

## Synopsis

### Software Studies

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#### **Loot Boxes/Microtransaction and Gaming as a social media platform.**

To play video games has been a well-known leisure time activity for decades, ever since the success of the first arcade games and their interfaces as a new way to interact with computational artefacts in a post-cold-war-era, where the notion of computation in society was slowly expanding from a purely logistical one, to that of the personal computer. While gaming in many ways could already be considered a social activity as well as just a leisure time activity - because of multiplayer games, be it cooperative or competitive, inviting people to be part of a shared activity – gaming has followed the trend and evolution of information technology and personal computing to the point where online-gaming can be observed as a social media with similar behaviours and personal needs of that of the conventional social medium, like facebook, where metrics, life-streaming; manifestation and facilitation of the self, is a big part of being present in your social circles – both online and offline.

In the last decade, new practices have become presence in the business model of gaming, and in recent years, these have been adapted into the world of online social gaming, subsequently affecting the social media practices of the users (customers). The term Freemium gaming was coined to describe the new trend in portable gaming (for smartphones, tablets etc) where the asking price is free, but you have limited gameplay option, often dictated by an in-game timer, unless you exchange real world currency for in-game currency. The model was a success, albeit the dissatisfaction generally present in the gaming community. Today, the use of Loot Boxes (a fixed or random amount of extra game content that can be purchased – usually the content is hidden until it's been purchased) has become a big part of online gaming, and the developers of these mechanics exploit the social-media-like behaviour of games, gaming, and gaming platforms for a profit.

#### **Gaming platforms as a social media**

Real-Time Streaming and Metrics.

Benjamin Grosser's *What Do Metrics Want* will be my focus in understanding how Metrics on social platform quantifies and prescribes sociality and the human needs for personal worth, 'desire

for more' and in general to manifest the subjectivity. By breaking down the importance of metrics through Grosser's analysis of metrics on Facebook, as well as the results of his Facebook Demetricator – I aim to show that gaming (be it on the platforms like PlayStation Network, Steam etc. or the individual games' internal social network system themselves) is subject to the same quantification and need for a subjective (and social) manifestation.

David M. Berry, *Real-Time Streams* investigates the consequences of the subjectification of information technology and how we pass on our rationality to these technological devices. This means that we manifest ourselves in the Dataspace and make us accessible on a wide variety of networks and devices. I wish to draw lines between this behaviour on dataspace like Facebook, to show that Gaming equally offers a way to store virtual information, to sustain a facilitation throughout time, though unauthentic.

### **Loot Boxes and their presence in social gaming.**

Sinjin Baglin & James Morgan, *Random Numbers and Gaming*

The authors write about a technical aspect of computation that is a core element in developing gameplay. The notion of 'Chance' in computation derives from generating random numbers – in gaming, these numbers are similarly what constitute the sensation of chance and liveliness in gameplay. The authors argue that poor implementation of RNG as a business practise have given RNG a bad reputation. They argue that the developers of Loot Boxes (or Loot Tables, conceptually similar) in gaming, is abusing RNG solely to profit.

Sally Gainsbury, *Gambling and Gaming are converging: "Won't someone think of the children!"?*

The author breaks down the presence of gambling in social gaming and criticizes the effects it could have on the adolescents; normalizing gambling behaviour and erasing the line separating gambling and gaming. She argues that the accessibility (free to access/low-entry-stake, advertisement), possibility of social interaction and use of competitive metrics like leader boards is what encourages online casino games. The analysis can be transferred to that of the online-aspect (in particular Loot Boxes) of big budget video-games titles:

Brett Abarbanel, *Gambling vs. Gaming: A commentary on the role of regulatory, industry, and community stakeholders in the loot box debate.*

In this 'debate' the author uses Gainsbury's analysis of online social casinos to talk about the problem with Loot Boxes in modern online gaming. While the author seeks to debate whether it should be regulated, he touches upon the recent public outcry over the implementation of Loot Boxes in game-development-giant: EA games', recent Star Wars title: Battlefront II.

## Literature

From the course/syllabus:

Berry, Real-Time Streams.

Benjamin Grosser, *What Do Metrics Want*

Other:

Shibuya, Akiko, Mizuha Teramoto and Akiya Shoun, *Systematic Analysis of In-Game Purchases and Social Features of Mobile Social Games in Japan*. DiGRA Conference, 2015

Sinjin, Baglin, *Random Numbers and Gaming*. San Jose State University, 2017

Sally Gainsbury, *Gambling and gaming are converging: "Won't someone think of the children!"?*

Division on Addiction, Cambridge Health Alliance (Harvard Medical School) 2017

Brett Abarbanel, *Gambling vs. gaming: A commentary on the role of regulatory, industry, and community stakeholder in the loot box debate*. University of Nevada, Las Vegas; University of California, LA (UCLA), 2018