

Digital Escapes. On the Importance of Spatiality in Game Design.

Block I, session 2
16.01.21, 10:15 – 16:45 h

RUHR-UNIVERSITÄT BOCHUM

Institut für Medienwissenschaft

Janou Feikens, M.A.

Projektmodul (4 SWS)

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Think of a game

Games as Systems

„At the heart of every game is a set of formal elements that when set in motion, create a dynamic experience in which the players engage.“

(Fullerton 2019: 129)

Can you think of a game with no rules?

Making sense of games

"Play is a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life as being 'not serious,' but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly. It is an activity connected with no material interest, and no profit can be gained by it. It proceeds within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in an orderly manner."

(Huizinga 1955 [1938]: 13.

Playing games is „an activity which is essentially: Free (voluntary), separate (in time and space), uncertain, unproductive, governed by rules, make-believe“

(Caillois, 1958: 10-11)

Table II

AGÔN	<i>Cultural Forms Found at the Margins of the Social Order</i>	<i>Institutional Forms Integrated into Social Life</i>	Corruption
(Competition)	Sports	Economic competition Competitive examinations	Violence Will to power Trickery
ALEA (Chance)	Lotteries Casinos Hippodromes Pari-mutuels	Speculation on stock market	Superstition Astrology, etc.
MIMICRY (Simulation)	Carnival Theater Cinema Hero-worship	Uniforms Ceremonial etiquette	Alienation Split personality
ILINX (Vertigo)	Mountain climbing Skiing Tightrope walking Speed	Professions requiring control of vertigo	Alcoholism and drugs

„A game is an artificial system for generating experiences.“

(Sylvester 2013: 44)

„A game is **1)** a rule-based formal system; **2)** with variable and quantifiable outcomes; **3)** where different outcomes are assigned different values; **4)** where the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome; **5)** the player feels emotionally attached to the outcome; **6)** and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable“ (Juul 2005: 6-7)

„A game is a system in which players engage in an artificial conflict, defined by rules, that result in quantifiable outcome“ (Salen/Zimmerman 2004: 80)

Rules of non-digital games

(cf. Salen/Zimmerman 2004)

1. Constitutive Rules

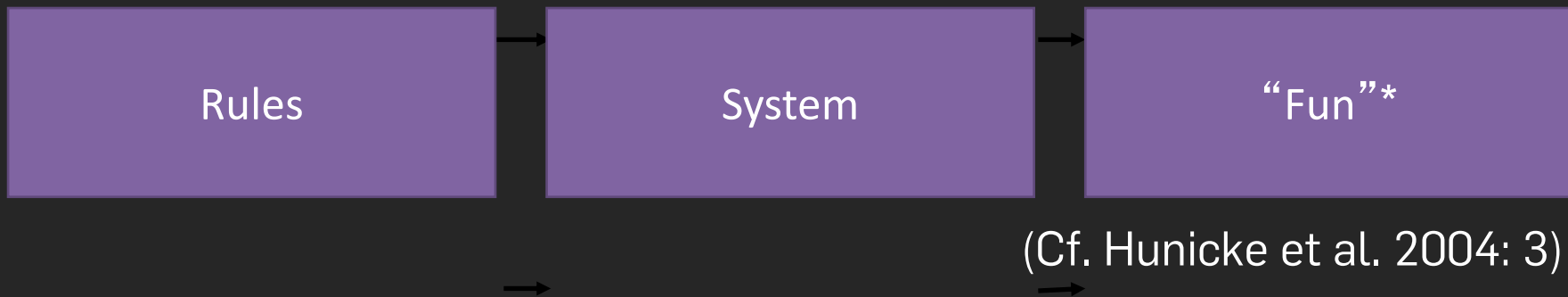
Underlying formal structures that exist „below the surface“ of the rules presented to the players.

2. Operational Rules

The guidelines players require in order to play.

3. Implicit Rules

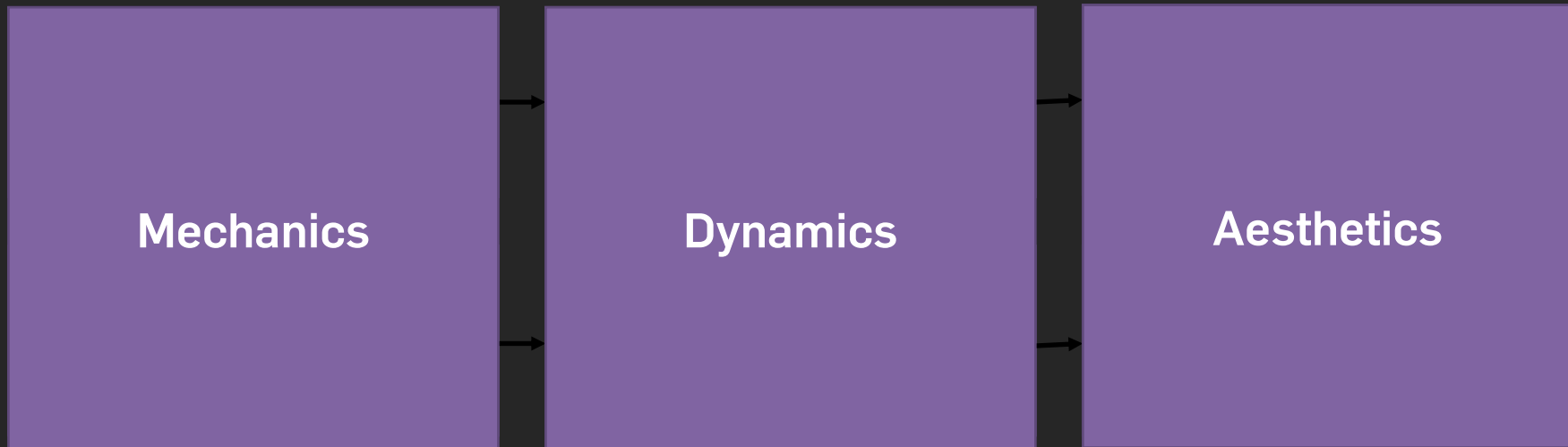
The „unwritten rules“ of a game. Concern implied rules of proper game behaviour.



* „The emotions of play are not limited to ‘fun’.“

(Sylvester 2013: 10)

A design vocabulary



Definitions (cf. Hunicke et al)

- Mechanics: The rules and concepts that formally specify the game-as-system.
- Dynamics: The run-time behavior of the game-as-system.
- Aesthetics: The *desirable emotional responses* evoked by the game dynamics.

„During play, mechanics and players interact to generate events.“

(Sylvester 2013: 1)

The MDA Framework



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Immersive experiences

Sensory immersion

The degree to which the medium controls the user's access to stimuli

Challenge-based immersion

Involves being immersed in solving problems with a certain skill set and strategy and facing the challenges that a game poses on its players.

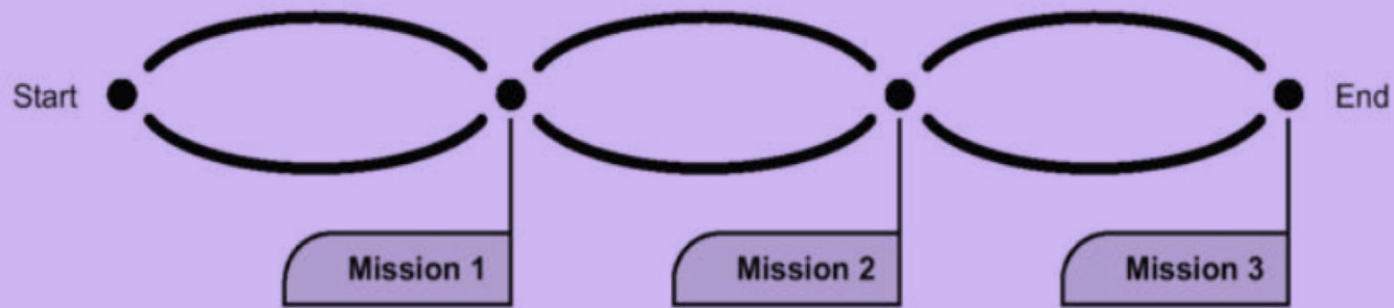
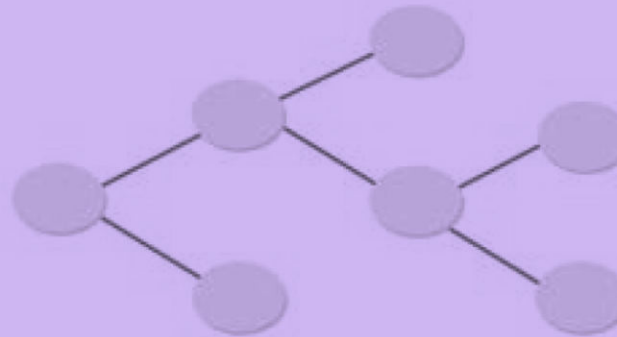
Imaginative immersion

Becoming emotionally involved in a story, the characters or game environments through imagination.

Linear Flow



Network or Branching



Rule structures

Interacting with Systems

„Games are designed for player interaction, and the structures of their systems are integrally related to the nature of that interaction“ (Fullerton 2019: 148).

Information structures

- Hidden
- Open
- Mixed
- Dynamic

„The less information players have, the less informed their choices will be. This affects the sense of control they have over their progress.“ (Fullerton 2019: 148).

Methods of control

- Direct/indirect
- Real time/turn based

„Control often involves a repetitive process or action performed throughout the game“

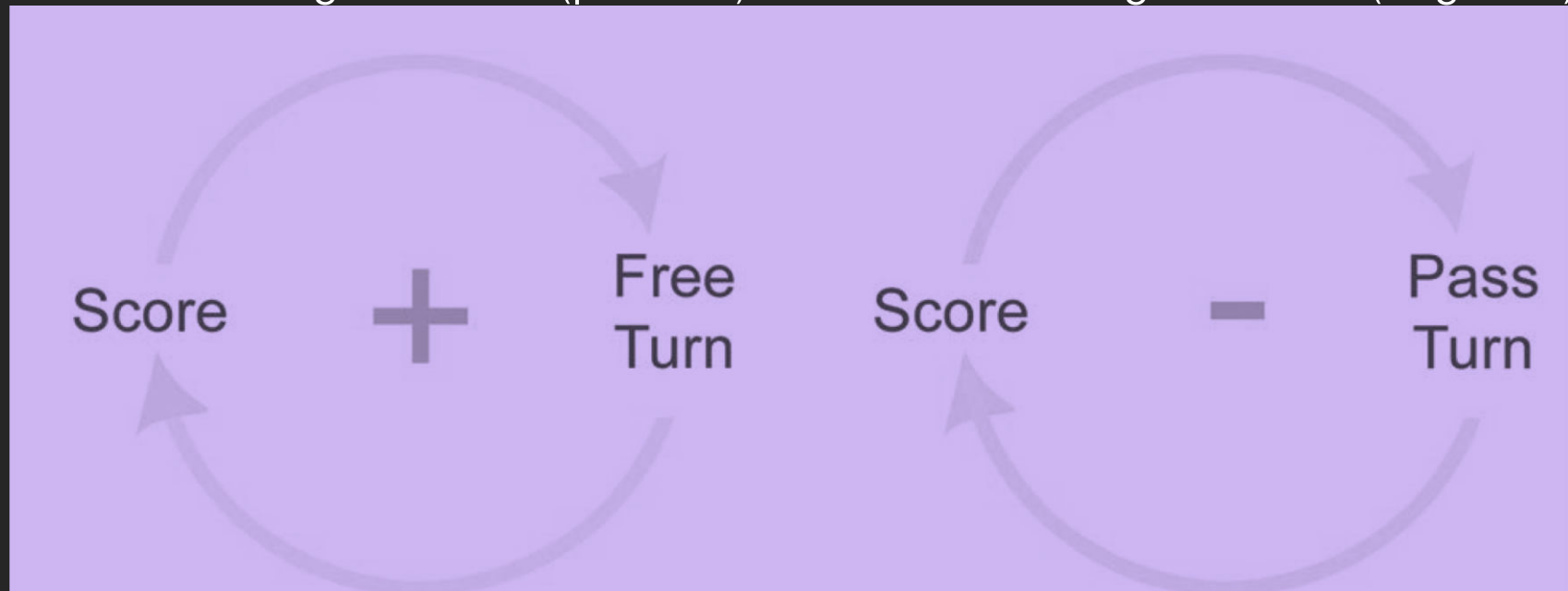
„One type of control system is not inherently better than another. What matters is whether the control system is well suited for the game experience“

(Fullerton 2019: 150)

Feedback

Reinforcing feedback (positive)

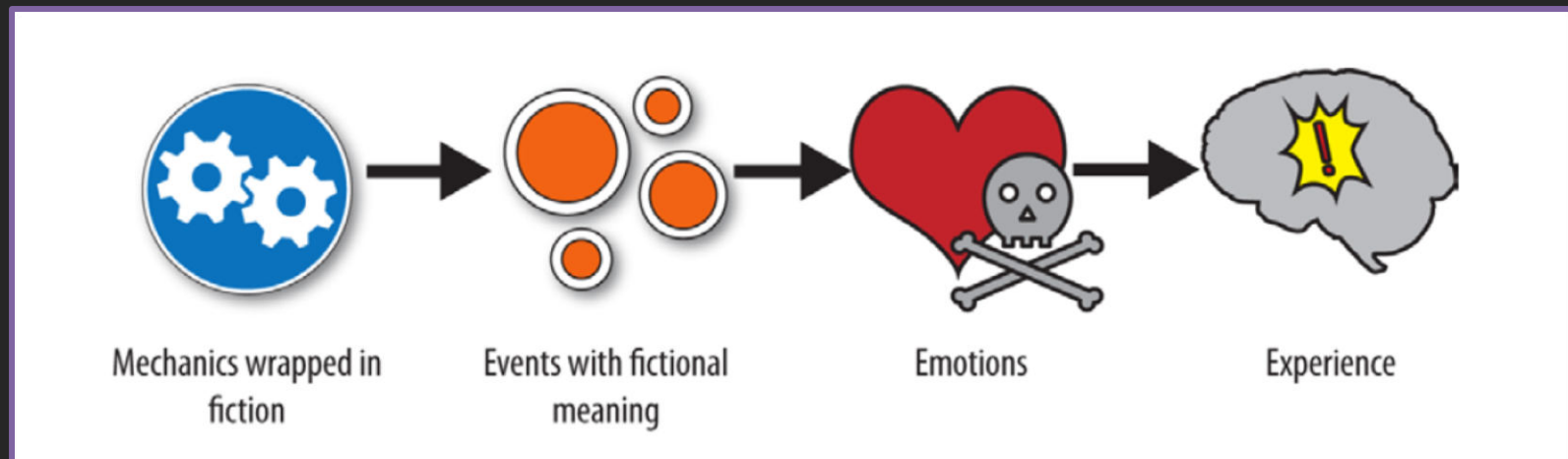
Balancing feedback (negative)



Feedback

„Generally, reinforcing relationships are ones in which a change to one element directly causes a change to another element in the same direction. This might force the system toward one or the other extreme. By contrast, in balancing relationships, a change to one element causes a change to another in the opposite direction, forcing the system toward equilibrium.“

(Fullerton 2019: 152)



(Sylvester 2013: 44)