

How "the serious" can enrich your game experience

What is a game?

A game is...

- ... an interactive system
- ... not necessarily digital
- ... defined by a set of rules
- ... supposed to be entertaining

What is a serious game?

- Could "Serious game" be a genre?
 - Genres describe the gameplay, not the purpose
 - A game's *gameplay* can not be serious
- Serious games are games made for a purpose other than **pure** entertainment
 - ▶ "Normal" games are "Entertainment games"
 - ▶ The only difference between serious games and entertainment games is their purpose

How serious games work

- Good games engage the player
 - Engagement is good for learning
 - Use engagement to trigger a learning process
- ▶ Applying game design mechanics to the learning process makes it more fun to do
- ▶ A serious game needs to be engaging

The 5 Types of "serious"

- K nowledge
 - U nderstanding
 - B ehavior
 - E thics
 - E motion
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- ▶ The KUBEE-model

Knowledge

- The player is not informed about a certain topic
 - What the player thinks to know is wrong
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- ▶ After playing the game, the player ...
... should know something he didn't know before
... the player has accepted a new truth

Understanding

- The player is motivated to train skills and needs a training ground
 - The game can spark the motivation to train
 - Playing the game explains one or more systems to the player
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- ▶ After playing the game, the player understands connections he did not understand before

Behavior

- The behavior of the player needs to be changed
 - The player may not agree that his behavior is wrong
- Present a reason to change a behavior
 - Present objectively strong reasons
- ▶ After playing the game, the player begins to change his behavior
- ▶ His behavior might change in the "wrong" way

Ethics

- The player has improvable ethics
- The game raises attention to an ethical problem in the real world
 - Not necessarily inside the game
 - The game itself does neither need to ask nor answer the ethical question
- ▶ After playing the game, the player makes a change to his ethical code

Emotion

- No direct assumption about the player
 - Create an experience that triggers a certain emotion
 - Very hard to control
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- ▶ After or while playing the game, the player experiences a predetermined emotion

About Game Design

- A serious game has two goals
 - Entertain
 - Send a message
- If one goal is missed, the serious game fails
 - ▶ Both goals are **equally** important
 - ▶ For a serious game to work, it needs to be fully playable as entertainment game

How to use "the serious"

- What is "the serious" you are aiming for?
 - Identify your purpose(s)
- Gather everything you want to transport
 - General Information, Facts
 - Concepts, Ideas, Opinions
 - Emotions
- ▶ Foundation for game design process

How to use Knowledge

- Create a scenario where knowledge is helpful
 - Don't force the player to learn
- Feed knowledge parallel to gameplay
 - Do not interrupt gameplay
- Knowledge as reward
 - Reward must make sense in game context
- ▶ Knowledge must be integrated into game world

How to use Understanding

- Create an interactive simulation
 - Allow the player to make decisions
 - Demonstrate the consequences
 - Do not prevent mistakes
- ▶ Understanding cannot be taught, since it is a thought process
- ▶ The player needs to learn at his pace, in his own way

How to use Behavior

- Create a situation where the player has to behave
 - Allow the player to play out their personality
 - Show him reasonable consequences
 - Show him alternative, better behavior
- ▶ Make the player reflect on their behavior
- ▶ Give them incentives to change their behavior

How to use Ethics

- Ethics change very slowly
- The change requires a long thought process
- Forcing someone to have the "right" ethics is impossible
 - Don't attack the ethics code of others
 - Present your own ethics code
- ▶ Ethics are very personal and very sensitive
- ▶ Brace yourself for heavy feedback

How to use Emotion

- Emotions are not related to a certain topic
 - Your game setting can be chosen freely
- Emotions do not happen consciously
 - You cannot push/force an emotion
 - Let the emotion happen 'naturally'
- ▶ Create a playthrough that leads to an emotion
- ▶ Use your freedom to address your target group

How to Serious Game

- ▶ Identify your "serious"
- ▶ Use your "serious" as a foundation for the game design process
- ▶ Create the game the same way you'd create an entertainment game
- ▶ Use gaming industry standards to measure your game's quality
- ▶ Have fun :)