somewhere. All right. Talk to you later. Bye.

Researcher

Bye

ANON DATA 07

Fields: Research

ID-Codes
- Participant
- Researcher
- // observational notes
- [comments] e.g. SBG = Serious Board Games

SURVEY

Performed:	25 April 2024

Do you have experience with designing serious games? (Serious Board Games, Serious Digital Games, or both)
Yes, both serious board and digital games

Introduction Questions
How many digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
20+
How many serious digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (serious Games)
3-5
How many board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
3-5
How many serious board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Serious Games)
3-5

Substantive Questions
Do you usually design/develop these serious games with multiple people in a team, or alone?
Always in a team

Substantive Questions – Team
What is your team like? Any specific team structure? (E.g. 1 game designer, 2 programmers and a dedicated playtester)
The digital games I've worked on were made with different teams ranging in size from 8-10 up to 40 people. The structure is usually 10% production / project management, 20-30% programming, 20-30% design, 30-40% art. Testing was expected to be done by all team members (in reality, mostly design and programming), but was often supplemented with external QA services.

For manual games there is usually a designer who creates the concept, does the initial research and makes a playable prototype. This is handed off to a developer who iterates on the design to get it to a publishable state. This usually requires additional research. They may require the original designer to sign off on any changes, but that is not always the case. The developer will also lead the initial playtesting, and the publisher will usually hire additional playtesters to validate the design. The final step is to hire one or more artists to create the final art for all game components

Is there a structure when working with multiple people to design these board games?

As noted above is typical

If hypothetically you would have to design a game alone, how would your process change? In what way?

For a digital game, it would be very difficult as I would have to master a number of skills and tools. This would impose significant constraints on scope and complexity. For a manual game the process would be simplified, but the result would probably suffer from not having at least one other person capable of providing critical feedback and ideas.

Substantive Questions – Framework

When designing a serious (board) game, what are the steps you take in your current design process?

Subject matter research, competitive product research, prototype, test, iterate (repeat), test with external playtesters under supervision, then finally blind playtesting. Finalize art, final QA, publish.

Do you use any frameworks, templates or guidelines for this?

Always

Frameworks

Who created the framework?

Externally created, adapted internally

To what extent is the framework documented?

Entirely documented

In case the framework is documented, how specific or generalised is it?

Generalised to be used on different projects

From your experience, what do you think is currently improvable from the process?

Better playtesting, better player onboarding, better UI / physical systems design

Background in the field

What was your prior education and the institute that you studied at before joining the industry?

[Redacted]

Have you spent time (for studies or work) in your career away from your cultural background? If so, what cultural region and how long (in years) did you spend there?

I lived and worked in Sweden for just under 6 months in 2003, and I've been living and working in the Netherlands the last 9.4 years.

How many years of professional work experience do you have designing games? (Entertainment & Serious Games)

6+

How many of those years have you been designing serious games? (Serious Games)

6+

If you had to give an estimate percentage, how much of that time would you say was spent on serious board games?

5% (more than 30 years of game development)

How would you describe your current work position?

Day job is teaching game design and production at BUas. Side project is a realistic space combat simulator on which I am the principal designer and senior producer.

Outro

What part of the design would you like to be further documented/researched?

Rationales for specific design decision. What alternatives were considered?

Interview – Warm-up

Participant

Hey Vincent.

Researcher

Hello. How are you doing?

Participant

How's it going? Ah, not too bad. Just spent most of the day working in the garden using the power washer.

Researcher

Yeah, same here. I think my dad's still outside doing it.

Participant

Hah, There's a power wash simulator game on Steam that's actually got really good reviews. I cracked up because it is a fun toy.

Researcher

Yeah, all right (…) I've not played the game, but I've definitely seen some streamers mess around with it.

Participant

The toy that I really want is a laser that you can clean things with. I've seen videos of it. Here is rusty pipe and they just go over it like a power washer. Oh my God, that's amazing. How much are those?

Researcher

Yeah. That would be very nice. I'm helping out my (…) girlfriend her family and they have a barbeque. It's rusted to every little bolt. It's taking hours to sand it down. That would need to be very nice as a tool.

Participant

Yeah. Sometimes you have to really examine. Maybe it's just better to buy a new one.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

The amount of labor that goes into restoring the old one.

Reseracher

It's their choice. (…) All right, so let's get into it.

Participant

Yep.

Researcher

So to start off, there are two key terms for my research that being serious games and then framework. So I would like to first ask you how you (…)

Participant

I'm sorry, I was messing with my headset. The two terms are serious games and?

Researcher

And framework. So those are the two key terms of my research. I would like to start off with asking you what you would say your definition is for those terms and then I would give you the definition that this research uses so that every participant is on the same level playing.

Participant

Right. I was just going to ask you, what do you mean by framework?

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Because I don't really use that term. I mean, if... Because if you ask me, I'm going to give you my best dictionary definition. It's not a term I use in practice.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

Serious game, I can address that. To me, it's where the primary goal is not entertainment. It's some form of learning or training. It's primarily educational, I guess. And that's either learning new things or practicing known skills.

Researcher

Okay. Kind of jump in on that. For serious game, the definition that this research uses is that a serious game is intentionally designed for the purpose of learning, skill acquisition, training. So as you said, the primary focus is educational goals rather than entertainment.

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

And then for framework, do you want to give it a shot to try and define it?

Participant

Uhm yeah, just generically, it would be like the overarching methodology structure approach to doing something.

Researcher

Mhm. Yeah, the definition used within this research is also very generic. It mostly just defines it as a system of rules or ideas that is used to plan or decide something.

Participant

Okay.

Researcher

So yeah, it gets very broad. (...) All right. Then I will send you a link to a Miro board. I'll put it in the chat. (...) Okay.

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

Can you try and move around the sample cards to see if you have all the necessary permissions?

Participant

Yeah, looks like I do. (...) I'm getting on the meta criteria, it's full access on the content criteria. I have to do long press to unlock.

Researcher

And then to the left, there's like this sticky note. It's synchronizing for me.

Participant

The sample card?

Researcher

Yeah. Okay. Then as an introduction to Q-sorting, so in front of you, you have this structure, which is a nine square grid, and it will range from minus two to plus two. And I will give you cards with a criteria on it, and I'll also give you a bit of (...) a definition

slash example of what I mean with this term. Feel free to disagree with it and then argue what you would call it as or what you would define it as. And then you can place it in the structure. Important is that you're not really giving a score to the term itself, but you're giving it score relative to the other terms.

Participant

Right

Researcher

All right. Then as a bit of a general note of the interview, I will be looking around, I have multiple screens and some papers on my desk. No need to wait for me, I'll just be taking notes. You can go at your own pace.

Participant

Okay.

Researcher

Right. Are there any more questions before we start?

Participant

Nope.

Researcher

Okay.

QSORT – CONTENT CRITERIA

Performed:	01 May 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Venue	Fun	Motivation	Essential experience	Set precise measurable goals
	Social elements	Desirability/Value	assessment	
		verisimilitude		

Alternative suggested at the end, where arguments could be made for value being the most important:

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
venue	Fun	Motivation	Set precise measurable goals	Desirability/Value
	Social elements	Essential experience	Assessment	
		Verisimilitude		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

- Verisimilitude
- Assessment
- Desirability/value

Qsort evolution

Set precise measurable goals: 0
Venue: -1, set precise measurable goals: +1
Social elements: 0
Fun: 0
Essential experience +1, set precise measurable goals: +2
Motivation: +1
Verisimilitude: 0
Assessment: +1, venue: -2, social elements: -1, fun: -1, motivation: 0, fun: 0, venue: -1
Desirability/Value: -2
Re-arrangements:
Desirability/Value: -1, venue: -2
Desirability/Value: 0, fun: -1
Came back after locked in and mentioned that an argument could be made for an alternative version where value is in the top spot.
Value: +2, essential experience: 0, set precise measurable goals: +1

QSort Transcription

Researcher

Then the first Q-sort we will be doing is on content criteria. So what should the framework cover when it comes to the topics? So this is mostly terms focused on the eventual game that comes out of designing the game with this framework.

Participant

Okay.

Researcher

All right. (…) Then if I grab this card. (…) The first criteria I have for you is to set precise and measurable goals. Give a bit of a context for it. What should the player achieve by playing this game? What should they learn? And how should they have transformed?

Participant

And are you putting something or am I putting something?

Researcher

Yeah. So I put it on the left Q-sort. It's here at the bottom. Oh, that's synchronizing again. (…) Seems that my Miro is slowed down a little bit.

Participant

I hit refresh and I still don't see anything new.

Researcher

Let's see. I'm refreshing as well. (…) Can you see the new card?

Participant

Yeah, It's there. (…) Let's just start with that in the middle. Because I need to see what other things are in there.

Researcher

All right. And would you say that criteria is important?

Participant

Oh, very, yeah. (…) It's likely to end up here, but I need something to compare it to.

Researcher

Yeah. All right. (…) And then for the second one, I have venue. With this, I mean that how should the game be set up? In what space, in what configuration, and are there any limitations to equipment? (…) You placed it at a -1.

Participant

As in less important than set precise measurable goals. I mean, it could be this or it might end up staying that way. I don't know.

Researcher

And why would you say it's less important?

Participant

Because there's usually multiple ways you can achieve the same goals.

Researcher

Okay. For the next one, I have (…) Social elements. What social elements will be in the game? And then to give a few examples, for example, none, maybe it's teamwork or maybe discussion one-on-one or in teams. (…) You place that in between.

Participant

Yeah, Because it's (…) a more difficult thing to get right. So it's harder to do than venue determines, but it's still in service of what your goals are.

Researcher

All right. The next one is fun. How would the game be fun to play? And then a bit of a (…)

statement that we would also like to see what your opinion is on this. If not fun, then why would you choose to make a gamified experience?

Participant

Right. So this is a tricky one because if your precise measurable goal is they're going to know something about something, you're going to be able to demonstrate a skill. I don't need it to be fun. I would prefer it to be fun because that usually improves engagement and we're wired to learn through play. So if it's intrinsically rewarding, then the fun is kind of there, but fun is very subjective. I find very complex wargames fun. Other people just roll their eyes and like, no, no, not even. So that's a tough one. (…) Yeah, for a serious game, I think I'm going to put it down a step. I mean, for me, I always, I think as a designer, that's where the interesting challenges come from, right? It's like, how can I elegantly model something that on the face of it doesn't sound like it'd be fun, but I can make it fun.

Researcher

Yeah. Right. And then to try something a little different, you now placed fun on the minus side, so less important compared to other criteria. If you were to put yourself in the perspective of an other participant who would put it on like the positive side, what would you say their argument would be?

Participant

I think it's probably coming from engagement. If they're not enjoying themselves, they're not going to really engage with whatever it is. So maybe they'll pass the test, but they're not going to retain it because it wasn't fun. They did it because they add to and as soon as they're done with it, it's immediately leaves their mind. So maybe I'll move it over a step.

Researcher

All right. (…) And then what, what made you move fun up one slot?

Participant

Well, that, that idea that as a teacher, I know that if students don't understand why they're doing something or why something is important to learn, they won't really learn it. They'll learn to regurgitate it for a test, but then it's gone.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

And if, yeah, if something about that learning really engaged them in a way that was enjoyable, got them thinking that, you know, then maybe it does stick a little bit better.

Researcher

Right. Then the next one I have is essential experience. What game experience should the player have? And it's mostly looking at what feelings should the player have while playing to give some examples to feel powerful, to feel powerless, or to possibly even feel like part of a minority.

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

Okay. So you moved up set precise goals to +2 and essential goals to +1.

Participant

Yeah, because the, it's part of the way we teach game design is define your player experience. What are you, what are you hoping to evoke in the player? And that I

strongly associate it with entertainment games. And that's why I put set precise matter of goals higher for, you know, player knowing what it is they're supposed to be doing is more important than me knowing what feeling I'm trying to evoke.

Researcher

Yeah. Okay. (...) For the next one, I have motivation. How can the game motivate the player? And if that has happened, how can the game use that motivation?

Participant

This one, I think is, I almost look at it similarly to the way you look at fun, or even essential experience. Excuse me about the sneeze.

Researcher

Bless you.

Participant

Thank you. Um, and that I think it's back to or relates to my comment on intrinsic motivation, intrinsic reward with a serious game. The motivation being, well, I'm, you know, I'm a fireman, I need to learn how to do this exit strategy out of a burning building that my motivation is I need to do my job better. So it's, I'm not motivated because I'm going to get points, I'm motivated because this is a skill I need or this is knowledge that I need.

Researcher

All right. And now we come to the fun part. I will give you a blank criteria so you can fill in a criteria that you find that is currently missing that might be important. And then place it.

Participant

Ah yes. (...) Um, this is more from, from wargaming, realism versus fun. Does, does the simulation is the simulation accurate? And if, if it's not, then what am I really learning? I'm not really learning how this really works. And, and there's, um, there's a couple of design terms designed for process or designed for effect. And with war games, the example would be a game that has a World War II theme, like Axis and Allies. You're the ruler of a country. But what you actually do in the game has no bearing whatsoever on the reality of being the leader of one of those nations in World War II. It's just got that grand strategy theme, and it's engaging and fun. Whereas a game like Air War is a paper simulation of jet fighter combat. It's probably the most complex paper war game ever made. And each turn in the game represents like two and a half seconds of real time, but it will take hours to execute the turn. But you're learning every knob and dial, all of the energy management of an actual fighter aircraft, the radar systems, the process. And I've seen operational war games where you're the high level commander, but you've got sub commanders. So you're delegating and sub commanders don't always do what they're told. And it forces you to realize, oh, it's not like a lot of simpler war themed games where I give an order and it's followed and I can send all my men to their death. And it's like, no, they're gonna, they're subject to morale and they're subject to their own, you know, sub commander egos.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

So generally, for entertainment products, a design for effect is perfectly acceptable. Whereas if you're doing a training simulation, then you're designing for the process.

Researcher

Yeah. And you define the term verisim-, verisimilitude

Participant

as authenticity, I guess is another way to say it. Maybe that's a better word. (...) Let's see if my dictionary definition is accurate. Yeah, the appearance of being true or real. So yeah, that's, that's what verisimilitude means. Yeah.

Researcher

And would you say there's a difference with simulation in as a term in general? Is there like a nuance in the answer?

Participant

Yeah, well, as I saying, it depends on whether your simulation is designing for a factor designing for process.

Researcher

Yeah, okay. (...) Another blank cards. I did forget to mention I also have prepared ones just in case you get stuck.

Participant

Okay. (...) Okay. For topics. (...) Assessment. (...) Yeah, how do you know whether you're actually getting the result that you set out to get?

Researcher

Mhm. So in a sense, effectiveness.

Participant

So it's it's closely. Yeah, it's close to the setting the goals. But how do you know?

Researcher

So would you say it's in a way trying to test?

Participant

Mhm.

Researcher

Okay. And how would you see that? Would you see that more in the form of the game itself during play? It does this or that there is a sort of interview?

Participant

Yeah, there's a feedback loop. I mean, both. But during play, if I have precise measurable goals, then I should be able to measure my progress while I'm playing.

Researcher

Yeah. Okay. (...) And you moved quite a few cards around. Could you elaborate the placement and the readjustment?

Participant

Well, these these are outcome.

Researcher

Mhm.

Participant

And these are all kind of the the platform. And yeah, the outcome is more important. These are the means to get there. And these are the ones that I think you have the most flexibility over.

Researcher

Okay. Then one more blank card.

Participant

Go with (...) Desirability, feasibility, viability kind of thing. But the main one desirability.

Is that correct? Yeah, I think that's correct. (...) How badly do we need this? Maybe should be more important because yeah, I think I'll make it a bit more important before we spend any money. Let's make sure that we need this.
Researcher
Okay. And from what perspective? From the perspective of the field, from the players, from who?
Participant
It could be any. What was first in my mind, though, was if we're going to devote resources to creating a serious game, we should have a clear idea of what value that we're offering. Right? Is this something that's actually going to help a lot of people? Or maybe it's only helping a few people, but it's super, super important.
Researcher
Yeah. Okay. Would you like to rearrange your final answer?
Participant
Maybe a value.
Researcher
Okay.
Participant
I think I can move that up higher too. (...) Yeah.
Researcher
All right. So you rephrased it as value. Does that mean that the definition also changes?
Participant
I think it makes it a little bit broader in a sense, but also (...) hopefully more grounded in the sense that desirability can be silly. I want to eat ice cream and lose weight. That's very desirable. But value is like what value does this bring? That's a more concrete, I think.
Researcher
Mhm. (...) All right. If we then go back into the perspective of other participants and we look towards the simulation slash authenticity, you place it at 0, so in the center of all the criteria. What would you say the argument is for people that would place it on the extreme negative and extreme positive side?
Participant
On the extreme positive side, I think it would be a desire for more rigorous accuracy in the simulation, which I can certainly support such a goal, depending on the audience and the product.
Researcher
Mhm
Participant
Putting it on the negative end, I don't think I could make a good case for that because this, yeah, for an entertainment product, absolutely, but not for a serious game.
Researcher
Okay. And for the positive side, you mentioned the rigorous realism of it. Would you say that goes hand in hand with assessment?
Participant
Yeah, I guess.

Researcher

All right. Okay. If we then move over to the right side, we have a second Q-sword. This time it is about meta criteria. So how should the framework be structured?

Participant

I would just want to propose one alternative first though. And that I was thinking as I was looking at this more, if I was to put value in the top spot, it might look like this. That's another arrangement that I think you could make a good case for.

Researcher

And would that case be?

Participant

That you're focusing on the value?

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Why are we doing this?

Researcher

Mhm. And I believe you described it earlier that the criteria on the right side, like set precise measurable goals and assessment, that those all fall under value in a way and then that the left side was more how to get there?

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

Okay. Yeah, just to clarify. All right.

Participant

Yeah.

QSORT – META CRITERIA

Performed:	01 May 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Co-creation	Self-explanatory	Logical	Identify scope & limitations	validated
	specific	Industry independent	effectiveness	
		Ease of use		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

- Logical

Qsort evolution

Self-explanatory: +1
Effectiveness: +2
Ease of use: +1
Specific: -1
Identify scope and limitations: 0, specific: 0, self-explanatory: 0, Identify scope and limitations: +1
Validated: +1, ease of use: 0
Logical: 0, Self-explanatory: -1
Industry independent: 0, specific: -1
Co-ceration: -2

Re-arrangements:
Validated: +2, effectiveness: +1

QSort Transcription

Researcher
Let's see. (…) Now for the meta criteria, so this is more on the framework itself. Framework is one of the terms maybe some synonyms could be guidelines or like a template. Really just something that a sort of model that helps you in the design process.
Participant
Mhm
Researcher
Then the first term I have is self-explanatory. So the framework holds all the information and no external sources are required to use the framework. In a way it is pick up and use.
Participant
Sure it is. Yeah, it's I'm afraid of that one. Having been humbled and observing focus tests. I thought my UI was perfectly intuitive. I was wrong. Yeah, I missed start again just put it in the middle.

Researcher

And I see the strategy that you're going for and placing it in the middle, but if you had to pick a place just purely on this criteria, where would you roughly place it?

Participant

Probably started at +1 then.

Researcher

Okay. (...) So then if we do the experiment again of trying to see the other side, somebody would place it on the negative side. What would you say their argument is?

Participant

Now we're talking about somebody that is interested in making a serious game and they want to use this framework to achieve that goal.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

I can't think of a good reason why you would put it in the negative unless your base assumption is that you're going to be there to explain it.

Researcher

All right

Participant

Which I don't know if you're building a consultant business that might be a good idea.

Researcher

Depends on how well it pays off.

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

The next one I have is effectiveness. Does the framework help the designer with the design process?

Participant

Start that one up here.

Researcher

All right, +2

Participant

This one comes up a lot when we're teaching different methodologies and tools and students don't like it. And they'll look for alternatives. This really doesn't work for me. Can we do it this way? It's like no, we're teaching you a particular methodology for a particular reason.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

You don't have enough experience to know why we need to do it this way. You'll have to take it on faith that we have your best interests in mind.

Researcher

So it's based on their lack of experience that they can't make the right judgment call of the effectiveness.

Participant

Yeah. And sometimes it'll be a tool that is overkill for their actual project scope. It's like, yeah, you would never use this tool for a project this small, but that's not the point. The

point is we need you to learn how to use this tool. And so we're giving you a super small project so that you're not distracted too much.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Because yeah, it's a bunch of cognitive load when you're learning complex tools on top of trying to make a game. Put ease of use up high as well.

Researcher

To give some, give a definition or some bit of an explanation on ease of use. The framework covers the basics and the seemingly obvious, and that way it makes no assumptions on the experience level of the user.

Participant

Okay.

Researcher

Don't know that changes your answer.

Participant

Nope.

Researcher

Okay. Okay.

Participant

I mean, these two together [referring to Self-explanatory & ease of use], the word that comes to mind is onboarding. And it's something that we see game design students really struggle with that (...) they make the typical rookie mistake of they tune and balance the game to their own skill level, which is usually quite high because they've been working on it so long. And we have to make it an assignment. You need to have an onboarding level and your target audience is an old guy that's slow and bad at these games.

Researcher

Definitely think that's important because in my spare time, I'm working with some friends on a game. And we, I think last month we demoed it publicly at some small, small scale event and that onboarding wasn't there. So it was just us explaining it to everybody. Yeah.

Participant

Yeah. Okay. Specific.

Researcher

So specific. (...) How specific should the framework be? And it's mostly on how specific it goes for information. So for example, it's a framework for simulation based series board games. It's like that specific should be a little bit broader.

Participant

Ah okay. Ideally, it's fairly general purpose. So let's park it over here for now.

Researcher

So you would personally prefer a framework to be generic?

Participant

Yeah. I mean, I have to be careful with that because it's like searching for unified theories of physics or something that's like, well, we can come up with a really good framework, but it's fairly narrowly applied. Or we can try to broaden its application, but then it's maybe not as strong a framework for any particular purpose.

Researcher

Okay. And then a suggestion that I would like to ask your opinion on. Let's say there is a multi-framework model in a way. So you have a framework that is like generic, which is like the base. And then you have like layers on top that are specific and then you can kind of like mix and match. What would your opinion be on such a model?

Participant

That sounds good. (…) Yeah, that would be a good approach where you've got a generic foundation. And then depending on the specific nature of what you're doing, you adopt different layers, different modules.

Researcher

The next one I have is identify scope and limitations. So what does the framework cover? What does it not? And where in the process of designing it should it be used?

Participant

Yeah, that goes right with specific. (…) Yeah. What exactly is this good for?

Researcher

Okay. And you give it a score of 0, kind of like in the center of all criteria. What would you say somebody that gives it like a very positive score? What would their argument be?

Participant

Well, it would be related to effectiveness, I think. Yeah, if we clearly understand what the framework can do, then we have a very good idea of how effective it's going to be, hopefully. And I might even bump it up for that reason.

Researcher

All right. (…) Next one I have is validated. Is it proven to be effective? And is there possible research backing that?

Participant

Yes. (…) So another example of students wanting to do something different is like, well, I don't like this methodology. And I've just found out about this other thing that sounds really cool. And I'd like to give some lectures about it. Great. Fantastic. And they start introducing the methodology. And a couple of other lectures are asking some very pointed questions. And I wait till the end. And my question is very, very simple. Is there a single game company that you can cite that has used this methodology successfully? If not, then why am I listening to you? Yeah.

Researcher

Okay. And that kind of comes from the perspective more of how it is used and maybe like the big dogs in the industry, if they're using it. If we look from the side of like research and testing on it.

Participant

Well, it could even be a small indie company, but I need for you to make a convincing sales pitch. I need to see proof that it's effective.

Researcher

Yeah. All right. And then to try again and being as perspective of other people, let's say somebody would put it very much on the negative side. What would you say their augmentation would be for that?

Participant

I can't think of a good argument for that. If you haven't validated the methodology, then it's Voodoo. (…) This is something that drives me in nuts sometimes. Oh, we're going to

use this Bellbin test thing is like, okay, how is this different from astrology? I mean, where's the scientific research that validates this and why is the school spending money on this if it isn't validated?

Researcher

Yeah. All right. (...) Then we're back to the fun part with the blank criteria.

Participant

Okay. Meta criteria framework. (...) Do I want cohesiveness now? No, it doesn't want to auto complete. (...) Let's see if this is a better way to phrase this. (...) I think validated addresses this. Yeah.

Researcher

In what way would you say that validated covered cohesion?

Participant

Yeah, cohesiveness. (...) Maybe that's an assumption on my part. (...) Yeah, I'm kind of struggling. I guess what I was trying to get at is that there's an internal logic to the framework. It kind of makes sense. The more you think about it, the more you look at it, it's like, oh, this makes sense. I understand why it's structured this way. (...) So maybe just logical. Kind of also relates to self-explanatory. If it's logical, then it probably is self-explanatory. (...) In fact, I would rate that probably higher. This [referring to Self-explanatory] is desirable, but not necessary.

Researcher

Okay. So from what I understand, the difference between logical and self-explanatory being self-explanatory is based on the information it gives, but logical is based on the structure of the framework and how it gives that information.

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

Okay. (...) Maybe I can give you one of the prepared ones to help you on your way. (...) So industry independent, so that it helps regardless of the industry, in this case the industry being the topic it is covering. So if you're making a serious game for some medical field thing, then medical field is industry.

Participant

Right. (...) That's a good one. It kind of gets into the specific versus general. Well, if we're talking about what we'd like to see in a framework. (...) Yeah.

Researcher

Okay. And you blaze it in the middle and you move down specific?

Participant

Yeah, because if we're going for industry independent, that's arguing for a more generic framework.

Researcher

Mhm

Participant

But again, it's the same kind of logic applies that it's like this [referring to industry independent] is desirable, but is it more important than whatever the framework does is very well identify scope and limitations kind of touches that too. So, yeah, I like this then because this is in the middle and this tells you clearly what you can do with it regardless of what your industry is. (...) How did you define specific again?

Researcher

Specific. (…) So, for example, this framework is helpful for simulation based series board games. That's like very specific as to which kind of games can be made with these. Maybe it should be a bit more broader. That was up to your preference. (…) So it could be if you go very broad, it could be a framework for serious games.

Participant

Yeah, leave it there.

Researcher

All right. Then we have one more blank criteria. I can give you a lifeline if you feel it is necessary

Participant

Let's see what else would I consider here (…) Yeah, I'm sorry. Lifeline.

Researcher

No problem. (…) Then the next one I have is co-creation. So the framework as a tool helps communicate within the team and in a way serves a bit as a communication tool in case the framework is used in a team, of course.

Participant

Can you elaborate on that a bit?

Researcher

So let's go in a hypothetical case. That specifically for this criteria that it is now used within a team of designers. And in that case, the framework helps with the communication between the designers and serves as a communication tool in the process.

Participant

Okay. (…) So that triggered a memory about halfway through my career where I finally got sent to project management training. And it was something that the studio did on a regular basis. Every year or two, they'd get the most recent hires and send them to this. I forget how long it was, maybe a week, maybe just a few days. But it taught us the basics of project management. And I think almost as important was it taught us a vocabulary that it gave us a common language. So when we came back, and now if we had any doubts before, we know what people are talking about when they use certain terms and for people that have kind of forgotten because it's a while since they had the training. There's an injection of fresh blood that all it's all fresh in their minds. So I thought it was a very smart strategy from the studio level. (…) So that's what your explanation prompted the memory of. So in that sense, it seems like that's almost a given. And almost like it should sort of happen naturally by addressing all the other things so you don't have to make it more important because it's just going to fall out of the other effort. Hopefully.

Researcher

Yeah, It's kind of on the part of the people using it rather than the framework.

Participant

Yeah. But it's good to think of that.

Researcher

All right, then would you like to rearrange your final answer?

Participant

I think that this [Validated] kind of outranks the others because this is this is the proof of

the effectiveness. (...) Yeah, if you're selling a framework, especially from a research perspective, having it thoroughly validated, that seems to be a pretty important criteria.

INTERVIEW

Researcher

All right. (...) Then we are done with the Q-sorting. Then I have a few elaborate questions that I had prepared based on the survey that you filled out.

Participant

Okay.

Researcher

First question, feel free to not answer if you don't want to share this information, of course, but I was wondering what your cultural background is, slash your nationality?

Participant

American. More precisely, Californian. We're different.

Researcher

Okay. From the answers that you filled in at the beginning regarding how many projects you've roughly had for board games, serious board games, and so on. Am I correct in assuming that when it comes to board games, you have 100% experience with serious board games?

Participant

Yeah. Well, they're hobbyist games, so they are entertainment products, but it's that niche audience that finds that kind of weird subject matter interesting. And the perennial debate among conflict simulation designers is, is this just a game or is this actually a simulation? How good of a simulation? How realistic is it?

Researcher

Mhm.

Participant

And the games that I developed (...) pretty much straddled the middle because they were meant to be entertaining, but they also had to feel at least believable, plausible.

Researcher

Yeah. Okay. And kind of links to that. My next question. Am I correct in assuming that the serious games that you have made were not with clients in the process?

Participant

No. (...) One was a simulation of a hypothetical Chinese invasion of Taiwan. And so it's operational level warfare. There's various assumptions made about the circumstances and whether there's going to be any intervention from anybody else, that sort of thing. And the other one was a historical game on the War of 1812 between the US and Britain. And they were both published in magazines, there's a couple of magazines. When Dragons Fight, the Taiwan game was published in Command Magazine and War of 1812, was published in Strategy and Tactics. And they're, (...) they call themselves Military History Magazines with a game in it. (...) And then I've contributed to a number of other games, but those were the two where I was the developer. And I've been a play tester, proofreader on several others.

Researcher

Yeah. Okay.

Participant

And a couple of, I guess a couple of those are what I consider like the PhD level war games where the original designers have done extensive research and it's very much more of a design for process than a design for effect.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

And yeah, it's kind of games that it's like you're, you're getting a bachelor's degree in history just by playing the game.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

One of them, it's the, it's called Lockdown Rhine. It's about the Battle of the Bulge in 1944. And it's best played in teams. It takes about 18 hours just to set it up because it's four maps and a couple thousand pieces. And there's a monster game conference in, in the States every year, and people come in from all over the world to play these kinds of games for a week. And it was this game in particular where the fourth day, they're talking about, you know, what time tomorrow it's the last day, what time do you guys want to start? And one of the German players was like visibly just in the state was like just kind of shaking. And I don't think I can come back tomorrow. He's psychologically shattered by a board game because it was like it put you in the shoes of one of the German generals and you've got a fucking impossible task ahead of you. And it's not going well.

Researcher

All right.

Participant

Yeah, it was good. And we were thinking as we were, you know, reflecting on that, like, so, so games like this should be mandatory in command college. If you're going to officer school, you should have to play this. And if you can't hack this, then you have no business commanding actual people.

Researcher

I can definitely see that that could be interesting to do. But I feel like the army would prefer to not have people drop out (...) at that level.

Participant

Well, but that's, that's an important test. That's one of the tests that I'd rather have somebody wash out of a program before I lose a war. Or just have several hundred casualties because somebody panicked when it got overwhelming for them.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

That's the primary value of war games, professional war games is it's not about coming up with the perfect plan or the perfect strategy. It's about having a situation where it's unpredictable. The opponent's doing things you didn't expect and you have to react in the moment and adapt and and practicing that skill set is the point of it.

Researcher

Yeah, the ability to adapt to the context.

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

Towards the end of the survey, you mentioned that for future research, that you would like better documentation on definitely during development. But if we take a look at

research done on the field of game design, what would you say that you would prefer to be better researched?

Participant

So as I have to admit, it's fairly nebulous is my experience with games research is pretty limited. Um, but when I taught a game studies class and there was an assigned textbook from the MIT Press and it was basically, I think it was just a bunch of master's thesis papers. And the overwhelming majority of them were just like, what the fuck? You really needed to do a research project to get to the answer, which is kind of self evident. And I'd been ignoring it and the students are getting upset because it was an expensive book and they and they're bringing it to class and thumping it down on the desk. When are we going to use this? Sorry. So I basically cheated and I said, okay, each of you pick one of the chapters And give a report on your chapter. So then we'll get a good overview of what are the good chapters and which ones should be avoided. And then I got the book taken out of the required textbook list. But I think that's maybe that's where that came from is that I was so disappointed in what passed for research that it didn't seem very useful or meaningful. It seemed like it was more of an academic exercise for somebody to get a master's degree.

Researcher

Yeah, and then do you have any recommendations for me for frameworks that I should look into?

Participant

I don't. As I said at the start, it's not a term that I actually use in that sense, although I'm lying a bit because we're kind of trying to teach a framework in year one now. But yeah, my default answer was no because it's still new to me to do it that way. (…) And so yeah, I was, oh wait, I am doing it that way. But it's in there. (…) It's something that's been iterated on every year as we learn new things and try to improve outcomes however we can by either trying to do things in a different way that increases engagement. (…) A lot of it is being just much more clear about why we're doing things in a certain way. But I think what often happens is that whatever explanation we give isn't actually being listened to or it's not believed. And it's kind of, yeah, so it's like, here's a good methodology you should use. Say, yeah, but I don't like it. Okay, do something else and see how that works for you. Oh, it ended in disaster. Would you like to try this method again? Because some things people just have to learn the hard way. But yeah, if you can create a strong framework that people can learn and apply, then that would be valuable.

Researcher

Sure would hope so. And then maybe if we take a step back from the term framework and maybe just look at literature and books in general because I believe you shared the book on transformational design by Sabrina Culyba, if I'm not mistaken.

Participant

Maybe

Researcher

It was in some teams channel a while ago.

Participant

Yeah. Let's see. (…) my library is getting kind of dated. I used to be, took full advantage of my position as a teacher and I would just request publishers to send me games or books. (…) I can copy all these into chat and I'm not sure honestly how much you might

get from them. But the first one that came to mind was this story and simulations for serious games.

Researcher

Okay

Participant

And it's been around for a while. I used it, the first school that I taught at decided that they for marketing purposes, I'm sure added a serious game design degree. What's the difference between that and the game design degree? Oh, there's two other classes that you take.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

And this one's more about simulations, game simulation development. And this game development essential series is pretty good. There's over a dozen books there. This one's more narrow and specific, but the guy's got a really good approach. He taught at King's College London, a master's program there and most of his students are serving officers in various militaries.

Researcher

So that one's validated.

Participant

Yes. Yeah, it's interesting because (…) if you take his course, what you produce is a war game and you basically pick any topic you want and there's like a 7,000 word requirement for your analytical essay on the topic and how you've modeled it in your game and then the actual game. And I think it's still up on the website there that you can just download print and play versions of the games. And a lot of them have gotten republished in like professional versions.

Researcher

Okay. Right. I'll have a look at those. Okay. Those were the questions that I had prepared. I don't know if you would like to make like a final statement.

Participant

No, thank you for asking me to do this. This was actually interesting and I enjoyed the intellectual exercise. And I think it's an interesting structure that (…) a similar approach I learned was used during the development of Star Wars quadrants where they are trying to determine the value of different features in the game and they used a process very similar to this. Okay, we'll put it there. Okay. Well, but now this one, which one do you think is more valuable?

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

And unfortunately, I think they resulted in a somewhat mediocre game. There's a risk involved in that process of, you know, well, this is the lowest common denominator, isn't it?

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Something to be said for, well, I've come up with my own idiosyncratic framework and it works for me really well. For you, maybe not so well.

Researcher

All right. With that, I will not be taking up any more of your time. Thank you for making the time.

Participant

You're very welcome, sorry for the delay there.

Researcher

Yeah, no problem. And then just one closing reminder in a way that to ask you if you could send me the signed consent form. That way I can use the data from this interview

Participant

Oh didn't I?

Researcher

It has not popped up in my mailbox. Maybe something wrong with my mail though.

Participant

Okay, I'll see what I did wrong. Because I know I filled it out, but maybe I didn't actually send it back. I thought I did. I'll figure that out.

Researcher

All right.

ANON DATA 08

Fields: Research

ID-Codes

- Participant
- Researcher
- // observational notes
- [comments] e.g. SBG = Serious Board Games

SURVEY

Performed:	24 May 2024

Do you have experience with designing serious games? (Serious Board Games, Serious Digital Games, or both)
Yes, both serious board and digital games

Introduction Questions

How many digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
20+
How many serious digital games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (serious Games)
20+
How many board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
6-10
How many serious board games would you estimate that you have designed/developed? (Serious Games)
6-10

Substantive Questions

Do you usually design/develop these serious games with multiple people in a team, or alone?
Always in a team

Substantive Questions – Team

What is your team like? Any specific team structure? (E.g. 1 game designer, 2 programmers and a dedicated playtester)
always different, but usually a combination game design, artist(s) and programmer(s). Mostly teammembers have multiple roles. Recently we also have a dedicated playtester. Team usually have 3-4 members, some outside our own company.
Is there a structure when working with multiple people to design these board games?

Sort of. Every discipline has iets own lead for final calls in decisions. Mostly the main decisions are made together.

If hypothetically you would have to design a game alone, how would your process change? In what way?

No need to discuss anything, so more development time. Probably a lot more mistakes and bad decisions. Also terrible art.

Substantive Questions – Framework

When designing a serious (board) game, what are the steps you take in your current design process?

1. System analysis
2. Problem definition
3. Prototyping
4. Development sprints
5. Acceptance testing
6. Deployment
7. Support
Mostly the same for digital games :)

Do you use any frameworks, templates or guidelines for this?
Never

Frameworks

Who created the framework?
/
To what extent is the framework documented?
/
In case the framework is documented, how specific or generalised is it?
/
From your experience, what do you think is currently improvable from the process?
/

Background in the field

What was your prior education and the institute that you studied at before joining the industry?
[Redacted]

Have you spent time (for studies or work) in your career away from your cultural background? If so, what cultural region and how long (in years) did you spend there?
Nope, just short vacations of no more then 3 weeks

How many years of professional work experience do you have designing games? (Entertainment & Serious Games)
6+

How many of those years have you been designing serious games? (Serious Games)
6+

If you had to give an estimate percentage, how much of that time would you say was spent on serious board games?
About 25%

How would you describe your current work position?
Entrepreneur/game designer/programmer

Outro

What part of the design would you like to be further documented/researched?
1. Getting from problem statement to actual subject and goal of the game. Clients sometimes have a limited view of their actual problem.
2. The continued use of a game by the client, really integrating it in a company process (not really design process). Sometimes a client only uses a game once or twice which is a shame. Also when the contactperson changes there is al lot less commitment.

Interview – Warm-up

Researcher

Hello, good morning.

Participant

Hello.

Researcher

How are you doing?

Participant

I'm good. (…) How are you?

Researcher

I'm a little bit sick, so I apologize for my voice, but other than that I'm doing well.

Participant

Right. You're not a Dutch-speaking

Researcher

Well, I'm Flemish, so we could do it in Dutch, but for the sake of the research and transcribing the interview afterwards, it's a lot easier if it's in English.

Participant

Yeah, sure. Yeah, no problem. I was just wondering whether my recent emails, if you could understand them.

Researcher

Yeah, yeah, no problem.

Participant

Okay, sure.

Reseracher

Okay, let's see. So I've been looking at the barn a little bit, but could you tell me a bit about them? Because of course I was referred via via (…) to you guys. So I see that you make serious games.

Participant

Yes, yeah. Yeah, so for myself, I am one of the founders of the barn, and as you say, we are a serious game development company, so we only make serious games. We do some consulting and some support for entertainment games, but those are not our own projects. So it's just some contract work. (…) Yeah, we started in 2011 with the barn, so we've been doing this for almost 13 years now. Prior to that, Arne, the other founder and myself, have been working for a couple of years already in serious gaming at the TU Delft as part of the gaming research group there. (…) Yeah, and at the barn, we make games for all kinds of different topics, so ranging from safety protocols to logistics, to training of corporates, cooperation training, assessments. There's been a lot of games we've already created, and we do both board games and digital games. And also for the digital games, we're not limited to one game engine. We use multiple engines. (…) So we're not dedicated. We don't have a particular framework we use every time. We just look at the assignment, the problem, and then decide together with the client which is the best solution.

Researcher

Yeah, Okay.

Participant

So we do a lot of custom games we make, but next to that we also have a couple of our

own products, board games and digital games, which people can use in a license model. Yeah, I think in the nutshell that's the barn.

Researcher

Okay, I am familiar with your project, I believe it's called TeamUp, because I helped out Steven with his research. So I'm a bit familiar with that one. And you also mentioned... Yeah?

Participant

I was just also curious at your background and the research you're doing now.

Researcher

Yeah, I guess as a bit of an introduction to myself, so I am from Flanders-Belgium. I did my bachelor at HoWest DAE, which is in Belgium as well.

Participant

Which part of...

Researcher

West Flanders is very much at the border with France, at the beach there ish, in that area.

Participant

Right

Researcher

That's where it is. I got my degree in independent game production, so I have a bit of a background in the whole process, both art, programming, design and the business. And then now I am doing my master at BUAS, where I am sharpening my skills of research. And I am looking more towards game design specific stuff, with this research being about the design of serious board games and a process to help with that.

Participant

Right.

Researcher

Okay, let's see

Participant

Sorry, I messed up your schedule a little bit.

Researcher

Oh, no problem, no problem. (…) Yes, so you mentioned that you mostly do serious games and that you do entertainment games in the form of consulting. Do you also have experience with entertainment games, maybe at your own time, maybe outside of the barn?

Participant

Not in development, just playing.

Researcher

Yeah, okay, no problem.

Participant

We did some game jams, but it's been a while since I did one of those, but it's not really entertainment. Also not in the serious games.

Researcher

Yeah, alright. Then the games that you've made, so the serious games, would you consider those to be educational serious games or what would you classify them as?

Participant

It depends also on the definition of educational. So we've used our games in education,

in regular education, like in high school or university, but they weren't designed specifically for that. So I think we were just talking about this morning, maybe 25% or maybe 30% of the games we've created the last couple of years are for research. So as part of research projects for universities, but not for education, but as part of the research.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

Part is operational, so we just, like procedures, stuff like this. I think part is awareness games, so getting people aware of a certain problem or complexity of a system or not really educating them. (...) I have to think a bit if we actually did some real learning games that when you've played the game, you've actually at the end learned anything new, as in yeah mostly training of skills. So you learn something new maybe, but it's training of maybe existing skills or of fine-tuning new skills. But I think mostly we don't really do a game about learning a new subject. At least I can't think of a game right now, but as I said, I've been doing this for a while, so I can't remember all the games very well anymore.

Researcher

Okay no problem. You mentioned that you also make games for research. What is that process? Does a research team come to you guys and be like, hey, we're doing research about this? We would like a project, could you make that for us? Or how does that go about?

Participant

Yeah. That's sort of it. We have a close relation with TU Delft as we've worked there before. For example, if they do a research project and they want to use a game for that, they call us and say, can you help us with development? So we pick up the development side of the project or support their development team. That's also a possibility. So it can be a bit of consulting, but also just development of a tool. Then it depends on whether or not they are already aware or sure of their subject. If they know exactly what they want to build, we have to really guide them in that. We just started a project where the university already had a complete scenario of a VR experience they wanted to make. The scenario itself was developed by the university with some experts. Then it's just the process of developing and creating that experience. There's limited game design, rather than interaction design, and stuff like this that we're doing. So it ranges a little bit. But usually we help them with the game design as well.

Researcher

Then, before we start with the actual meat of the interview, the research, I would first like to ask you a couple of questions surrounding the key terms of this research. There are two key terms, that being serious game and framework. I would like to ask you what you would define this as, that you give a definition that you work under, I guess, and then I would also give the definition that this research uses. So, with that, when we talk about serious games, how would you define that?

Participant

That's such a tough question. (...) Yeah, I think one of the core aspects, as I see it, for a serious game, it's an actual, how do I explain this? It has to have a main purpose, so it's a game. It has a main purpose, which is not education. I hear the term fun a lot, but it doesn't have to be fun. It can be frustrating, it can be all kinds of things. Same with any

other game. Not all games are just about fun, they can have other stuff, but there has to be some meaning to it. Probably some emotion people feel, especially playing afterwards. But the main goal is the goal of the subject matter of the game, of either making people aware of it or teaching them something about it, or, well, (...) and then there's, for me at least, a serious game, really has content and really has an experience in itself. So, there's a difference, with for example, micro gaming or gamification. Those are sort of more lower in the game mechanics part, so they're more on the process side than on the game mechanics part. And for a serious game, it's really about the mechanics in the game, and you actually make a game from start to finish, but people really have the experience of the game. It can be a short game, and a micro game can, so there's always some grey area, but for me a serious game has a bit more body to it. Let's call it that. And it needs to be able to integrate in the processes of the client. I think that's there. So it doesn't define the process, that's more gamification. But it should also think about integration of the game in a process.

Researcher

Yeah. Okay. Then to give the definition that this research uses, it's a bit more broad in a way, and that is serious games are games which are intentionally designed for the purpose of, for example, learning, skill acquisition and training, and serious games are games that are driven by educational goals and not by entertainment.

Participant

Right, yeah. Education in the broad sense, not just in schools.

Researcher

Yeah. Then a second term that is a key part of this research is the term framework. How would you define that?

Participant

In what context?

Researcher

To maybe help out and kind of like try to give the context without spoiling the definition a bit.

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

It's mostly, or you know what, maybe some synonyms would be guidelines, templates, game design,

Participant

but for the game design process or

Researcher

yeah for the game design process

Participant

for the development process or for the game design process. Yeah, a framework in my, if I just think about it right now, I think it's sort of a set of, it's sort of a, I want to use those terms you just mentioned, but it's a predefined way of structuring your process. Maybe that's even a broader definition.

Researcher

To be honest, I think that's a better way to describe it than the definition that I found. But the definition that this research uses is, framework is a system of rules slash ideas that is used to plan or decide something. So it's extremely broad.

Participant

Yeah. It's the same thing, yeah.

Researcher

Alright, then for this research, to maybe (...) come back, because I was trying to explain my research without like spoiling the key terms at least,

Participant

Mhm

Researcher

what I'm looking at is serious games, and I made the limitation of serious board games simply because the master is a very short amount of time to research it. The design process of that is not well documented, and I am looking to see what experts think are important criteria for a framework or a set of guidelines for the design of these games. So in that way, my research could kind of like help towards creating such a set of guidelines and framework, which will hopefully be used by people so that they can design these games more effectively and get into designing them without having to stumble about.

Participant

Without? Yeah.

Researcher

So for this research, we are going to do some Q-sorting. Alright, I see that you are on the Miro board. Okay.

Participant

Q-sort? Who are your, your

Researcher

supervisors?

Participant

Your supervisors, yes.

Researcher

My first primary supervisor is Kevin Hutchinson. He is from BUas, the Cradle Department, which is their research department. And then my second supervisor is Thomas Buijtenweg, who is also the coordinator of the Master Game Technologies program.

Participant

Right, yeah. I don't know any of them. I know Igor Meyer,

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

and I've heard some other names sometimes.

Researcher

Yeah, Igor Meyer is of course the big name of this field. He's been thrown around a lot. A lot of my participants also like mentioned him, also recommend me to talk to him. I had a brief conversation with him, but of course he's a very busy person.

Participant

Yeah, I know. At least he appears to be.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Yeah, I know he used to be my boss at TU Delft. And he taught me how to be a game designer, sort of. I see him as a sort of a mentor.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

But I still have some contact with him on a regular basis. And always, as you said, he's a big name. I always enjoy listening to him when he talks about games. He really knows a lot.

Researcher

All right. I'm not sure if you're already familiar with Q-Sorting.

Participant

No, but it's sparked, yeah, a little bit. It's sparked this question also because I know Igor uses it. That's why I'm a little bit familiar with it. And we used to talk about making a tool so that you don't have to use Miro anymore. But there's a specific tool that lets you do this. But that's been, I think, 15 years ago when we talked about this. Apparently, this still doesn't exist.

Researcher

I have not heard of it.

Participant

Well, at least you haven't heard of it now. So there's no way. But please explain it to me how it works.

Researcher

Yeah, no problem. I have an explanation ready so that every participant has the same level playing field. All right. So with Q-Sorting, you have this Q-Sort model in front of you. I will be giving you criteria on a little posted note if I can find my cursor on the screen somewhere. Here we go. On these post notes, I will give you criteria and then you can place them. This model ranges from - 2 to + 2. And it is important that you're not giving a score per se to the criteria itself. But you're giving a score relative to the other criteria. That being said, if we, for example, have a look at the 0 column, there are three slots there. One card per slot. But the top slot is not more important than the bottom one. So they are the same importance. I will give you the criteria one by one. And at the end, once the criteria is filled in, I will also give you the option to rearrange according to how you would like.

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

Okay.

Participant

And I just placed the cards in the right slot.

Researcher

In the right slots. And it's all about your opinion so there's no wrong answers. Okay. All right. That being said, are there any questions before we begin?

Participant

No, let's go. I'm excited.

QSORT – CONTENT CRITERIA

Performed:	24 May 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Fun	Duration	Social elements	Target Audience	Set precise measurable goals
	Venue	Motivation	Essential Experience	
		Moderation		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria
- Target audience

Qsort evolution
Set precise measurable goals: +1
Venue: 0
Social elements: 0
Fun: -1
Essential experience: +1
Motivation: 0
Target audience: +1, set precise measurable goals: +2, venue: -1
Duration: -1, fun: -2
Moderation: 0

QSort Transcription
Researcher
If we take this one, then for the first criterion, I have set precise and measurable goals, maybe I should first mention. The first Q-sort we will be doing is on content criteria. So this is looking at what should the framework cover when it comes to the topics. So it's mostly focusing on the game that results from using this framework. So it's like the content of the game in a way. (...) So the first one is to set precise and measurable goals to give an example or an explanation. What should the player achieve by playing this game? What should they learn and how should they have been transformed? (...) Okay, you give that a score of +1. Could you elaborate?
Participant
For now, I think it's really important and I think it's something that gets lost sometimes in the process. We try, we have always someone during the process that has the (...) who is really responsible for keeping the goal in mind. So you get lost in designing the game and making nice game mechanics and making the game flow nice and feel good. Make sure that the people enjoy or at least appreciate playing the game. But those things can conflict with the goal sometimes. So then it's good to always keep in mind what's the goal. And if there's a framework that for every decision you make says, oh, check it with

the goal. And our rule is you can add things to a game. And if you want to, you have to check, is it (...) contradictory to the goal? And if not, does it support the goal? That's the first one. That's what you try to achieve with the happy mechanic. If so, then great. Let's try it. If not, does it oppose the goal? And then if not, it's sort of more of the game flow. Then it should always be questioned again and really see if this is a good mechanic you want to use. To give an example, if you have a game about some real structured or real set of predictable things. You want to use a die because it's fun. That's a bad idea because it's random and the goal doesn't say. It poses the goal of having this clear structured way.

Researcher

Yeah. The next one is venue. This is mostly applicable to board games but also a little bit to digital games. With venue it is meant that how should the game be set up? In what kind of play space, configuration and are there any limitations due to equipment?

Participant

Yeah. (...) It's hard because I don't know what's coming out.

Researcher

So a bit of a safe neutral middle spot.

Participant

Yeah. It is also very important because you have a lot of decisions depending on how you play it. What's the possibilities if you're standing at a table or how many people? Yeah, that's not the venue really. It's the setting

Researcher

For the next one I have social elements. What social elements will be in the game? To give a few examples of what I mean with social elements. For example, none or maybe there's teamwork or there's discussions between teams, between individuals.

Participant

Can I already start pushing the other ones?

Researcher

Yeah, no problem, no problem.

Participant

For my own so that I can structure it a little bit more when you've given them all of them.

Researcher

Yeah. So if we were to put the cards in slots rather than in between, then venue would be at -1 and social element at 0?

Participant

Yeah, I'm already looking at when I have all of them. For now for me venue is a little bit less important than social elements, but I don't know if it's -1 already. For now it's at 0.

Researcher

Okay, then I'm going to put it in 0 simply so that it makes my data analysis a little bit easier. So I don't have to work with halves, but we can always move things around later on. That's no problem.

Participant

Yeah

Researcher?

Alright, then the next one is fun, which is interesting because you already brought it up with your definition of serious games a bit.

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

And for this, the example that I have is how will the game be fun to play? And kind of maybe a discussion point that I would like to have your opinion on as well is if it is not fun, then why would you choose for a game experience or a gamified experience?

Participant

Yeah, well, for me games fun is like only the positive side or only the (…) It's one emotion and there's so much more emotion you can achieve and want to achieve also with other games. There's scary games and those people say they (…) Well, it might be fun for someone to play a scary game. So it's (…) If you define fun as liking the emotion you experience, then it's part of why you make a game indeed. So when the framework, if you look at the framework, you should already be past this point of saying, I want to use a game because I think it helps. So in the framework itself, yeah, of course you need to make sure that the game raises the right emotions. But it can also be frustration or it can also be sadness or (…) Yeah, there can be all kinds of emotions you want to achieve and also a game can be a good way to achieve those emotions.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

So yeah, fun is sort of the, for me it's a limited way of defining the emotions you want to feel.

Researcher

Alright. Then up next I have essential experience. What game experience should the player have and it's kind of mostly looking at what feelings should they have. So already what you're kind of hinting at. What feelings should they have while playing to give a few examples to feel powerful, to feel powerless or to maybe even feel like they are part of a minority while playing this game.

Participant

Yeah, I think that's what I meant with my elaboration of the word fun just now.

Researcher

Yeah. Okay. Alright.

Participant

I think it's also part of the goal.

Researcher

So you would say it goes hand in hand with set precise measure goals in a way?

Participant

Yeah, and then. Yeah, (…) sort of, yeah.

Researcher

For the next one I have motivation. So how can the game motivate the player and then as well how can the game use that motivation?

Participant

Yeah, in the context of the framework. (…) It's a hard exercise you are putting me through. I don't know.

Researcher

I'm afraid it will not be easier going forward.

Participant

Yeah, I was afraid it wouldn't.

Researcher

Okay, you give it a score of 0?

Participant

Yeah. It's sort of a core part of building a game using the motivation and using the immersion of the player. So, yeah, it's important. As you see, I am not one for extremes, especially if I don't know what you're coming up with next. So, yeah, I think it's also part of my personality to stay in the middle a little bit before I know everything.

Researcher

Okay

Participant

So I'll get in trouble now.

Researcher

Well, something that could maybe help in a lifeline kind of way. Now the floor is up to you. I will give you blank cards so you can come up with criteria that you identify as important. I also have suggestions for these if you do end up getting stuck.

Participant

Right. Wow. The topics. (…) Cards. Help me out. What's the "doel group" [This is the dutch word for target audience]?

Researcher

Target audience.

Participant

Can I also start moving the cards already.

Researcher

Yeah, no problem.

Participant

It's the measurable goals. Set precise measurable goals. Yeah, I think that's still. (…) So with venue, you also mean the technical limitations, right? Yeah, we're looking at board games, right?

Researcher

Primarily looking at board games, yes.

Participant

Yeah, there's not really topics.

Researcher

Well, before we move on to the next cards, so you mentioned target audience. What exactly do you mean with that? What kind of example or explanation do you have for that card?

Participant

Well, it's a really important part is the people who will play it. What's their background? What do they already know about the topic? Do you want the topic to be closely related to their day-to-day work concerning this topic? Or should it be something completely different? So it really takes them out of their day-to-day work and you want to talk about something else because you want to achieve a different mindset. Yeah, it's really, You really have to think about this early in the process.

Researcher

Yeah, okay. And then you mentioned something. You moved the set precise measurable

goals to +2, but while thinking out loud, you were mentioning like, oh, but it's measurable. So would that make a difference if the goal was measurable or not measurable?

Participant

No, I think my consideration was mainly because it sort of sparks the idea of having a dashboard and targets for it, but that's with goals not really, they should be measurable. I think now it's just a good term set precise measurable goals. That's why I still moved it. Because you have a goal. For me, a goal should be precise and measurable because when people play the game, you want to see if you reach this goal. Because that's the whole purpose of building the game. And if you don't reach the goal, then you've done a bad job as a game designer. That's also why it's +2. Because that's the (...) even with a bad game, you can still achieve your goal.

Researcher

Yeah, alright.

Participant

Yeah, I was thinking a little bit about distribution, but that's not really on the topic of topics, of the content.

Researcher

That's more the publishing side of once the project is done. It's not really about the design anymore.

Participant

No, but it also has to do with the venue. For example, (...) should people, If they want to play a game, which can be played with six people per game, but they like, for example, in a school or university, but they want a whole class to be able to play the game. Then they might need 50 games, for example. But if you have, for example, 50 suitcase sized games, that's also not really feasible. Because they need an entire room just to store the game.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

I'm mentioning this because we have a suitcase sized game. But you can play it with around 30 people. Yeah, so that's why I was thinking about it. It is something that comes up during the game design process. But it's not really related to the topic. That can be because of the topic. Well, I think maybe it does because the topic can ask for, for example, a big game or a small game or a card game or a (...) I don't know (...) a dice game.

Researcher

Okay. Something that's maybe a little bit related to help you on your way is duration.

Participant

Duration? Yeah.

Researcher

How long should the game be and maybe also how long should specific mechanics take?

Participant

Yeah, that's definitely (...) I'm moving on because the topic is covered by essential experience for me. So, yeah, duration is definitely something you need to take account. It can be a very limiting factor. Right now we're building a game which can take no more than 35-40 minutes because it has to be played in a classroom setting at schools. And one class takes 50 minutes. There need to be some introduction, some debriefing. So it's

a really set goal which can be really hard because some people take a little bit more time, some people take less time. And we do want them to finish the entire experience.

Researcher

Alright. If you would like, I think there's another suggested criteria that kind of links to that a bit. (...) That is moderation. So how will the game be moderated and how will the game be explained?

Participant

Yeah. (...) You know, It's really hard to put them in these little boxes because (...) Yeah, you probably know this, but it's a combination of everything. So you can't really pick them out. Always. (...) I think moderation deserves more attention than people give it.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Sometimes it's just an afterthought thing. Oh right. Someone needs to, oh this game can't be played by people themselves for example. In the classroom setting where you have like 50 games, you can't expect the teacher to simultaneously facilitate those 50 games. It's impossible. So then people need to be able to play it by themselves. But if people need to be able to play it by themselves, that's a decision you need to be aware of from the start of the design process.

Researcher

Yeah.

Participant

Yeah.

Researcher

Now that all the cards are placed, would you like to rearrange them for like a final shuffle?

Participant

No, I think (...) I'm happy enough.

Researcher

Yeah. Alright.

QSORT – META CRITERIA

Performed:	24 May 2024

Final Q-Sort Result

-2	-1	0	+1	+2
Industry independent	Validated	Ease of use	Identify scope and limitations	effectiveness
	specific	Self-explanatory	Stimulates creativity	
		customisation		

(Self-Created) Blank Criteria

- Custimasation

Qsort evolution

self-explanatory: -1
effectiveness: +2
ease of use: 0
specific -1
identify scope and limitations: +1
validated: -2
custimazation: +1
industry independent: -1, self-explanatory: 0, industry independnt -2, validated -1
stimulates creativity: 0

re-arrangement
stimulates creativity +1, customisation 0

QSort Transcription

Researcher
Then if we move over to the right, we have second Q-sort, this time on the topic of meta criteria, so about the structure of the framework itself.
Participant
Right, yeah.
Researcher
If I go to my list, the first one I have is self-explanatory. So the framework holds all the information and no external sources are required to use the framework, so in a way it is pick up and use.
Participant
I think you can, since it is a really specialized framework for a limited audience, it is easier to expect people to give it a bit more (…) If they need to really give it a bit more attention than just expect them to do it, to really read into it, not sure how to express this. Plug and play is a little bit more, not that important.

Researcher

For the next one I have effectiveness, so does the framework help the designer with the design process?

Participant

Yeah, I think that is the goal of the entire thingy, so for now that is a plus too, otherwise why would you use it?

Researcher

To maybe try a little experiment, if you were to put yourself in the shoes of somebody else that would put this criteria on the other side, on the negative side. What would you think their argument would be to put effectiveness on the minus side of the model?

Participant

I don't know. For me a framework is a tool and if a tool isn't effective. I don't know the other criteria yet, (…) but my head is blank at this moment. I can't really think of something.

Researcher

That's not an issue. For the next criteria I have ease of use, so the framework covers the basics and is seemingly obvious. No assumptions are made on the experience level of the user of the framework.

Participant

That one is definitely more important than the self-explanatory. It might be +1, but I'm not sure yet.

Researcher

Yeah, going to play it a little safe first.

Participant

Yeah

Researcher

Okay. Then I have specific, which is on this page. (…) How specific should the framework be? The design is mostly looking at the category of games. For example, Broad would be serious games and I'm being specific would be simulation-based series board games. It's very specific to a subtype of serious games.

Participant

No, I don't think so that that's really important. I think because the design process only differs in details. Having a global framework already helps a lot if you know how to use it and if it's effective. The differences between even digital and board games, the design framework, or us at least, especially for serious games, is the same. I also commented something like this in the survey.

Researcher

Yeah, then to get your opinion on a suggestion for a hypothetical framework, there is a multi-framework structure. One framework is very generic and broad about general game design as the base. There are smaller, specific frameworks that work as modules that add on top of it. What would you think of such a framework?

Participant

I think that's a good structure. I think that's the way to go. First, make sure that the main global framework works well enough. If you take this approach, you really have to be careful with those modules and how to (…) It's easy to get lost in details and trying to generalize it. You have two modules that have the same structure again, but they differ a little bit. Do you want to put it into the base framework or do you want to add another

layer? For example, serious games, awareness serious games, and then logistic awareness serious games. Three layered modules. It can get out of hand.

Researcher

Okay. For the next one, I have identified scope and limitations. This means that the framework identifies what does the framework cover and where in the design process should the framework be used.

Participant

Yeah, I think that is pretty important. It's also part of why you use the framework and also to be aware of when not to use it. You don't try to use it for everything, which can be really frustrating. You want to use your framework, but it doesn't really fit with the face you're in or what you're covering right now. There's a mismatch. If the framework defines this part, you need to do it yourself. You should use the framework for this part because you'll need it in the later stage of the development process. If you want to use the framework there, then you need to have done this part because they're dependent. Getting this flow easily available (...) for the user is really important.

Researcher

The next one, I have validated. Is the framework proven to be effective and is there possible research backing the framework?

Participant

I do like research a lot and I do like validation of a lot of stuff. So for something like this, I think it's more important. Does it work for you? And do you have the feeling it's effective? Because with these types of things, it's the same with project management tools. You really have to make it your own. So you have to adjust it to your own pace. For me, it's the same with an agile approach to your development process. Just trying to use Scrum, for example, but out of the box. In my experience, that doesn't really work because you have to make it your own. Scrum can be validated to be effective. But it doesn't work for me and my team. This validation is good to get people over the line at the start. But user reviews saying it works for me. Maybe one of the criteria if I make one myself is a little bit of customization.

Researcher

Interesting, you say that, because once again the floor is yours. You can indeed make your own criteria. Just as a reminder, there are suggested ones if you get stuck once again.

Participant

I think customization and then I mean that you can deviate from the (...) Let me customize (...) Where should I put the custom [talking about the hyphon] (...) Yeah, there? Is it an S or a Z?

Researcher

I think it depends on British and American English, but it doesn't matter.

Participant

Yeah, It doesn't matter. I think that's also maybe part of my personality. I should be able to use it in my way and use it adjusted a little bit. So it works for me and my colleagues and my company.

Researcher

I definitely understand and agree with your criteria. But would you say that the framework itself could do something to enable this or to help you in this process of customization or is that just purely on the end user to do this?

Participant

It would be nice if the framework allows you to do it actively. Maybe even challenges you a little bit. But that's also for me personally. I can also imagine that people just want this structure and want to keep to the structure. But then it should also be possible to say, no, I just let me just use the framework as it is. Stop asking me to add my own stuff. But it would be nice also giving the limitations of your customization, which is really hard because you can't really give every limitation of every possible customization. But it is, you can also break the framework if you customize it too much or deviate. I can imagine if you have a framework, there's a certain guidelines, there's certain rules that you need to follow for the framework to work. Otherwise, if you do stuff in the beginning, then at the later stage in the process you might not be able to use it anymore. So yeah.

Researcher

And how would you say a concrete example would be? What would a concrete example be of how a framework could help you in this way? Would it be like it tackles the topic and then it asks you open-ended questions so you can go from there or how would the customization work?

Participant

Yeah. (…) Yeah, I think (…) for example in the project management tool we use, there's all kinds of tasks you can assign and you can create. But there's a lot of custom fields you can create there that you can use. I like that a lot because then you can add your own ideas. It's more stuff like this. I think maybe being able to add your own step but then giving the limitation of that the framework doesn't include your steps then at the later stage that you're also responsible for all the (…) consequences of adding these steps. And I think it should allow you to do it in an incremental way. So it's not like at the start saying, oh, you want to add something. This is your chance. Otherwise, you're stuck with it. You should be able to do it and maybe even keep track of what you've added so you can also easily remove it if you don't like it. Because it's a little bit of experimentation and in my experience every project is different. So that's also why we don't have a really set framework because there's clients use different approaches, different topics, different types of games and they all require different approaches. Though maybe a bit more structure could help I think for us.

Researcher

Yeah

Participant

That's also I think why I would like that there's all kinds of frameworks I think in books and we use the triadic game design approach sometimes. But I think having a piece of software or in whatever form to guide you through this also with your documentation and stuff like this would really help because having this book and then making all your own documents based on what the book says for me it doesn't work. Because then you're doing all the work yourself still. And yeah, so like a project management tool and it would be nice if it's something like that. But I do like structure. I'm not good at it. It helps.

Researcher

Yeah, Okay.

Participant

How should I explain it? (…) Yeah, do you have any suggestions?

Researcher

Yes. The first one I have is industry independent. So the framework it helps regardless of the industry of the topic of your games. So for example, if you're making serious games for logistics, the framework is not about logistics. It helps you regardless of the field you're working in.

Participant

Yeah. Yeah. I think it's even hard to make it industry dependent. Though for example, I can imagine that for the health industry, there's some extra steps you need to take into account. So it would be nice if those are already included because there's more legal stuff to do or other industries. In my experience, it doesn't really matter what's the topic. So it should be, yeah. I don't know where to place it. (…) I'll move this one. No maybe even

Researcher

All right. (…) Would you like another suggestion?

Participant

Yeah. Yeah. Okay. (…) The next one I have is stimulus creativity. So it helps the designer think and kind of serves as guidelines.

Researhcer

Yeah. I think that's a good one also. Stimulates and also (…) Let me give you an example because I can't really explain it. What I notice for myself that sometimes I get lost in the creativity. So it's thinking about the game design is what also with why I think those measurable goals are really important. You can get lost in designing a game and also not only contradicting the goals, but also making it too complex. So I think challenging you to really think about this also for the complexity, especially with a board game, because it's very easy to make a board game too complex. One mechanic extra can really get the players, can make it too hard for the game. For the players to understand it. So yeah. A little bit broader than stability, but it's yeah yeah

Participant

And when you say you kind of get stuck with designing it, does that mean you just get so off track of the goals indeed or is it more about the fact that it's a sort of game designer's form of writer's block that you just get stuck?

Researcher

No, it's more that, it's not stuck. It's (…) It's getting too complex. So you're thinking about all these ideas and their ideas keep coming, sort of, but they don't fit anymore in the game. So the game you're making it too complex. And then downscaling again can be really hard. Making it more complex is easy. You can always add some mechanic because it fits the goal or it's fun or any other emotion you want to achieve. Adding stuff is easier than removing stuff. So if you're gone too far in adding stuff, also because you want to reach the goal and the goal is complex, then you should really make sure that you're stimulated to really think about this. Should you add another layer? Or if you add this, maybe you should remove something else.

Participant

All right. All the criteria are placed. Would you like to rearrange them?

Researcher

No. (…) I think this one is less important than those two. I don't think I can, they're not more important than the other (…) Well, maybe I think even (…) It's just up. But maybe

it's also because it's the one I've just been thinking about. It's all kinds of things that influence your decision making at the moment.
Participant
Yeah. Okay.

INTERVIEW

Researcher

Okay, then to wrap up, I do have a couple of questions in the form of a small interview. I don't know if you're strapped for time.

Participant

No, it's okay. No, it's Friday afternoon.

Researcher

Alright, let me get my notes up. Alright, so I saw in the survey that you mentioned that you don't use frameworks. What is the reason for that currently?

Participant

I didn't start out with it. So at the start of my career, we did use some game design documents. Igor used them. We were freewheeling it a bit more. So there's never been really, I've tried some a little bit like the triadic game design, but they never really stuck with me. And sometimes I read up on new possibilities or new frameworks, but I don't know. They don't really stay. And it might also be because we are a small team. And we've been doing this together for quite some time. So we're just doing it as we're always doing it. And yeah, that might be a framework, but it's not written down. And that's not so if a client asks us, how do you work? There's a certain steps like I also mentioned in the survey, which you might see as a framework, but it's not something we check off or it's not really that we're (…) Yeah, have a checklist.

Researcher

And let's say from this research there comes this holy grail of a framework. Would you then be using it or would it still be because you're used to another workflow that you would not really change that you're happy with your current workflow?

Participant

No, I think I would be really interested to try it and see if it also works for us. And if I can make it my own. Because I do think it helps also in scoping your project, also in managing the project, making sure it stays within scope, within budget, within other limitations, because yeah, it does happen that we go over budget. We get lost in our own enthusiasm of making a new game and yeah, the client doesn't really know, but because we usually work for a predefined budget, so it's our own problem, but as a company for your business model, that's not really the best business model. To make something even bigger than for every client, because also people expect a bigger game for a budget that's really not feasible. Yeah, so I would definitely be interested in using it, trying it.

Researcher

And you mentioned that indeed as a company you have this model of working with the clients and having a budget up front. Do you purely work with clients or do you also make projects that there's no clients on that project?

Participant

Yeah, we have one main game, that's our own game, that's a team-up game. And there's no direct client on the game design side. We do have clients using the game, so they give us feedback. But we haven't designed it specifically for them, we've designed it for a broad audience and they are part of our broad audience. But there's no internal experiment projects at the moment.

It would be nice, I would like to, but we need a bigger skill I think to experiment a little bit more. To have the time to have more internal projects and just see what happens.

Researcher

In the survey you also go over your step-by-step process that you currently have. Could you elaborate a bit on the first step that being system analysis, what do you mean by that?

Participant

Yeah, so for a serious game, as a designer you have to become sort of an expert on the topic. So we have to, yeah that's the system analysis, so it's interviews, it's gathering all data you can gather on the topic. More data is usually better, there's a limit of course. In order to get a good overview of the system before you go into making the game out of it. And also with the client to get a site on which part of the system you want to grasp in the game and it should match the problem and the goals. Sometimes goals can also be achieved in another way and if you don't know the whole system then you don't know these other hooks you can use.

Researcher

Yeah, all right. And then kind of the same thing, a later step you said acceptance testing, in what way is that done for you guys?

Participant

Yeah, it's not something we always do really structured, but in the end the user needs to play the game and see if it works. So for digital game it's usually easier to see if there's no bugs, if there's no weird stuff, if all the content is correct, stuff like this. And if we delivered what we promised, then that's the result of the acceptance test. It isn't validation of whether the goal is actually achieved on the long term. That's really hard. It's something we try to achieve and it's also a really soft measure with games usually. So it's more of the did we deliver what we promised and what we discussed because we keep the client close and they are part of the process. So they're also part of the post solution. We should deliver the post solution.

Researcher

Yeah, all right. Then you mentioned in your definition of serious games, you also mentioned micro gaming. What do you mean with that?

Participant

Yeah, it's a term used a lot. It can (...) really small games with a really simple topic, so there is no real complexity. Which can be played in a short amount of time by the user, but it can't show the real complexity of a problem. So maybe playing five micro games then together can show a bit more complexity, but they should be really single topic and they can visually be related, but they are not related between micro games.

Researcher

So to kind of try and understand it a bit better, could it be sort of like a WarioWare game or maybe like Mario Party where it's like small individual games, you play them and then together it forms an experience that might

Participant

Yeah, but the games itself are apart from maybe the setting unrelated. And also the data you collect. I don't know if it's always the case, but I can imagine that they are (...) it's hard to combine the data of those different games because they're unrelated.

Researcher

Okay, all right. Those are my questions. So thank you for taking the time to participate in

my research. I don't know if you have any remaining questions or a final statement that you would like to make?

Participant

No, not really final statement. Keep me in the loop of your progress and if I can help with reviewing stuff or any more questions you have, just let me know. Also, if there's a result or anything you come up with and you need testers or someone happy to help.

Researcher

The result of this research is going to be mostly the statistics done on the answers that I got from the interviews. So it will mostly be like, hey, from my limited sample size, these criteria got the best score, these didn't get a great score and it's mostly because it's so innovative in a way, it's mostly the first step towards the framework. Unfortunately, I will not have the time to make my own framework anymore within this Masters.

Participant

So how long will it take your research?

Researcher

I'm hoping to graduate in August.

Participant

Oh, okay, right. So that's pretty soon already. How many interviews do you have?

Researcher

So I had two test runs with my supervisors and then I had six participants.

Participant

Are you still looking for more participants?

Researcher

Currently not because I have to move on with the rest of my research. I would love to interview as many people as possible because as you said, more data the better. But yeah, there's a very strict time limit on this research.

Participant

Yeah, I can imagine. Yeah, I know, I was just wondering if you need someone, I could perhaps prefer you to someone else. But if you're good, then good on you.

Researcher

For now it will be enough to come to a conclusion. I don't know if it's going to be the best conclusion there is or (…) But I'll do my best.

Participant

All right. Thank you.

Researcher

Yeah, thank you for the time.

Participant

Yeah, thank you for making me think about this again. It's always good. All right, good luck.