Newsgames –
Typological approach, re-contextualization and potential of an underestimated emerging genre

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I."News+ Games = News-games?" - In Place of a Definition

News = actual, topical facts and arguments, critical reflection

Games = amusement, leisure and entertainment
Newsgames

Tell me and I'll forget;
show me and I may remember;
involve me and I'll understand.

Chinese Proverb
Newsgames
I. "News + Games = News-games?"
   In Place of a Definition

II. "Play the news! – Play any news?!"
   1. Genres and sub-Genres
      A typological approach and re-contextualization
   2. Making playful sense –
      Discussion of a systematic-analytical and interpretive model

III. "Journalism@play?"
   Challenges and opportunities and for journalistic games
"News + Games = News-games?" - In Place of a Definition

a definitorial *approach*

- *procedural* coverage of the topic
- play and experience
- insight and understanding of system dynamics at large

game content and/or dynamics are based on *actual facts*

usage of *digital media*
II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!
Genres and sub-Genres – A typological approach and re-contextualization

**Interactive infographics**
- **purpose:** tool to help understand visualized data by synthesizing it through play
- **re-contextualization:** traditional infographics
- **examples:** *Budget Hero; Hurricane Makers*

Illustration 1: Interactive infographics – *South Florida Sun Sentinel's Hurricane Maker*
II. "Play the news! – Play any news?!“
Genres and sub-Genres – A typological approach and re-contextualization

**Current event games**

- **purpose**: conveying opinion on **topical** events
- **re-contextualization**: editorial of newspaper, equivalent to column, letter from the editor; feature
- **(sub-)genres of current events games**
  - if used as an equivalent to column, article:
    - short, bite-sized works, conveying small bits of information or opinion
  - if used as an equivalent to feature (i.e. more complex):
    - reportage game
II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!“
Genres and sub-Genres – A typological approach and re-contextualization

**Editorial games**

- **re-contextualization**: convey opinion, equivalent to column, letter from the editor
- **examples**: *September 12th; Kabul Kaboom!; Layouff!*

Illustration 2: Editorial Newsgames - Bejeweled as 'role-model' for Layouff!
II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!”
Genres and sub-Genres – A typological approach and re-contextualization
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Reportage games

- **re-contextualization**: emulate factual *reporting* more complex in content
- **examples**: *Food Import Folly*; *Mama Kills Animals!*

Illustration 3: Reportage Games – *New York Times: Food Import Folly*
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**Documentary games**

- **purpose:** present more complex topics; more thorough 'exploration'
- **re-contextualization:** feature; documentary film [// web-documentary]
- **example:** JFK Reloaded; Gaza/Sderot; Fort McMoney; Prison Valley
II. "Play the news! – Play any news?!
Genres and sub-Genres – A typological approach and re-contextualization

Illustration 4: Documentaty game – *JFK Reloaded*
II. "Play the news! – Play any news?!“
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**Further (sub-)Genres:**

- Puzzle games
- News literacy games
- Community newsgames
II. "Play the news! – Play any news?!“
Discussion of a systematic-analytical and interpretive model

Treanor, Mateas, Michael et al.: towards a 'game wizard' (?)

- **analysis**
  - remove thematic mapping

- **interpretative model**
  - detect deep structure → deduct possible interpretations

- **design**
  - take 'message' and break it down into 'formula'
  - form meaning-classes/roles

- **implementation**
  - find signifying images to 'fill' roles
II. "Play the news! – Play *any* news?!

Discussion of a systematic-analytical and interpretive model

"*Play* the news! – Play *any* news?!

- risk to stimulate 'subversive play' or 'oppositional reading'
- 'serially' produced newsgames → dull
- digital media offer surplus features!
  → geolocative newsgames
  → integration of user-generated content
III. "Journalism@play?"
Challenges and opportunities for journalistic games

**producer perspective**

- organizational challenges for realization
timeliness
  vs. accurate investigation?
  vs. creative and effective design?
  vs. procedurally proposed argument?
III. "Journalism@play?"
Challenges and opportunities for journalistic games

recipient perspective

• lack of 'procedural literacy'
  → misinterpretation or no interpretation at all (due to false expectations as to games)

• possible solution:
  • newsgames first as supplements to establish the genre
  • then as independent medium for doing good journalism
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research perspective

• very ephemeral, heterogeneous corpus
• lack of interdisciplinary approaches
• reflection vs. immersion?

→ different kinds of engagement!
  • naturally reflexive ('rule-based')
  • 'deeper insight' beyond the visible → underlying mechanisms!
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research perspective

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research perspective

→ different kinds of engagement!
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**Play the News –**
but maybe not *any* news
and do so deliberately!

Thank you for your attention ....

.... and looking forward to discussion!!