

Fun, Immersion and Agency: The User Experience





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Outline:

- Gaming culture(s): creativity, productivity and sociality of cultures that support and surround videogaming
- Fanfiction, fanart, cosplay
- Configurative and transformative gaming practices
- Modding, fan translations and hacking
- Reception: case study on the reception of L10N quality of *TES IV:Oblivion*

Outline: Making a case for the gamer (community)

- **Intrinsic nature of the medium** → immersion & agency 
- **Web 2.0** landscape → central role of the user in creating, manipulating and sharing content 
- **Marketing concept** → instead of a product- centred, make-and-sell philosophy, marketing involves “the art and science of choosing target markets and getting, keeping, and growing customers through creating, delivering, and communicating superior customer value” (Kotler, 2006)
- Mainstream translation theory: “What do we know about the target-text receiver? ” (Nord, 2000)

Immersion and agency

- **Immersion:** feeling of being present in another place and engaged in the action therein [...] When a participant is immersed in an experience, they are willing to accept the internal logic of the experience, even though this logic deviates from the logic of the real world.
- **Agency:** feeling of empowerment that comes from being able to take actions in the world whose effects relate to the player's intention. (Mateas and Stern, 2006)

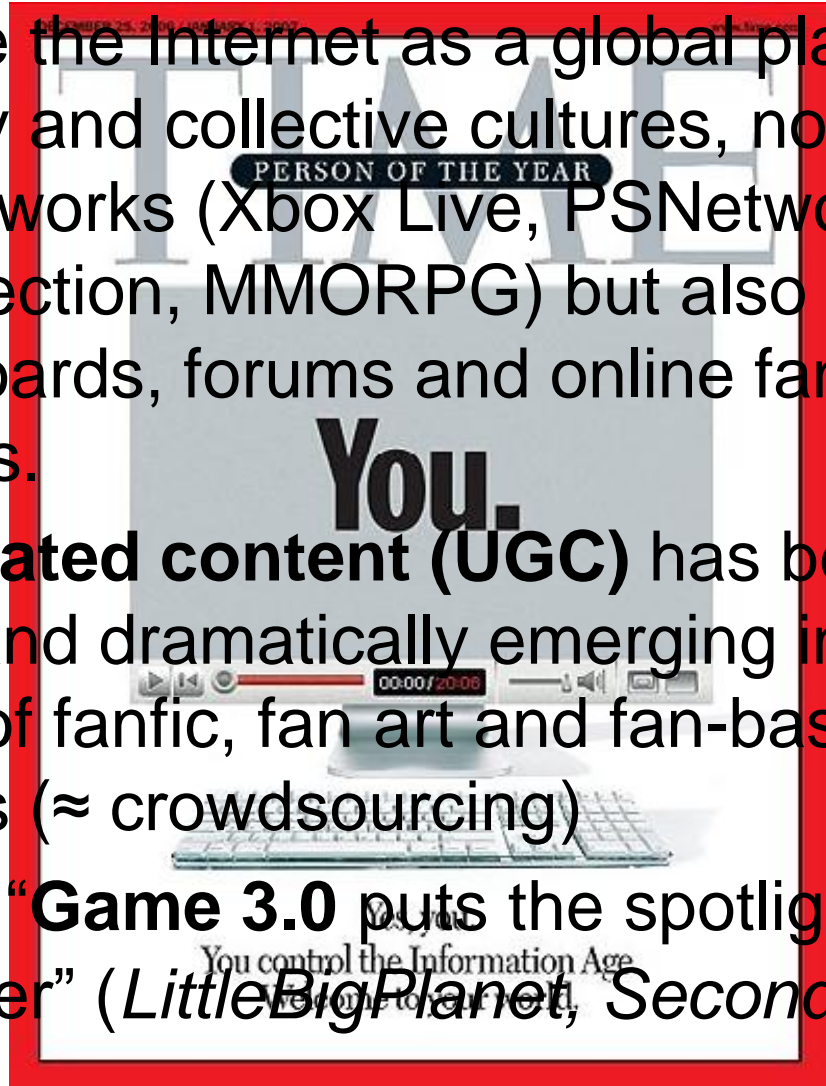
- high level of customisation
- strong psychomotor identification

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p2qIHoxPioM>



Web 2.0 → Game 3.0

- Gamers use the Internet as a global platform for participatory and collective cultures, not only through Networks (Xbox Live, PSNetwork, Nintendo Wi-Fi Connection, MMORPG) but also through message boards, forums and online fan communities.
- **User-generated content (UGC)** has been constantly and dramatically emerging in the production of fanfic, fan art and fan-based localisations (≈ crowdsourcing)
- New vision: “**Game 3.0** puts the spotlight back on the consumer” (*LittleBigPlanet*, *Second Life*)(Radd, 2007)

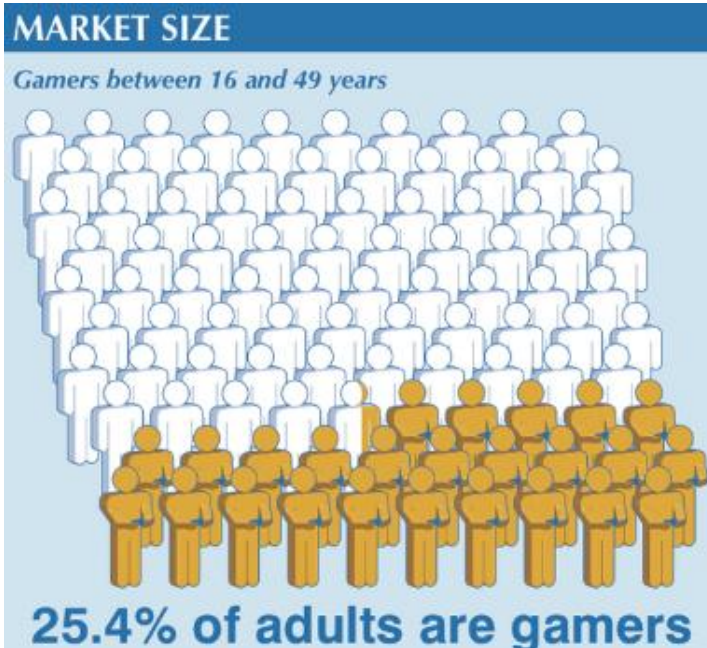


What kind of gamer are you?

- Casual gamer
- Hardcore gamer
- Pro Gamer
- Otaku
- Gaymers, retrogamers..



Gamers: the European scene



Regional Game Industry Associations
(vs. Rating boards):

ISFE (Europe)

ESA (USA)

ESAC (Canada)

CESA (Japan)

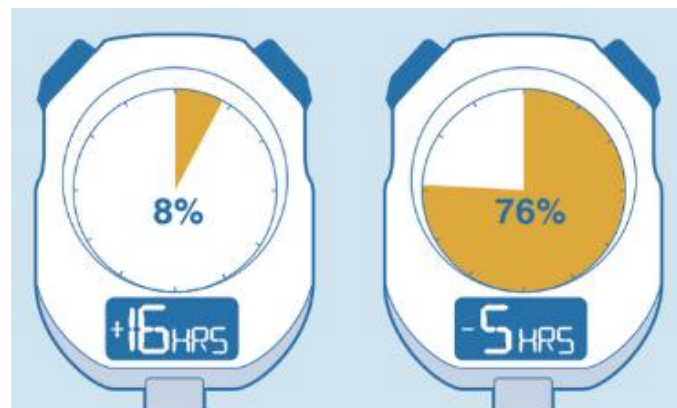
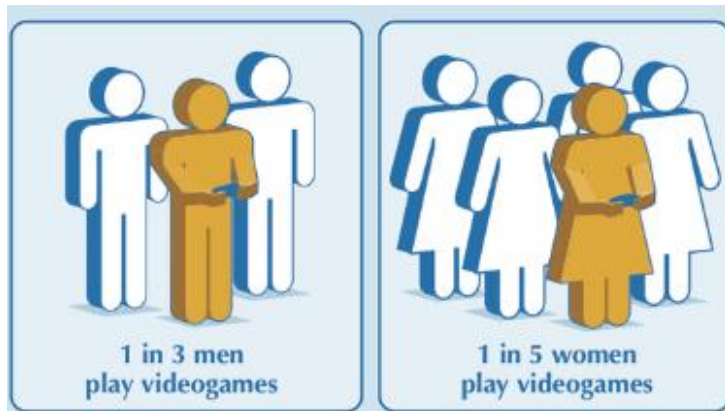
KGDI (Korea)

IEAA (Australia)

India?

China?

Central/South America?





Gaming as a social practice: Performance and ‘watercooler’ moments

- (physically proximate) Multi-player gaming
 - wi-fi connection (Nintendo DS)
 - LAN-parties
 - arcade malls
- Dedicated gaming networks (MMORPGs, Xbox Live...)
- Specialist gaming press
- Dedicated web sites (Game FAQs, Fanfiction), and gameplay footage hubs (Game Videos)
- Blogs, forums and message boards

Fan-based practices: re-shaping the representational system

- Fanfiction
- Fanart
- Cosplay
- Musical composition: remixing and replaying
 - inspired by videogames as a form of art and by official collections of game novelisations (drawn from *Halo* or *Resident Evil*) and artwork (*Game heros*, *Half-life 2: raising the bar* etc.)
 - collective intelligence



Fanfiction

- Fanfiction: original fictional narratives based upon and around games
 - supportive nature: beta-reading
 - collective intelligence: trend towards high standards of style and adherence to the canon

<http://www.fanfiction.net/>

Fanart

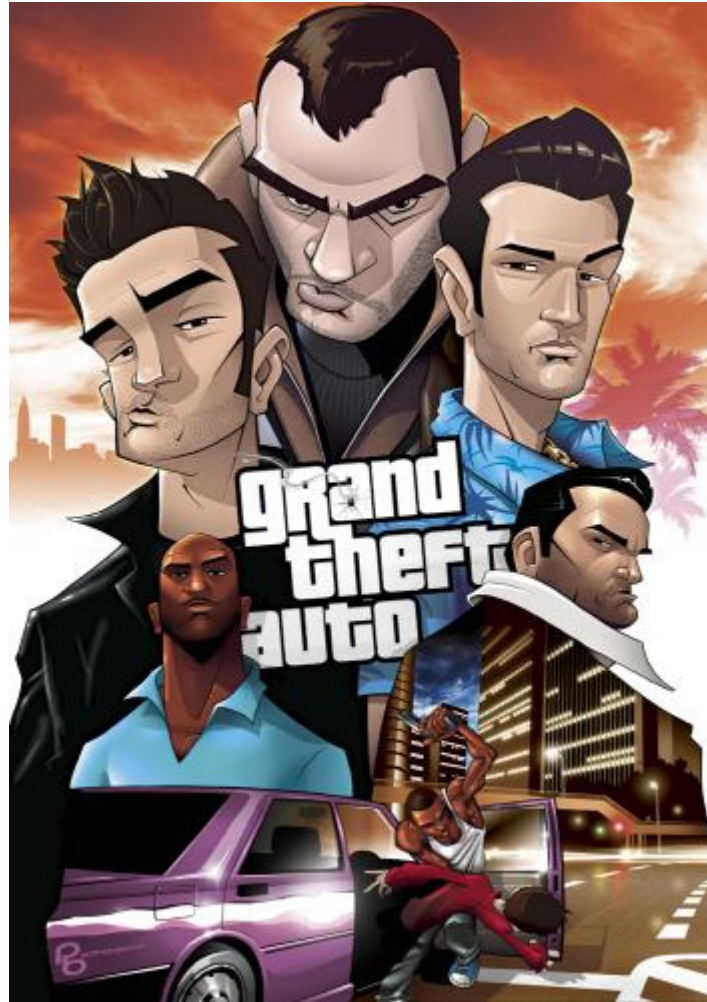
- Fanart: original production of (static) images, but could cover a range of productive activity including music, craft, costume and machinima.

Fanart



Toad by Robotpencil

Fanart



Grand Theft Auto: LEGENDS by patrickbrown

Fanart



Princess Peach by DashMartin

Fanart: Yaoi

- Yaoi (Slash): Visual art genre that centres on male-male relationships.

Ex.: God of war: Kratos-Lloyd



(Burn, 2006; Newman, 2006)

Cosplay



- Cosplay: blend of “costume” and “roleplay”, act of dressing up as characters from popular animation, films and videogames.
- the manufacture of original costumes is an integral part of the culture - trade
- Digital dress-up is a major feature in many genres
- linked to the Japanese culture, where popular arenas for display are dedicated restaurants and Tokyo’s Harajuku Station
- in the West offline cosplay is restricted to promotional events or LARP (Live Action RolePlaying Game)

Configurative/Transformative Performance and Play

- Walkthroughs
- Game Guides
- FAQs
- Superplay
 - speedrunning (*QuakeDoneQuick*)
 - high scores
- Machinima
 - Scholarly studies have provided insightful perspectives on how gamers receive, describe and re-shape gameplay

Walkthroughs: contentious texts

- Virtual tour guides that help gamers towards success (not only completion), offering hints and guidance
 - Official strategy guides
 - Unofficial game guides

Game Guides

- Usually written in plain text: reverse engineering
- Tend towards completion or configurative gameplay (*Quake done Quick*)
- Walkthroughs
- Cheats
- Glitches
- Credits

HOW TO USE QUICK FIND

Each section has a quick find in the []'s. Press Control and F and type in the letters in the []'s and press Enter to find that certain section. This is so you don't have scroll through the entire document looking for the right section.

CONTENTS

1. History
2. Character Bios [CHB]
3. Limit Breaks [LIB]
4. Walkthrough [WLK]

DISC 1 [DSC1]

- 1.1 Mako Power Plant [PP1]
- 1.2 Midgar City [MDG1]

Glitch Hunting

- Glitches: bugs/anomalies that range from graphical artefacts or inconsistencies, to system crashes or save data corruption.
- Attitudes towards glitches:

Pokémon:

Gotta Catch'em all!



Zero Wing – L10N



Superplay: showing your mastery

- Superplay: variety of gaming practices bound together by a common desire to demonstrate mastery of the game
 - speedrun: complete the game in the fastest possible time (Quake done Quick)
 - attaining high scores
 - sequence breaking
 - TAS: tool-assisted speedruns
- social and gameplay implications

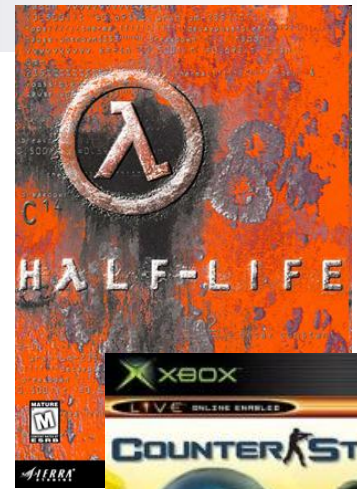
Machinima

- Machinima: filmmaking in videogame environments, using game characters and environments of games as cast and location for cinematic production.
 - Academy of Machinima Arts and Sciences
 - Festivals
 - *The Movies* (2005) game project by Lionhead Studios

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k08gjJbxG-A>

Playing with code

- Modding: modifying game platforms (modchips) or modifying game assets (institutionalised through toolkits provided by developers, PC games)
- **Fanslations**
- Hacking: acquiring or tampering with the game code illegally
- Cracking: illicit practices like circumventing regional codes, bypassing copyright protection systems and ripping game code



Fanslations: Translation hacking

- Fansubs/fandubs of film, TV programmes and anime
- Scanlation (scanning+translation) of manga and comics
- Crowdsourcing (community localisation): outsourcing localisations to volunteers, especially for minor locales, increasingly exploited by digital editors (*Facebook*)

Fanslations: the journey towards recognition

- *Mother 3*, (*Earthbound 2*) fan translation case: massive petition and engagement of the fan communities (fanfic, fanart) to urge publishers to localise the game in English → unofficial path released in 2008
- The ITP fan translation group in Italy
 - *Planescape: Torment*
 - *The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind*

Distributor: Italian magazine *GMC*

- Re-translations: *TES IV: Oblivion*



Investigating the reception of L10n: *Oblivion* in Italy

- In AVT, reception/perception studies aim to investigate how the target audience receives and judges translated films and television programmes, drawing on marketing and statistical techniques.
- Aims of the study:
 - 1 - to assess the weight of linguistic bugs in relation to cosmetic and functional bugs according to Italian users.
 - 2 - to assess the degree of severity of linguistic bugs according to Italian users.

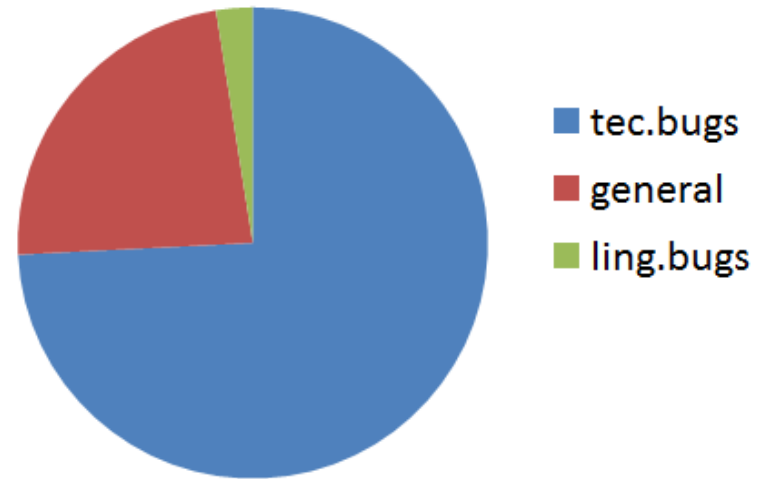
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Si83Mf3YzA>

Methodology

- Statistical analysis of the gamers' posts contained in 3 forums (hardware/software issues message boards)
 - 1- Official Forum of Bethesda Softworks/TES (English)
<http://forums.bethsoft.com/index.php?forum/23-oblivion-hardware-and-software-issues/>
 - 2- Italian Oblivion Fan Forum
 - 3- “Hardware upgrade” Italian web site dedicated to technology
- Shortcomings:
 - the game was released in 2006, a few forums are not available any more (SourceForge, community forum of the amateur team that re-translated *Oblivion*)
 - partly limited scope of the sample

Results: Italian Oblivion Fan Forum (hardware/software issues)

- 159 topics
- 118 sw/hw problems
 - crashes, installation, graphical and AI glitches
- 37 general questions about quests, gameplay and patches
- 4 topics complain about linguistic glitches
 - untranslated strings and overall linguistic quality of the Italian version (moderators seem to be mild about linguistic bugs)



Results: “Hardware upgrade” Italian Forum (hw/sw issues+translation message board)

- 416 topics (340+76)
- 359 regard software/hardware problems
- 60 regard general questions about quests, mods and patches
- 97 topics are centred on linguistic glitches
 - 43 % grammatical errors and fluency
(very critical judgments about the linguistic quality of the Italian version and localisations in general)
 - 30% untranslated strings
 - 13% punctuation, accents
 - 8 % consistency of project terminology
 - 6% other

Conclusions

- Italian gamers did not report localisation issues to the developer/publisher through the official English forum (as of 2011)
- Forum communities revealed different reactions to linguistic bugs, partly due to the size/type of community and the time span of posts (the hw/sw message board of the Oblivion Fan Forum was opened in 2009)
- Oblivion was rated positively by game magazines and web sites, and was a global market success, partly thanks to the introduction of the TES Construction Set for mods; yet the huge amount of gamers' posts and videos witnesses the “buggy” reputation of the developer's works
- Bethesda has paid the penalty in the following works, *Skyrim* and *Fallout: Las Vegas*. This was withdrawn from the market soon after its release after massive complaints about serious bugs.



Thanks for your attention

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