

Theory

Mobile and Ubiquitous Games

ICS 163

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Content adapted from:

Pervasive Games: Theory and Design

Experiences on the Boundary between Life and Play



Ubiquitous games as culture

- Pervasive Games
 - Intersection of
 - city culture
 - mobile technology
 - network communication
 - reality fiction
 - performing arts
 - single player
 - multi-player
 - artistically and/or politically motivated



Ubiquitous games as culture

- Game Theory
 - Johan Huizinga
 - “Homo Ludens” (1938) : Argued that play is primary formative element of human culture (more)
 - forefather of games studies based on philosophical and anthropological work
 - **play** happens outside ordinary life
 - play is a ritual **activity**
 - **rules** of play are separate from everyday life



Magic Circle

- Huizinga introduced the idea of the **magic circle**
- the magic circle is the boundary that separates
 - ordinary from the **ludic**
 - “real” from playful



Magic Circle

- Huizinga's magic circle was physical, temporal
- Salen and Zimmerman extended the magic circle metaphorically
 - a conceptual membrane that forms a game boundary
 - "a special place in time and space created by a game"



Magic Circle

- Within the magic circle:
 - action is artificial
 - different rules apply
 - lying, backstabbing, limited violence is ok
 - **metacommunication** frames this difference
- Salen and Zimmerman extended the magic circle metaphorically
 - “a special place in time and space created by a game”
- Goffman further conceptualized the magic circle as:
 - “a conceptual membrane that forms a game boundary”



Magic Circle

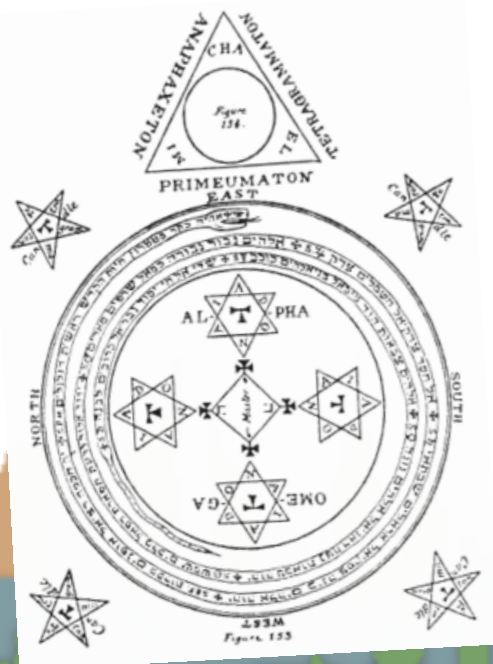
- When you play Monopoly, real world wealth does not influence the game

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Magic Circle

- Some thoughts on the magic circle
 - The idea indexes to pagan and neo-pagan ritual magic
 - The physical circle marked out by practitioners functions to
 - contain energy, spirits, magic
 - form a sacred space
 - provide magical protection
- Be sensitive about the discussion of the topic



[more: [magic circle on wikipedia](#)]

What is a game then?

- Salen and Zimmerman
 - “a game is system in which players engage in an an **artificial conflict** defined by rules, that results in a quantifiable outcome”
- Jesper Juul (2003)
 - “A game is a rule-based System with a variable and quantifiable outcome, where different outcomes are assigned different values, the player exerts effort in order to influence the outcome, the player feels attached to the outcome and the consequences of the activity are optional and negotiable.”
- Compare



Purpose of a game

- Fun?
 - Entertainment
 - Excitement
 - Enjoyment
- Learning?
- Artistic Expression?
 - Critical Commentary
- Societal Exploration



Types of play

- Caillois (1958)
 - Play exists on a spectrum

παιδιή

paidia (Greek)

informal

“messaging around”

make-believe

mimicry

riding a roller coaster

ludus
(Latin)

formal

defined rules

chess

basketball



Types of play

- Salen and Zimmerman, Juul focus their definitions on rules
 - ludus
 - ludologists define games as “rule systems”
- Huizinga play is “free activity”
 - more paidiac
- What are Pervasive games?



Magic Circle as Contract

- The magic circle only holds if everyone agrees
 - implicit agreement
- Magic Circle is not impervious from the outside world
 - You can't actually kill someone in a game and be ok
 - You can play a sport and be liable for external punishment
- Magic Circle membrane is broken by
 - Markets
 - Politics
 - Law

Magic Circle as Contract

- The game Twister
- Watching TV while playing WOW
- hardcore gaming destroys the magic circle (Pargman/Jacobsson)
- games build communities that spill into the ordinary

Game Frames (Fine and Goffman)

- Consider a role-playing game
- Primary framework
 - external matters from game (e.g., ordering pizza)
- Secondary framework
 - communication about the game (e.g., clarify a rule)
- Tertiary framework
 - diegetic communication (e.g., negotiating for a character)
- frameshifts aren't explicit
 - gestures, speech, mannerisms index the

metacommunication



Pervasive games break the magic circle

- “Killer” does not “proceed within its own proper boundaries of time and space according to fixed rules and in orderly manner”
- It intentionally blurs

A pervasive game is a game that has one or more salient features that expand the contractual magic circle of play spatially, temporarily, or socially.

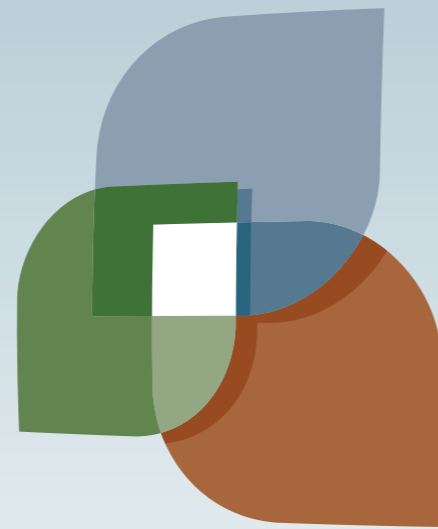


Case Study: Cruel 2 B Kind

- Game designed by
 - Jane McGonigal
 - Ian Bogost
- Post 9/11 version of Killer
 - Game Play
 - Video Demo



- <http://www.cruelgame.com/>



L U C I

