Clash of Realities
2015/16
On the Art, Technology and Theory of Digital Games

[transcript] Studies of Digital Media Culture
From:

Clash of Realities (ed.)
Clash of Realities 2015/16
On the Art, Technology and Theory of Digital Games.
Proceedings of the 6th and 7th Conference


Digital games as transmedia works of art – Games as social environments – The aesthetics of play – Digital games in pedagogy – Cineludic aesthetics – Ethics in games – these were some of the important and fascinating topics addressed during the international research conference “Clash of Realities” in 2015 and 2016 by more than a hundred international speakers, academics as well as artists. This volume represents the best contributions – by, inter alia, Janet H. Murray, David OReilly, Eric Zimmerman, Thomas Elsaesser, Lorenz Engell, Susana Tosca, Miguel Sicart, Frans Mäyrä, and Mark J.P. Wolf.

The Clash of Realities – International Conference on the Art, Technology and Theory of Digital Games takes place at the TH Köln, University of Technology, Arts, and Sciences in Cologne, Germany. Unique in Europe, this research conference brings together academics and artists for an interdisciplinary exchange and dialogue. The conference is jointly organized by the “Cologne Game Lab” and the “Institut für Medienforschung und Medienpädagogik” (both of TH Köln), the “ifs internationale filmenschule köln”, the “Institut für Medienkultur und Theater” of the University of Cologne, and “Electronic Arts”, a global leader in the field of digital interactive entertainment.

For further information:
www.transcript-verlag.de/978-3-8376-4031-1

© 2017 transcript Verlag, Bielefeld
Inhalt

Preface
Program Board of the Clash of Realities Conference | 11

I KEYNOTES

Clash at Clash of Realities
Eric Zimmerman | 19

How Close Are We to the Holodeck?
Janet H. Murray | 29

The Potential of Procedurally-Generated Narrative in Video Games
Mark J. P. Wolf | 45

Cinema and Game Spaces. Contingency as Our New Casualty
Thomas Elsaesser | 57

More About EVERYTHING
David OReilly | 77

Play, Games, and the Good Life
Miguel Sicart | 83

II.1 GAME STUDIES SUMMIT

Introduction
Benjamin Beil, Gundolf S. Freyermuth, Hanns Christian Schmidt | 93

Transmedia. Twelve Postulates
Gundolf S. Freyermuth | 97

Worlds Apart?
Game Worlds Versus Other Imaginary Worlds
Mark J. P. Wolf | 127
Playing (with) STAR WARS
James Newman | 143

Time, Memory, and Longing in Transmedial Storytelling
Susana Tosca | 159

Playing with Stories, Playing in Worlds. Transmedia(l) Approaches to Video Games
Hanns Christian Schmidt | 175

A Game of Playful Art. Transmedia Auteurs, Genre Settings, and the Cineludic Form
Andreas Rauscher | 195

Marshmallows and Bullets
Federico Igarzábal Alvarez | 217

Teaching Game Studies. Experiences and Lessons from Tampere
Frans Mäyrä | 235

II.2 MEDIA PEDAGOGY AND MEDIA ETHICS SUMMIT

Introduction
Angela Tillmann, André Weßel | 245

Not Just a Game. Media Activity in Digital Gaming Worlds as a Preliminary Stage of Participation
Angelika Beranek, Sebastian Ring | 249

This Moral of Mine. Reflecting Ethical Decision-Making with Digital Games
André Weßel | 267

Making Ethical Decisions in Serious Games
Sonja Gabriel | 291

Moral Dilemmas in Digital Games
Jeffrey Wimmer | 311
The Good, the Bad, and the Inbetween.  
**Using Digital Games for Ethics Education**  
André Weßel, Maike Groen | 323

**Bioethics and Biofacts in Digital Games**  
Arno Görgen | 339

**POKÉMON GO. User-Created Social Environments in a Single Player Game**  
Christian Toth | 365

**Spaces of Possibility? Aspects of Spatiality in Online Role-Playing Games**  
Arne Schröder | 377

**Beyond the Multi-Player. Exploring Sociality in Single Player Videogames**  
Kelly Boudreau | 387

**Camping N00b-Tuber and Other Annoying Players. Unfairness and Its Regulation**  
Thomas West | 401

**Bodies That Matter in the Pursuit of Esports**  
Emma Witkowski | 417

**Gamers(’) Talk. A Conversation Analytic Approach to Let’s Play Videos**  
Ute Barbara Schilly | 441

**II.3 FILM AND GAMES SUMMIT**

**Introduction**  
Lisa Gotto | 461

**Serial Games. On the Philosophy of Difference and Repetition in Moving Images**  
Lorenz Engell | 465
Games That Play People.  
The Facts in the Case of D. Cronenberg  
Bernd Herzogenrath | 481

Abu Goat  
Rembert Hueser | 489

II.4 GAME DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

Introduction  
Björn Bartholdy | 507

The Aesthetics of Choice.  
A Question from the Outside  
Klaus Gasteier | 509

Games as a Source of Future Memory.  
A Typology  
Daniela Kuka | 523

My Hyperideal Self.  
Identification and Objectification in Digital Games  
Nina Kiel | 547

Play It Again, Sam  
Michael Erlhoff | 559

Open Development as Disruptive Game Design Practice  
Ortwin Freyermuth | 565

II.5 GAMES PRESERVATION SUMMIT

Introduction  
Martin Lorber | 593

Play, Things and Playthings.  
Approaches to Videogame Preservation  
James Newman | 595
Preserving Games from Concept to Creation.
A Perspective from the Business Side
Stefan Serbicki | 611

Contributors | 625
In 2015 and 2016, Clash of Realities — The International Conference on the Art, Technology, and Theory of Digital Games took place in Cologne for the sixth and seventh time. At the center of Europe’s premier artistic-academic research conference lie questions concerning the aesthetic development, theoretical analysis, and cultural mediation of digital games. Conference guests included scholars from the humanities, social scientists, specialists in education, game developers of all kinds—from AAA companies to Indie start-ups—, up-and-coming creative talent, students, and all those interested in and excited by digital games.

This volume features the best of the many lectures given at Clash of Realities 2015 and 2016.

The year 2015 marked a fresh start for Clash of Realities. Founded as a biannual event in 2006 by Winfred Kaminski of the Institute for Media Research and Media Pedagogy at the Cologne University of Applied Sciences, and Martin Lorber of Electronic Arts Germany, the conference set out to redress the lack of an interdisciplinary forum on digital games in Germany and Europe. The premier goal was to facilitate and stimulate academic debates on pedagogical, psychological, sociological, and cultural aspects of digital gaming. However, from its beginning, the conference also aspired to be a place for communication among academia, politics, media, and other relevant stakeholders in the area of digital games.1

In 2010, Björn Bartholdy and Gundolf S. Freyermuth of the then-recently founded Cologne Game Lab of the Cologne University of Applied Sciences joined the conference board and started to organize a new track dedicated to

---

1 The political significance was underlined by the fact that the first conference in 2006 was opened by Armin Laschet, then Minister for Intergenerational Affairs, Family, Women, and Integration, today the State Premier of North-Rhine Westphalia.
Game Development and Game Studies. The five bi-annual conferences between 2006 and 2014 were documented in the publication of proceedings.²

In 2015, after Kaminski’s retirement, Bartholdy and Freyermuth took over the organization of the conference and restructured it. The perspective and orientation were widened to include academics and artists from more specializations. Additional partners were recruited, specifically the ifs internationale filmschule köln (international film school Cologne) and the Institut für Medienkultur und Theater (Institute for Media Culture and Theater) at the University of Cologne.

As a consequence of the expanded function of the conference as an interface of academic research and artistic creation, a new structure was implemented. The conference now consists of a Summit Day facilitating specialized discussions in smaller and more homogeneous groups, and a Main Day encouraging heterogeneous exchange among the different academic specializations concerning themselves with digital games and, most importantly, between academics and artists.

This volume documents Main Day keynotes and lectures of five summits:

• **Game Studies Summit**: Organized by the Cologne Game Lab and the Institute for Media Culture and Theater, this summit concerns itself with the analytical and critical interpretation of digital games from the perspective of the humanities, specifically of media and cultural studies. As digital games shape our self-perception as well as our perception of the world around us, the emerging new field of Game Studies requires an emphasis on the investigation and promotion of games literacy. In 2015, Benjamin Beil and Gundolf S. Freyermuth curated the summit; in 2016, Benjamin Beil, Gundolf S. Freyermuth, and Hanns Christian Schmidt led the proceedings.

• **Media Pedagogy and Media Ethics Summit**: Organized by the Institute for Media Research and Media Pedagogy in cooperation with Electronic Arts Germany, this summit aims to discuss a broad spectrum of subjects related to

---

the application of digital games in educational contexts. A particular focus highlights ethical questions, such as the presentation of characters, conflicts and conflict resolutions as well as a critical review of the communication culture in player communities. In 2015, Isabel Zorn, Martin Lorber and Jürgen Sleegers curated the summit. In 2016, Angela Tillmann, Martin Lober and André Weßel led the proceedings.

- **Film and Games Summit**: Organized by *ifs internationale filmschule köln*, this summit explores visual regimes and modes of perception, particularly in regards to the relation between film and digital games. In accordance with current developments in screen culture, as well as with theoretical debates engaged within these changes, the focus lies on converging media aesthetics as well as dynamically evolving media synergies. The summit was curated by Csongor Baranyai in 2015, by Lisa Gotto in 2016.

- **Game Development Summit**: Organized by the *Cologne Game Lab*, this summit focuses on the practice of making games by presenting concrete showcases of development processes along with critical reflection. Speakers at this summit range from representatives of the game industry (from AAA and Indie) to academic researchers to specialists from relevant fields. In 2015, Björn Bartholdy and Katharina Tillmanns curated the summit; in 2016, Björn Bartholdy and Krystian Majewski.

- **Games Preservation Summit**: Organized by *Electronic Arts Germany*, this summit concerns itself with the current state and future of games preservation, particularly with comprehensive and systematic efforts for the preservation of digital games and the many challenges preservation is facing, ranging from technical to methodical to legal questions and issues. In 2016, Martin Lorber and Fabian Weichert curated this summit.

**Acknowledgments**

**Conference**

The sixth and seventh *Clash of Realities Conferences* took place at the *Cologne Game Lab* (CGL) of TH Köln and the *ifs internationale filmschule köln*; in 2015 from Monday, November 2, through Wednesday, November 5, 2015; in 2016 from Monday, November 14, through Wednesday, November 16. Both conferences were planned and designed by a Program Board, which was chaired by Björn Bartholdy and Gundolf S. Freyermuth of CGL. Members of the Program Board included Angela Tillman, André Weßel, and Isabel Zorn of the *Institute*
for Media Research and Media Pedagogy, Csongor Baranyai, Lisa Gotto, Sunedria Nicholls-Gärtner, and Simone Stewens of ifs internationale filmschule köln, Benjamin Beil and Hanns Christian Schmidt of the Institute for Media Culture and Theater, and Martin Lorber of Electronic Arts Germany.

The conferences were made possible by the generous support of TH Köln, Film and Medien Stiftung NRW, the City of Cologne, Ford Motor Company, and Electronic Arts Germany. Our sincerest thanks go to these institutions and companies.

The conferences owe much of their success to the extraordinary staff that helped organize and promote the events, in particular to Judith Ruzicka and Katharina Klimke of CGL, and the many members of CGL student support groups as well as to Mathias Mehr (CGL) for providing technical assistance and to Judith Neumann (CGL), Miriam Edinger and Ulijana Thaetner (ifs), Sybille Fuhrmann and Petra Schmidt-Bentum (TH Köln), and Martin Lorber (EA) for the continuous press work. Katharina Tillmanns (CGL) moderated both conference Main Days with intelligence and wit.

The Program Board owes the deepest debt of gratitude, however, to the international speakers and presenters—more than a hundred academics and artists from over a dozen countries.

Speakers and organizers of the Clash of Realities Conference (2016)
Initial author support, editing and formatting as well as final approval was provided by the heads of each summit. Curtis L. Maughan (CGL) tirelessly edited and proofread most of the contributions. Carmen Schneidereit (CGL) produced the layout. She was assisted by the publication work group of CGL students, David Kade (ifs), and Judith Ruzicka (CGL). The editorial process was supervised and managed by Gundolf S. Freyermuth. We thank them all for their help.

Last but not least, we would like to thank the TH Köln for supporting the publication of this book.
When I was asked to put together a talk for the *Clash of Realities Conference*, I wanted to do something that did justice to the idea of a “clash.” So I gave myself this design problem: put together a session that could serve as a forum for discussion and debate across disciplinary lines. In other words, I didn’t just want to talk about realities clashing, but I wanted to try and see if I could actually get some real clashing to happen.

This short essay outlines what I did to engineer a clash of ideas onstage. The procedures I used can easily be ported to other conference contexts—please feel free to use this approach for your own events!

## 1. Raw Material

Just putting people in front of an audience and giving them discussion topics wasn’t going to be enough—in my experience as a game designer, creativity emerges out of constraints. I wanted to design a procedure that would help structure and focus the conversation.

Taking the online conference proceedings as my raw material, I extracted all of the interesting nouns and noun phrases that I could find. For example, from this talk abstract by game scholar Emma Witkowski:

> **Smack talk, teamwork, and playing for keeps: weighing in on some bodies that matter in the serious pursuit of E-sports**

> “The past 5 years have seen eSports explode into legacy sport spaces and conversations: *traditional sports celebrities* are investing in established franchises, major eSports competitions draw six-figure prize pools and reach *millions of viewers*, and *sports media broad-**
casting has gotten on board with ESPN even launching an online vertical dedicated to eSports. These recent headlines are fascinating marks on the history of eSports. Such sway from legacy sports, tied to ongoing community support, and the staging of eSports will certainly come to affect how we—the fans—can engage with competitive computer gameplay/players. But just as importantly, a deeper consideration of how players and teams do professional play is brought on by such growth. This talk will address the changing eSports ecosystem from the perspective of players and the liveliness of their practice—how they play, how they think of performance, and what it means for them to play to win.”

I extracted the following (highlighted above):

- smack talk
- teamwork
- playing for keeps
- bodies that matter

Figure 1: Eric Zimmerman during his opening keynote of the Clash of Realities Conference at the Cologne Game Lab, November 2016

---

traditional sports celebrities
millions of viewers
sports media broadcasting
ESPN
the history of eSports
ongoing community support
competitive computer gameplay
professional play
the changing eSports ecosystem
the perspective of players

While that list is fairly coherent (because it is all coming from the same paragraph), taking text from the dozens of different conference presentations resulted in a wild linguistic mix that was somehow also a core sample of the ideas and interests of the conference itself. Here’s a random list:

our leisure time
a dynamic system
unsuspecting tourists
friendships and social support
fans
cultural heritage

Figure 2: Eric Zimmerman explaining his Clash of Ideas Game, November 2016
(digital) rights
capitalist production
the crazy idea that we can all get along
otherness
complex logical thinking
time
a mummified goat
learning environments
narrative
single-player games
crowdfunded open development
Guy Debord and the Situationists
the LEGO Star Wars series of videogames
an emotional experience

As I curated these words, one important constraint was to only use text verbatim—exactly as it had been presented in the online program. I gathered several hundred phrases and hand-wrote each of them onto a blank white card.

![Figure 3: Game Cards from the Clash of Ideas Game](image-url)
2. Blanks to Fill

To serve as vessels for this salad of signifiers, I came up with several statements that could take advantage of the card content, riffing off of the main themes of the conference itself. For example:

_Nostalgia._

*When we were children, we always wanted _____.
But then why as adults do we end up thinking we need ____?*

You can imagine the possibilities:

*When we were children, we always wanted **friendships and social support**. But then why as adults do we end up thinking we need **single-player games**?*

*When we were children, we always wanted **an emotional experience**. But then why as adults do we end up thinking we need **Guy Debord and the Situationists**?*

My other prepared questions included the following, all of which I created as slides to be projected onstage.
Change the game.
What do we all hate about games? _____.
What can we do about it? _____.

People.
Like it or not, humans are drawn to _____.
That’s why we need more games that can engage with _____.

Living in the future.
The future is already here. Just look at _____.
Games can adapt by relying on _____.

In putting these Mad Libs-style blanks together, my main goal was to make sure that everything could fit together grammatically. I was building a modular system of linguistic units—and LEGO bricks just don’t work if you can’t actually stack them together.

But I had other discursive strategies as well. I wanted some of the questions to point directly towards the topics of the conference. And I wanted other questions to use the extracted words to take us into new terrain. The two parts of each question usually create some kind of opposition or contrast. But it was left ambiguous if the discussion was about something positive or negative.

Like it or not, humans are drawn to formal analysis.
Like it or not, humans are drawn to war.
Like it or not, humans are drawn to the virtual spaces of videogames.
Like it or not, humans are drawn to Pokémon Go.

That’s why we need more games that can engage with cinema.
That’s why we need more games that can engage with multiple planes of reality.
That’s why we need more games that can engage with our brains.
That’s why we need more games that can engage with life.

I did quick tests with the cards and the statements, refining the language and weeding out cards that just didn’t play well. After several rounds of playtesting and editing, there seemed to be a lot of room for surprise, humor, and genuinely interesting combinations of ideas.
3. **Structuring a Discussion**

Here’s how the process worked during the session.

- **(1) Pass out cards.** With the help of a few volunteers, each person in the audience was given a few random cards. I explained what I had done and what was about to happen.

- **(2) Form groups.** I asked the audience to turn their chairs around and form into groups of about 4-6 people. Smaller groups were combined and I encouraged people to get together with others they didn’t know. Throughout the session I encouraged people to leave groups and form new ones, or trade cards between groups. Halfway through the session I gave each group additional cards in case they were getting tired of their original set.

- **(3) Select cards.** I would project the current fill-in-the-blank question. Each group had just a few minutes to share their cards and the best pair to fill in the blank. The discussion in each group was fast and furious.

- **(4) Come up on stage.** Then I asked each group to send a representative to the stage with the cards they had selected. Most sent someone every round, but it was OK if a group sat out. I also asked that each group send a different representative each time to maximize the number of voices that got heard.

- **(5) Discuss.** This was the heart of the session. Sitting onstage, people shared their cards, reading the entire statement and filling in the blanks with their group’s selections. Usually they wanted to explain what the group had been thinking. My job was to keep the conversation moving and to bring out any interesting points of agreement or disagreement. When possible, I highlighted differences of opinion and asked people onstage or in the audience to comment on one side or the other.

Rinse and repeat. I had prepared more questions, but we got through 4 of them in about 45 minutes. In my role as circus ringmaster, I had to keep things moving quickly. But it was just as important to be flexible. Some groups sent multiple representatives, merged card phrases together, and even stole cards from others to make on-the-spot modifications. Being fast and loose with the rules let the participants be creative and really make the session their own.
4. SOME CONCLUSIONS

Constraints work.

The process did function well. You can see from the photos that everyone really is engaged and enjoying themselves. The basic mechanism of the cards and blanks gave just enough structure for people to become very creative very quickly. The ideas that came out of the conversation were truly interesting and thought-provoking. And there were more than a few real clashes of genuine disagreement.

They could only blame themselves.

All of the card content was taken from the session descriptions. This meant that the discussions always reflected ideas that were somehow in the air of the event already—even when they were being forcefully refuted! I couldn’t be blamed for the discussions and arguments that emerged since they came from the speakers themselves.

Arguing can be fun.

I believe that disagreement is one of the best ways to explore ideas—when there is a productive debate, contrasts become clear and the audience can figure out their own position from the different points of view being presented. But it is hard to stage a real debate in a professional context—few people enjoy arguing and no one likes to make enemies. The abstraction of the cards and blanks and the group decision-making let people take very strong positions and disagree openly with each other. No one felt that their own personal ideas were ever under attack.

Room for many roles.

Some people couldn’t be kept offstage. Others ran from group to group trading cards. Still others just preferred to watch. There were enough ways for people to interact so that they could find their own preferred role to play.

Shake up the system.

Perhaps my favorite aspect of the session was that people came up onstage that would never otherwise have had a chance to address the crowd. Students could
lecture their professors; players could tell designers what they thought about design. By allowing anyone to come up on stage, the usual power dynamics of the conference were just a little bit undone.

![Figure 5: Audience and speakers discussing the game on stage](image)

**Design for reuse.**

As a classroom exercise or way to structure a conference session, I highly recommend this method of staging a “clash.” It does take a bit of preparation but is well worth the effort. If you do try it out, let me know how it went!

**Let go of the rules.**

The whole session had a somewhat wild and unpredictable feeling, which was made possible by the fairly simple structure. Once people got comfortable with the system after the first round or two, they started bending and breaking it. As designers, we too often try to get players to follow our rules exactly when what we should be doing are creating situations that result in unpredictable and meaningful play.

*Thanks to Gundolf S. Freyermuth, Katherina Klimek, and Judith Ruzicka for helping me to design and implement this very playful clash.*