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PLAYIN'SIEGEN FORUM I

Game Design for Urban Spaces

BY ANDREAS RAUSCHER (MODERATOR), JUDITH ACKERMANN, PHILIPP EHMANN, MARIANNE HALBLAUB MIRANDA, CHRISTIANE HÜTTER, GWYN MORFEY, AND MICHAEL STRAEUBIG

I. PLAY AS TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE

Andreas Rauscher: Play is often described as an entertaining activity and therefore misunderstood as an activity that lacks substantial seriousness. What do you think about this description?

Judith Ackermann: The question is where you place the seriousness. Play can be serious in the area of the content, but it can also be serious in the activity. When people play, they can engage very seriously in the activity and can be really committed. Watching the people in Siegen during the playin'siegen urban games festival as they are walking around with a mobile phone playing games, we see that they are really actively thinking about what they are doing, where they are going, and how they have to behave in each step. Play is a really serious activity for them, even though it might not always have a serious content. I think all games are serious in the way they engage people very actively and very seriously.

Andreas Rauscher: It's up to the player to be engaged seriously; it is an individual decision you make while playing. On the other hand, so-called serious games sometimes have this kind of conflicting message. They keep on telling you: You have to play it this and that way; you have to be serious; don't be playful or else you will not get the lesson we are trying to teach you.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: I don't think that seriousness has to be necessarily a bad thing. It can be a really good feature, especially since it may have this layer of didactic elements. Of course, some of the people who are developing these games are not designers, and I think that's what should be brought together. How can you work together, people who know about design, know about playing, know how to make it fun, etc., and make those serious games more attractive? So maybe the term can be changed, but I don't think it's a bad thing that people continue to make this distinction, analyzing and really focusing on being serious. Because once you define it you can really work around those boundaries, and then you will see ok, that definition isn't all that good.

Christiane Hütter: That is a really good point. Not many people can just work as translators between designers and scientists or whatever content the games should present. Most of the people who want to tell others something through games don't grasp the power games can have. A game can make people understand, feel, and live in a very complex system that they couldn't even see before. But this is not how serious games are used. They are mostly used for making people learn stupid facts. It's the question of how you define what you want to transform in people when they play the game, and this can be more than just stupid learning things. But funding-wise, making a serious game is much easier.

Gwyn Morfey: I think you have a really good point about empathy. Emotion in the game world is a really good way to educate people, give them empathy about what it is like to be someone else or do something – maybe not very good for teaching facts, but good for teaching understanding. I've seen this done really well in the computer games space. I played *Papers, please* for twelve hours straight; that game just got into my head, and I really was a border security agent for about twelve hours, which really changed the way I see things. Watching decisions I made in this game was really quite alarming, and that was a powerful experience. I haven't seen that done in a street game. I don't know if any of you guys have seen anything like that done in this space.

Michael Straeubig: I've had some transformative experiences during street games, but I want to mention something else. I once met a kid of fifteen, sixteen years at a games convention. He was organizing a *World of Warcraft* guild, and he told me how he was coordinating this group of people from all over the planet, 24-hours a day, coordinating their attacks and raids, distributing the loot, recruiting new players, and my jaw just dropped as he kept on talking. He had acquired more managing skills than he would have by attending business school for several semesters. *World of Warcraft* is not a »Serious Game,« but it teaches fundamental skills just by playing and by solving these thorny problems. And to your question, Gwyn, I do think that street games and playful experiences in the public space have this transformative power because they allow you to see your usual environment, the city you live in, with new eyes. We normally just pass through our cities to get to work or during leisure activities, but we don't look at the city itself. We only look closely at cities when we are traveling as tourists. These games have the power to let you rediscover your »usual« environment. In this sense, I think, we can create fundamental experiences for people with urban games as well.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: In the Research Group Urban Health Games, we have had that experience because that's what we do: We want to know how people appreciate and perceive the environment. In the games we've done, people come into an industrial site, and suddenly you have this visual layer that is telling you to do something that you wouldn't usually do in that space. They go, ok,

actually this place is really nice, you can do something with it, and I'll come back here; it's not only like the place where you go to buy a car; you can actually live and do fun stuff in this place. And that's really nice, watching people first of all being really excited and amazed about something they have never seen before, and then afterwards wanting to engage and say, this is that good and nobody knows – I am going to tell somebody else what this place has to offer. For example, if they live in that place and do not know about maybe an open courtyard that is really nice, then they might think: We want this to happen more often in our neighborhood; we want it to be different so that we can have this experience in our everyday lives.

Christiane Hütter: And it can even go one step further. You don't just have those experiences in street games that people learn something from or just transform themselves but through which they can even become scientists themselves, conducting research, finding results, and then making a plan about how to change their environment. This is one of the most important achievements of urban games. They can empower people on a local level. They can connect people and directly form a real-life community, and this is the big advantage compared to computer games. In 2012, we made the game *Ruhrzilla*¹ in a city in NRW. The hypothesis of the project was that there were monsters in the city and everybody could join to examine them. One method was filling in online monster reports. Participants could take pictures of possible monster traces, describe the monsters, and connect their thoughts. In the end, we had hundreds of monster reports. People took a closer look at their city, but within this fictional frame, and this worked quite well.

Andreas Rauscher: So if a game comes to town – what do you think is its relationship to the urban space? Is there a kind of transformation of the city into a playground; is it a way of discovering everyday structures from a playful perspective? What are your experiences with street games? Is there a magic circle created within the urban space?

Christiane Hütter: I think it cannot be a magic circle, a closed magic circle, because you have the real-life environment. You have other people coming; you have cars coming. The interesting thing about this urban space is that you are not in a room and you are not alone with your game but you have to react nonetheless. You also react when you design a game, especially when you work site-specific, so that it fits a particular place. But many games work site-generic; you just have special conditions, for example, a wide staircase and ten people at the place you need for the game. Then you can play the game anywhere where there are ten people. These games are just temporary; they don't stay. The rules are

1 <http://www.ruhrzilla.de/>.

just a kind of showcase. This can happen here, but everything else as well. And for me, this »everything else as well« is the most important thing.

Judith Ackermann: I think that urban games can do the things you mentioned. I also believe that they can create a common ground for people who might not know each other but might be even neighbors. When meeting via participating in an urban game performance, which is a form of live event, they share an experience immediately. This creates memories for them, a kind of bonding between the participants, which is something that outlasts the event itself. It is something that the people have lived through together in their own city, something that is not an everyday routine but something extraordinary.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: I think this leads to a transformation of not only the environment itself but in the imagination of people, who might think: What is this environment now, and what could it be like? Which is really cool for urbanists, to know what people want.

Philipp Ehmman: Even the open magic circle, the pervasiveness of the game, even that already opens up the same thought structure. Ok, there are people running around with weird masks, which already opens up my perception of the space, and even though I am not actually actively involved in playing, I am still re-thinking what this space is used for and maybe possibly deciding at home that I'll use it in a similar manner or use it differently next time I walk around in that space.

Gwyn Morfey: I think one of the interesting things about this is that memories bind very tightly to locations – if something dramatic happens to you, you'll remember where that is: I climbed up a six-foot spiked fence in a game of street wars early one morning. I was wearing a suit pretending to be a real estate agent because I needed to get close to my target. That was quite an interesting morning, and every time I ride past that junction now I remember that. It has become a permanent part of the city landscape for me. I think games are doing that to many of my players as well because they say that if I chase them round a corner or they find a checkpoint or an interesting place they remember that when they get through – they always see the city differently after that.

Philipp Ehmman: I still remember *City Dash*² in Krakow. I hid in a lingerie shop.

Michael Straeubig: If you have had these experiences, you will always remember them. I recall being at our student-run theater festival ARENA in Erlangen fifteen years ago. There was this project by the group AKMS, where they gave you

2 <http://citydash.net/>.

tours of the city, but some of the things they said were factual and some were fictional, and often you couldn't tell the difference. So you began to wonder, is that piece of information about the architect who supposedly planned this building in front of you actually true or is it made up? Your perception was constantly challenged. For me, this started a kind of transformational thinking about how we perceive our environments. The kinds of experiences that we have at playin'siegen, some of them have the power to do that, even if people do not pick it up immediately. It is like a poisonous pill for some people that they swallow and, after some time, start reflecting about this. I think »poisonous pill« is a good name for these kinds of games.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: This applies even to games that don't physically take place in an urban context but present that context digitally. *Assassins Creed* gamers will go to Italy and will see the environment and the architecture in a whole new light. They are going to be thinking, ok, I am going to jump there, I am going to go there – stuff that, of course, you can't do, but they are seeing the environment and transforming it in their heads.

2. URBAN GAMING: SOURCES AND INFLUENCES

Andreas Rauscher: I have seen a very impressive video of an *Assassins Creed* parkour played in Paris, where the scenario of a recent entry in the series is turned into a real sports event with people in costumes like in *Assassins Creed*, with characters who visit the original locations in Paris and do a parkour on that. I think it's a really interesting combination of fiction becoming real and the real places turning into a fictional game world, such as the game Michael mentioned where you invent background stories to the locations or architects or artists. There is an interesting mixture here between elements taken from performance theater and from improvised storytelling. Are those influences useful for game design? I saw a hide-and-seek-game performed at the town square outside. It reminded me of a scene from classical spy thrillers. What inspiration can be taken from other art forms and media for urban gaming?

Philipp Ehmann: I think gaming is generally transdisciplinary and therefore gets its influences from everywhere: from the location you are playing to stories you heard to actions you think are interesting and could be used as a mechanic, for example, handing over a leaflet or a letter to someone to basic actions – sporty actions, like running around, shouting. In games, you will find different approaches because they are so easily manipulated from all sides. If you are an architect, you will probably look at the geography you are working in because that is what you know best. Therefore, you will start from that point, and then you will work toward a game mechanic that might be useful. I am a theater maker, so I work from social situations, and I use those as a starting point for my work and then work

them into the game mechanic. Gwyn uses his cards, which are fantastic really, to create a game structure. So I think, yeah, they are all different sides. Games, also because of these transdisciplinary approaches, have the potential to bring about, as Gwyn said, social empathy and learning mechanisms for social empathy. In that sense, they have great subversive potential that we are actually not using enough, possibly. At the same time, they are breaking up thought processes in public spaces. This is also a very great subversive potential.

Michael Straeubig: Games are the best examples of interdisciplinary thinking and making because we all work like that. It is hard to work with people with whom you may not share a common vocabulary; it is hard to work with people when you are not sure if what they are doing really makes sense and the other way around. Making a game is an art and a craft where you bring different people together. People from scientific, technical, artistic, cultural, and design backgrounds. All kinds of different approaches, views, and disciplines come together to build a game. For me, that is what is so fascinating, because it's a truly interdisciplinary kind of work, and that's really great.

Gwyn Morfey: In terms of sources of things, I straight up steal from movies. That's what I do. I find bits I like in movies, and then I go, how can I make a game out of this? So, one of the early ones I saw was *Entrapment* – the laser maze in it, that's great, let's have that! So, I booked a laser maze and put players through. Or that bit in *Aliens* when Ripley is struggling to work out the Pulse Rifle as the aliens are closing in on her. That's brilliant, that's incredibly tense! I did that, like giving players Nerf guns they didn't know how to use and sending zombies at them. It's doing the thing while struggling to find out how to load it while we've got actors closing in on them. Or the bit at the end of *Reservoir Dogs* where everybody is talking and trying to solve this by negotiation. And then somebody pulls a gun, and suddenly it's guns everywhere. I did a game called *Stand Off* that does that. Again, it doesn't always work because if you script it too much, it is not a game anymore, it is theater. But when it does work, it is great. It is exactly the moment I was trying to create, and it just worked. So, that's where I do it from.

Christiane Hütter: I would totally agree that you can take everything that interests you, especially when it comes to site-specific games. I find it fascinating to look at the people who live around and to also include the social setting, especially fearsome fantasies of locations around you. But I also steal a lot from movies, mainly because I am also a scriptwriter.

Judith Ackermann: I just wanted to add that the attitude of »being open« or »openness« is not only part of the design process but also of the playing process. It is also something that might remain. Because people realize they have to be open to what the playground might lead them into, what actions might be possi-

ble there. They can take everything you said as a resource to develop a game, and they can modify it in every playtest, by changing the location or the team structure. Being open, openness, is a key term for urban games.

Christiane Hütter: And most importantly, be open to playtesters. This is one thing that I find surprising each time: what you learn when you just make a playtest.

3. GAMES AND AGENCY

Andreas Rauscher: You mentioned the difference between site-specific and site-generic design. When you design an urban game and are recruiting play testers, are you already planning that it will be open to the people around? Is there already a kind of imagined role for them to take over as soon as the game starts? Or do you have to pull people standing around into the game? Christiane mentioned the social setting, and Philipp mentioned the subversive potential. How do you approach the process of integrating the people around you?

Christiane Hütter: In this playground work there are different levels of interaction with the »real« humans around – not the players, but the real humans. We often make them collaborators. For example, we want to make a game where we use private flats. Then we just walk around and look for people who let us use their flats. And not for our game, but for games we develop together with them based on their ideas of what kind of interaction could take place. This is a very deep level of participation. These people really become like non-player characters for us where you have to know it's not like theater, it's always very open, and you have to be very flexible to react on this. But your question was more about people just walking around and being there. You can separate different phases. In the research phase, we talk to everybody who is there; when the game is ready, most of the time it is for the players, and not for people who have to be brought in. We made some small games in which you have to gather people and make the group bigger or dance together in the pedestrian precincts. But this is not the usual case because you also see what is going on, and this is visible enough most of the times. It depends on the partner. We often work with art festivals, theaters, and other institutions, and they tend to have a specific idea of who to invite. Sometimes we also work with word of mouth propaganda or flyers on the location, but this is more for our own playtests.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: For us in research, if we are going to research something, we have a really narrow target group. We have to know what it is that we are investigating and who is going to answer that question. Depending on that, we have to develop a certain type of game. If it's for children, the activities are go-

ing to be totally different than activities that older people do in the city. I think Michael can relate to that.

Michael Straeubig: Generally, I am interested in an open approach toward play. Some games create social situations where you feel that you have to play. It is like visiting your friends and they say, »oh, let's play a board game!«, and you go, »hmm, do I really want to stay for two more hours?« For board games and many multiplayer games, it can also become difficult when someone decides to leave the game while it is running. What I am trying to achieve with playful experiences like *KlingKlangKlong*³ is that you can drop in and drop out anytime. It runs in the background and people can engage with it for a minute, an hour, or a day. I try to make the boundary between playing and not playing more permeable and the game itself more ephemeral. My first commercial projects were event games designed for large groups of people. What you must avoid in these setups is forcing people into the game. The most terrible thing you can do is to tell players that they have to play when they would rather chat with their friends.

Andreas Rauscher: But it's a serious game, you have to play it! If the game is considered serious and you are having fun instead, you are out of the game!

Michael Straeubig: We may recall that period in theater when many theater people were thinking about how to break the fourth wall, and some were doing it by dragging some unfortunate audience members on stage and making them uncomfortable in front of the others. This is probably the most obnoxious idea in the history of performative arts. Rumor has it that there are ensembles still doing this. Unbelievable. How can you still do this?

Andreas Rauscher: It's really mean.

Michael Straeubig: Because it is based on a skewed power structure where the performers still want to perform their stuff. So you are being ridiculed, you are being exposed on stage, and this power structure is not right. I believe that you can open up the fourth wall and let people in, but it should be on equal terms. Players always must have agency. This is one thing that you learn in game design. You empower the player, and you let go of some power. Many traditional artists are quite scared by the idea to let go of their power. They want their artwork to be there and allow the audience to experience it. But the audience has no power. As game designers, we always relinquish power, and often the players have the power to deconstruct the game, to change it completely, even to destroy the game.

3 <http://playpublik.de/de/events/kling-klang-klong>.

Philipp Ehmann: One of my favorite sentences is, »You are playing the game wrong.« If you've allowed me to play it that way, then I am not playing the game wrong. I am just using it differently than you may have expected, which should be okay. I'm saying that as a theater director.

Christiane Hütter: I like creating games where people want to cheat and feel good about this. And cleverer than me.

Gwyn Morfey: I really like watching players create solutions. In *City Dash*, you wear a coat with three letters on it so we can tell whether we've seen you, and you are not allowed to cover it or take it off. But we had teams showing up in camouflage suits made up entirely out of coats. They were wearing their coat, but there were so many other ones, we couldn't tell what was going on. I mean, it's inside the rules, it's not cheating, really, it's really creative.

Philipp Ehmann: I think if we look at things like *Minecraft*, it provides a structure for people to be creative in a certain environment. That's all it does: to be playfully creative. And that's almost the best thing you can do as an artist, to provide a structure where people can be creative and free and sort of play around.

Judith Ackermann: By integrating these things into a city, you create a good area for the people around. They can decide by themselves how much they want to engage. They can just observe – I've seen many people here in Siegen sitting in cafés, watching and talking about what the people are doing there, why they are running around. Others were talking to players and asking them what they were doing, and maybe they started to play by themselves, or they adopted several games we used on the first day and played them on the next day. They are totally free to decide how deep they want to go into that. It is what you said, Philipp. Sometimes people prefer to say, »I am not a gamer, I don't do games.« But by seeing the actions that are interesting and appealing, they can decide if they want to move into the field of gaming, maybe by not even recognizing it at first. They're just playing.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: I think that would be ideal for everybody. Think about the city as a playground, or maybe as a stage, where people can present themselves, where they can interact with others and use the built environment to express themselves. The questions would be: Can game designers choreograph these interactions inside a game field? Can designers, like artists or planners, make it into a real game field, including policies that are implemented? Can that also help people feel in that situation and feel that they are allowed to play, to be free in the spaces they are using in their everyday life?

4. PLAYING WITH THE DARK SIDE; OR, THE AMBIGUITIES OF GAMING

Michael Straeubig: I totally think so, and I have to mention a widely discussed term: *gamification*. What it means is taking concepts from games and game design and applying them to non-game contexts, for example, to urban planning, education, or healthcare. Unfortunately, the term has been misunderstood and is now problematic. But I do think that in order to transform our lives, we can try to make things more enjoyable and more playful. You can try to make filing your taxes more playful; I try to do it every year. I remember watching the episode from *Black Books* (2000) where Bernard is filling out his tax forms. He drinks a lot of red wine, and, in the end, he has his receipts all over his body. It is difficult, but you can do it if you think about the distinction between reality inside and outside of a game. It is interesting to think about what our reality is and if you could possibly change it to a more playful reality. In my opinion, we mainly construct our reality, and games can help us to reshape reality.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: Maybe it's the fact that terms like *gamification* and *serious games* are doing something in your head that you don't like. I mean, policy makers can actually have a very playful approach and change the way a city works. I come from Colombia, and what one major did over there was, he just had this playful approach to confront people with »wrong« behavior. He targeted people who were driving and not stopping at the zebra crossings. He hired 100 or 200 mimes who would just play with people, standing on the zebra and making them see how illogical their way of driving was. In the beginning, many people – that was 10, 15 years ago – said, »we do not need some crazy person managing the biggest city in Colombia. We need somebody who can be serious!« But he was dead serious about what he was doing. He just realized that sometimes you need a playful way of telling people that what they are doing is wrong. Once you tell them, say confrontationally, no one is going to react in a nice way. And then we come to that part of learning from a game. How you can change your way of actually moving and interacting.

Michael Straeubig: This is an excellent example.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: So it's not the fact, it is this term.

Michael Straeubig: It's only the term *gamification* that is problematic, not the idea.

Christiane Hütter: Michael, you said that everybody constructs his or her own reality, and I think games are excellent for just uploading a special kind of shared reality and having a nice one together.

Andreas Rauscher: Considering the term *gamification*, there is also the problem of the intentions behind it. There is one side that can be playful and subversive, and there is another problematic one employed as disciplinary action for corporations. Marketing can have an aesthetic side to it that can be fun, but a really bad case of *gamification* would be collecting discount tickets from a shop and considering this to be a game. Sometimes, bad *gamification* works like this. I would also be interested in the question if there are any limits to game design. Is there a point when it turns from being subversive to disciplinary? For example, you can get certain skills from *World of Warcraft*, as we have discussed, but if you don't use the skill productively for yourself, you just become a kind of perfect bank clerk or a gold farmer.

Michael Straeubig: I wouldn't object to perfect bank clerks, but you are right. Games are artifacts. With many historical games, we don't know who started them, but the games we design are made by people who have certain intentions. And these intentions matter. If you want to entertain people, educate people, bring a message to people, then it does make a difference. Of course, as a player, you can always challenge the intentions of the designer. I think that a dialogue between players and game designers about intentions can be very fruitful. There are some quite uncomfortable games that have the intention to illuminate the dark side of play. Play can be addictive; play can be cruel; play can hurt someone's feelings. Play is not »just fun.« Play is something deeply integrated into life, and so it might have its evil sides as well.

Gwyn Morfey: Getting back to that distinction to where this *gamification* becomes a particular problem, when it just becomes bookkeeping or is being used to manipulate people but is not an actual game you would play for fun. One of the other terms I've heard used which I quite like is *pointsification*, where you just put points on things and call it a game. So, now you get 5 points for doing your homework and an extra 10 points for doing them three days in a row, and it's a transparent attempt to take some ideas from games to manipulate people, but it's not actually a game and it's definitely not fun. You can see that kind of thing in many pay to win apps these days. It's just a treadmill with points attached to it. I think that's maybe a useful way to make a distinction between the kind of »adding playfulness« that Marianne talked about and change the way a city runs and a cynical attempt to co-opt gaming to whatever you were doing before.

Andreas Rauscher: It would be a more honest term, *pointsification*.

Gwyn Morfey: Yeah, the *pointsification* of things.

Christiane Hütter: Concerning your question where the border is between good games and *gamification*: My answer is that the border is where there is a

change in how you see human beings. What is a human being for you, and how serious do you take your players? Do you want them to be empowered; do you want them to grow through your game? I think that nobody who makes this *pointsification* can say this.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: It's an ethical question also in research because, for example, we analyze the navigation through a game and therefore also analyze people. Their wayfinding, their orientation in real space, that's data. We have all this data, but what do we do with it? The question is, are you just my subject that I am trying to analyze and are you just good for that, or am I giving you this experience and really want to know what your thoughts are? It's cool that you are here, but I have the GPS data as well. What is the ethical line here? What do we do with your data?

Andreas Rauscher: So it could be the data becoming determining. You have the playful approach, on the one side, and on the other, you have the research data without people really knowing where it goes.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: This has happened, actually. Many of the apps for cyclists that can rate which routes are really nice to go down to, which ones are really well kept – cities can buy this data and then plan around that data. Is that a game?

Andreas Rauscher: It would be a hybrid of *pointsification* and navigational skills.

Christiane Hütter: When it comes to economic systems, you also have this big theme complex of micro transactions inside of games. And then there is the ethical question how to crack people's motivation so that they want to buy better arms or whatever inside the game and that they somehow have to because they are in this, I say magic circle or flow, and just have a different state of mind, and you are very easily caught or manipulated.

Andreas Rauscher: It is more like a theme park where the entrance is free but you have to pay for every separate area and attraction you want to enter.

Philipp Ehmann: At that point, again it's all about intentions and being open about these intentions. They could tell people, »this is a really great bike app, and if you are using it, we will maybe collect the data and maybe change how the city works.« As a cyclist, I might be interested in doing that, but it is a different thing if I know about it or if it is just happening behind my back. I know the structure of the game if I know it's pay-to-win. Will I then still be interested in playing it, or will I be saying, no sorry?

Andreas Rauscher: Or can you even play it if you only win by paying? Is there even the slightest chance to win the game if you are not willing to pay those in-game points?

Philipp Ehmann: It is not a game anymore because paying is not a mechanic that is playful in any way.

Christiane Hütter: In the right frame, it can also be a great game because it just maps how big parts of the world work. When you know that all the money I spent in the game is collected to make a very big prize for the people who win this game competition, then it can also be a motivation for me. But when I don't know where the money is going, I always think it is the company, and then I am not very content with this.

Andreas Rauscher: Especially if you are promised free entrance and are charged after that. It would be like doing an urban game, and afterwards everyone who participates has to pay a fee.

Christiane Hütter: You can also lock the mobile phones of the people who are playing, and then they may just unlock them by paying after the game.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: We'd be turning to the dark side.

Christiane Hütter: Because playing is evil.

Andreas Rauscher: There is an interesting approach by Miguel Sicart about the fascination of dark play. He says that play is a dance between appropriation and resistance so that there is fulfillment and disappointment at the same time. Can you think of ways beyond *gamification* to discover the darker sides of the human psyche in play? What are your thoughts about this? How can you use negative emotions in play, or are they contradictory to play?

Philipp Ehmann: One of the funniest things in play or non-play is to just muck about with your friends and then trick them into doing something or being tricked yourself. I remember a card game where you are supposed to trick people. It's all about the tension before you are being tricked, and that tension turns around when someone tricks someone. It's actually quite fun being tricked as well. Even if you lose, it's still an interesting mechanic. It can be extremely fun.

Andreas Rauscher: It's a point where you have elements of storytelling, or like an improvisational theater, it's dramatic, it goes very wrong for most of the characters, but it has a kind of fulfillment in the way the situation is acted out. A payoff

regarding storytelling: Maybe you were cheated, but, at the same time, you admire the way you got tricked into this.

Philipp Ehmann: Exactly. It is all about creativity. Cheating is finding creative ways to change the game.

Andreas Rauscher: As Christiane said, it is a kind of game appropriation that you already expect to happen when designing the game. Somebody will come along and say, »Oh, you can do this!« After that you realize, »Okay, I have not thought about that.«

Gwyn Morfey: The other way to look at this is that games are made to give people experiences that they wouldn't normally have. You spend your life being a good guy, so it can be quite fun to get into a game and play as the bad guy and actually go and try to sort of crush people and conquer empires and things you wouldn't normally do.

Christiane Hütter: This is funny. Sometimes you have to give a lot of energy to people because people are afraid to be evil in the game. I designed a game in Berlin in which a small group had to be terrorists and plan a bomb attack, and they also had to kidnap one of the moderators (me). In the end, they did not want to kidnap anybody, so they made their own video. Afterwards, a friend of mine, an actor who was playing with this group and whom I had planted there because I knew she would like this, told me: »Okay, next time, I want to play the evil guys.« I said: »Hello? You just didn't follow the rules to be good, you know this.« And she said: »Ah, ok, hmm, now I know.« So it is not so easy to turn to this obviously evil behavior.

Philipp Ehmann: It is also a way of conquering fear sometimes. I have a game called *Weeping Angels*.⁴ A friend of mine played it, and she said she could only play it as a Weeping Angel because she was so afraid of them. They are villains from *Dr. Who*, for all you geeks out there.

Andreas Rauscher: When you look at them, they freeze on the spot, but when you turn your back on them, they start moving again in order to attack you.

Philipp Ehmann: Exactly.

Andreas Rauscher: They're really scary.

4 <http://pje.me/post/60168735832/weepingangels>.

Philipp Ehmann: This is a game mechanic: When you shine a light on Weeping Angels, they have to freeze, but once the light is gone, they can attack you. She had to play as a Weeping Angel because she was so afraid of them that she only could play as the evil character within the game, which I think is an interesting concept because she could not deal with the stress.

Judith Ackermann: I want to come back to the question of cheating because I remember your games in Cologne, *Monsters Hunt*,⁵ for example, where my colleague and I had the great idea to connect to each other so that the monsters could not hunt us. It was not outside the rules, but when the other players saw us, they really got mad. They made us go to the teamers, and we had to discuss with you, Christiane, whether we could proceed like that or not. This points to the emotions that were created and also to the creativity of cheating, which was not intended in that way, and again toward seriousness. The people were totally serious when they said, »this is the game and you have to play it that way and these are the rules and you are not allowed to make it wrong for all of us.« This also shows how players add their own rules, how they are free to integrate something of themselves into the game, while the game designers have to be open and flexible because they might see their game being played in a totally different way than imagined.

Andreas Rauscher: This is a very interesting point because earlier on we mentioned the artistic vision and that you have to give up control as a game designer; you aren't the master of the narrative like in a film or in a book. Would there be a point where you have the feeling that people take your game so completely wrong and play it in a way that you don't agree with at all so that you would say, »no, you have misunderstood the intention of the game?« For example, if you turn it into a game that is hurtful?

Gwyn Morfey: This has actually happened to me. One of the things I learned is that players will have fun in your game, whether you like it or not. In the *City Dash* game, players are meant to be running around, finding checkpoints, getting points and things. There was one team of about thirty people for whom this wasn't working. While we were out there, I get a message on my phone saying, »we have kidnapped one of your guards, send us 200 points and buy us drinks.« Obviously I text them back and go, »I need proof of life first.« The next thing I get was a video of one of my guards going: »uhhhm, give them the points.« So I thought, there is not much I can do. I get back to the pub and give them the points and buy them the drinks. This was not *City Dash*, but they were having fun doing it. It turned out they hadn't even kidnapped one of my guards; they just had a reflec-

5 <https://vimeo.com/52565487>.

tive vest, put it over one of their own guys, and filmed it from an angle so I couldn't see. It was absolute genius. They're playing a completely different game.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: This is bound to happen with anything you design, whether it is a game or a building. People will use it in ways that you couldn't imagine that they were going to be used. After a while, if the approach you had in your design process wasn't the one the people using it prefer, it is bound to be changed by somebody else, some other designer or the people using it. If you don't want to be that open about your game turning into something else, don't worry. Somebody else is going to do it for you sometime anyways.

Andreas Rauscher: I think the comparison to architecture is quite enlightening because you can provide a building but you don't know what the people that move into it will do.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: Yeah, people play with buildings and stuff in buildings that an architect really didn't ever imagine to happen.

Christiane Hütter: But still, the building will be a building, and in a design process, it can be an interesting question to see which rules are hard rules and which rules are soft rules. You don't need a table for a board game, but you cannot play it swimming in a pool, for example.

Michael Straeubig: As a designer, you are working with expectations of expectations. You are trying to figure out what your players will expect from the game and you might be getting it totally wrong. It is like the situation of that person who calls the police, saying, »I am driving on the highway and all the other cars are in the wrong lane.« As a designer, if you find yourself in that situation, you could say that the players have appropriated the game completely differently from what you expected and that this is okay. Or you can feel like the misunderstood genius who made this masterpiece that everyone else just doesn't get. It is up to you, I think. One of the things I like about games is that they allow a lot of space for interpretation. I like to see games as things that are continuously in flux, and not as finished artifacts we place in front of people.

5. THE CITY AS PLAYGROUND

Andreas Rauscher: Are there any questions from the audience?

Audience Member #1: I was wondering if the discussion could be turned a little bit more toward the urban context, in the sense of what is happening when game mechanics and all the stuff you have been talking about are applied to an urban setting. Can you ruminate on that a bit?

Christiane Hütter: When you are making games in urban settings, you always have to know that there are already many rules, and you have to be very aware in which place you will have what kind of game. Otherwise you will have the police there, and that wouldn't be good. It depends a lot on the city you are in, what country you are in – every place is different, and there is not a kind of manual on what is allowed where.

Andreas Rauscher: But you could also do a kind of subversive political game by integrating the police, like in street art. You know, this is a game at a certain time, and we have time until the police arrives. That could also be an option. Maybe if you get caught, it will be a very expensive game.

Philipp Ehmann: As Christiane mentioned earlier, the magic circle in the public space setting is always open, or at least half open, so there will be people who are looking on, who are not actually part of the game or not playing. But they are still part of the game in some way, shape, or form.

Christiane Hütter: What we see more and more are games serving as a tool for urban development. City planners are taking a closer look at urban games and at what you can do with them, and I think it is very interesting to think more about games in urban spaces in connection with architecture. Last year, Invisible Playground did the first *Championship of Gameful Architecture*⁶ in Witten, and in many places, similar things are happening.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: The potential of the urban playground is the fact that the city has a high density of players. And the playground is so much different from a rural setting. You have this city landscape that is ever transforming – the fact that you don't only have pedestrians, you have people cycling, and you have motorized transportation. You have to take all of this into account for the game. In the urban scene, you have to think about interactions, think about the social part, think about the built environment, let people who know something about that built environment have a voice in the discussion of creating those games, and have people who know about games. That's a really interesting part for urban planners to understand these dynamics and learn what games can offer them. It is also a way of having people participating in a design process through a game and letting them have a forum where they can structure their own neighborhood in a playful manner, telling you something about what they want to happen in that urban space.

Judith Ackermann: It also has another layer because you have to talk with all the institutions and owners of buildings you want to use, and they have the

6 <http://72hourinteractions.com/info?locale=en#>.

chance to think about what should be happening in their buildings, think about rules they don't want to change as well as those they are willing to change. This even initiates some kind of openness and reflection in people who are not actively integrated into the games but are part of the environment.

Michael Straeubig: Another element of pervasive games in urban environments is when the players realize that they are being observed by other people while they are playing and possibly behaving in unusual ways. For example, it is a really interesting experience when you meet somebody in the city while you are playing a game. It is like shifting in and out of these different realities, which I find intriguing. I made a game called *Speed Gardening Guerrilla*.⁷ It is a Guerrilla Gardening game, so the players are planting plants in the city. The question of whether we allowed to do that inevitably comes up, and the answer is usually »no.« But exactly how illegal is it to put plants into the city? In Madrid, for example, I was told that you shouldn't play while the police is nearby. These kinds of things are interesting to me, to use games as tools for these kind of negotiations. In a sense, the players are not only playing, but they are also observed by their environment and they are observing the observers. So playing in open spaces has some interesting dynamics.

Andreas Rauscher: Could there also be a kind of stalemate situation because everybody is just observing the other one so no one acts anymore. Has this happened?

Michael Straeubig: I haven't witnessed a kind of deadlock situation, but there could be, yes. In geocaching, for example, you try to avoid non-players. You don't want them to watch you digging out the cache. This is an interesting social situation, with players and non-players.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: To come back to the urban point: 51% of the world population is living in a city. This is the century of the city! More and more of us are going to be living in a city, so how do we understand this living together? We are going to build our future; we are the ones who have the possibility to construct that reality for ourselves. Games are such a nice way to interact, to build new friendships. That's one of the most important things in life, actually being able to do something with other people. Let's make the most of it. Since we are living in cities, let's make everybody have those interactions through games.

7 http://ludocity.org/wiki/Speed_Gardening_Guerilla.

6. FUNDING URBAN GAMES

Audience member #2: I was beginning to wonder about funding, and now I am just going to ask. Obviously there will be public funding for many of these projects, I guess from cultural institutions or from academic institutions. What I was wondering was if there are models that go more into a commercial direction or if the nature of highly local urban games prevents you from actually going into that direction?

Gwyn Morfey: That's part of why I am standing here, because that is exactly what I am trying to do. I started Fire Hazard Games as a hobby back when I had a fulltime job. I quit the job and am trying to build it into a kind of company that can sustain me and everybody else in it. Purely commercially. We do not have any kind of outside funding. The model is that we sell tickets. You want to come and play *City Dash* in London; we have a website with a list of dates, you put in your credit card number, pay fifteen quid per play. Come along and play and have a great time. That's our model. It seems to work; it started to get traction for Fire Hazard. But I have also seen it done on a larger scale. There is a company called Slingshot Factory in Bristol that has started doing free festivals. They developed a game that started off free, and they eventually added zombies to it, which is the way to getting commercial success. It is now called *2.8 Hours Later*,⁸ and it is massive. They do two-week runs in every major city in the UK; the tickets are, I think, 30 or 40 quid now. It is a commercial cooperation and it works, it has been running for years.

Philipp Ehmman: The way we sometimes work is that public institutions are doing basically the same thing for 500 people and they are paying for it, so that is a similar model. Google could come up to us and say they want a game from us and they are paying for it. Which would also be similar, I think – that also works. For us, it is mostly public institutions now. It is funding of some sort.

Audience Member #2: How is that different from marketing, if you are paid by a big cooperation?

Philipp Ehmman: It doesn't have anything to do with marketing.

Audience Member #2: I was wondering, because *gamification* got a sort of bad rep in the discussion – I understand why, but...

Philipp Ehmman: We provide a service for these institutions. For example, the next project we have coming up is for Caritas. They have a festival, which is not a

8 <http://2.8hourslater.com/>.

street game festival, but they want a street game at the festival. Obviously, we as artists need to live from something. We need to pay our rent. They pay us a certain fee so that we have the time to design the project for them. They pay other artists to play music, do a theater piece, or whatever suits them. I don't think there is any *gamification* in that.

Michael Straeubig: Maybe we should mention that the whole sector is ridiculously underfunded compared to other media like film or even computer games. It is great that cultural institutions like the British Council, Kulturstiftung des Bundes, and the Goethe Institute have been supporting some events. But, in general, the urban play community is absolutely not sustainable at the moment. Yes, there are some models for financing these projects. Crowdfunding would be one of them, taking fees would be another, and there is some public money for events. But, still, it is a bleak situation, I would say, for the majority of people involved.

Marianne Halblaub Miranda: Games are just like any new medium. Film also had to work to get to that point, and now you go to the theater and pay for movies, but they have the funding for that. When something is new, you have to talk about it. You have to define terms and have all these discussions with people who are working in the game area so that, later on, you will be able to explain it, to show everybody what it is about, how you can actually work with it, or why you should pay for a game.

Judith Ackermann: And the interdisciplinarity doesn't make it easier to get funding. It becomes even tougher if you're doing something for the first time and cannot refer to your last successful project. We worked pretty hard to get the playin'siegen festival funded, and were lucky to find enough institutions and sponsors willing to support us with rather little amounts. This has the advantage that it keeps their risk low in case we are not successful in our plans. Of course, it would have been easier if we had one institution saying, »okay, we know this area and we know the potential in it, and we support it, even though it doesn't fit our typical activities.« But when those things get more frequent, that might evolve. It is a process that is still at the beginning.

Christiane Hütter: This is typically German – funding systems. When you want something funded or supported in Germany, the first questions are: Has anyone done this anywhere before, and was it successful? Then you can get the money. But to say something positive, in my experience and the experience of my group, it is also a very big advantage that games are so multidisciplinary and that you can, if you are creative, spend time looking for applications and then find connected or related fields to enhance your own horizon in doing stuff. But back to your question about whether marketing is worse than cultural funding. I would say no from the content side because in order to achieve cultural funding, you very often have

to reshape what you want to do. At least in the context of my work, you are even less restricted with marketing. But, of course, I hope that the whole funding system will grow bigger and bigger to create more sustainable work for more people.

Audience member #3: I can think of one example of political gaming we had in Hamburg. It was the *Danger Zone*⁹ game in January 2014. We had a big demonstration in Hamburg in December that escalated. The police pretended to get attacked by a leftist group, but that didn't happen. And the Hamburg people were really angry. The police created a danger zone in the center of the city, and they did it on a Friday afternoon. The danger zone means that they were allowed to control everybody who was walking inside this zone without them having done anything. And from the night of Friday to Saturday, a Facebook page appeared – it was in English and German – telling people that the danger zone is open and that they should come and wear black clothes and put fake bombs in their backpacks, or fake drugs. And then they said, »if you have a picture with a policemen, you get fifteen points.« It started overnight and they had daily winners, and then they started to have actions, such winning a prize for pictures of policemen taking stupid things, like a toilet brush, out of your backpack. Somebody actually brought a brush, and on the title page of a major newspaper there was a picture of a policeman holding a toilet brush. This was the symbol of the whole protest, and it got so big that people who weren't on Facebook and didn't know about the game told me: »I don't know what is happening, but I am sitting at my window, and there are five people running and having a lot of fun, and hundred meters behind, twenty policemen are coming.« So this was a really great way of motivating a political action, playing with the police and not being illegal because no one was able to really get you for something.

Andreas Rauscher: This is a good example of playing the city and appropriating urban space through gaming. I want to thank all of you very much for these interesting insights!

9 <http://www.schleckysilberstein.com/2014/01/danger-zone-das-real-life-game-der-gefahrenzone-hamburg/>.