

The Future of Video Games

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So this paper is essentially about the book, "Future of Gaming: Creative Interventions in Video Game Culture," which is a summary of a long research. Despite what the title might suggest, the book is about anything but the future of video games. Actually, it's much more about the present, or to say better, it's about how the future of video games is currently being narrated and presented by a variety of actors and institutions, from gamers, the industry, game journalists, but also political, financial, and marketing institutions. If you are familiar with video game culture, you probably know that game culture is almost obsessed with narrating and talking about its own future. Game magazines, since their inception around the '80s, printed game magazines were already having a very extensive literature about the games that are expected to be released in the following months or in the following year. So the previews is something quite specific to kind of game journalism. It's usually articles written based on press releases by game publishers, sometimes based on just a few screenshots, or sometimes purely speculations. Sometimes these games don't really get released ever, so this is a very extensive literature about the future of games, and games that sometimes no one really ever plays. The industry itself is almost a frame around this obsession with talking about its own future. Since 1995, the game industry has its own trade show, the Electronic Entertainment Expo, also known as E3, which typically takes place around June in Los Angeles in California. It's a context where game publishers present their upcoming games, the games that are going to be released. It's a very important event along with other trade shows as well, because it can make the difference in terms of how these products are going to be received.

But it's not just the game industry and gamers that talk about the future of video games nowadays. There are also sort of social political promises that are being made around video games. You might be familiar with the work of Jane McGonigal, who became famous around 2010 with a famous Ted talk where she brought her vision, and her vision is that video

games can save the world. They're going to fix the world and solve every problem that we currently have from global warming to the oil crisis to anything really. Her proposal is that if game design is so good at attracting people and involving them into solving complex tasks, then if we can transform the problems that we currently face as on our planet into a game, then a lot of people will be engaged with these games and they will work together to save our problems. So in her vision games are something that is going to be important for the future of humankind, they're going to frame, they're going to shape the world we're going to live in. They're going to make us happier. They're going to make us more fit, more educated, and so on. Although Jane McGonigal doesn't usually explicitly talk about gamification, but that's a very similar approach. I'm going to talk more explicitly about gamification later on. Gamification is an ongoing trend, if you like, sort of a technique mostly by marketing consultants who try to promote their vision on how game design could be used to solve problems, to help people. So Nike Fuel is an example. Nike has been developing this app that you can use on your smartphone or as a wearable gadget, and the idea is that by setting goals and quantifying your movement, you can get better and kind of improve your life. So games are seen as things that can make us transform us into better people, better persons. So they're good for our future selves. In around 2013, Barack Obama made a series of public presentations where he was explicitly talking about video games as a potential tool for the future of education and the future of health.

He was explicitly addressing college students, and telling them that they should be spending their lives and careers into designing games, better games that are not just about shooting aliens and monsters, but about educating people. These presentations usually these narratives are not just presenting games as something is good for us, but they also go hand in hand with financial investments. So very often, these narratives about how games are going to be useful for our culture, they usually are also presented as good business opportunities. In the UK, we had something similar in 2012. The then British Chancellor, George Osborne, secured tax breaks for the game industry after a very long negotiation, and the representative of the trade body, TIGA, here in the UK, Richard Wilson, reacted positively by welcoming this announcement, and saying at the same time that this means that now video games can be considered an important cultural form next to films and literature and so on, and also that this will bring large investments, which was at the time estimated around 188 million pounds. In the European Union as well, if you look at the Horizon 2020 funding scheme, there are explicit uses of the words games and gamification, which are presented as solutions for education, health, for solving problems essentially, and also for economic benefits. Also at the same time as techniques that can be used to size new business opportunities. So here games are seen as a technology that can lead us into the future and also help businesses on the same time. So as you can see, there are not just investments from the side of people who are already playing games and making games, but there are also political interests into gaming, and political interests that go next to financial investments as well. We're almost presented with a narrative where it seems that games need to be supported by political and financial institutions in order to unleash their potential, to become finally fulfill what they are expected to become.

The interest from political organizations to our video games actually dates much back than what we're kind of seeing now. In a paper by Jennifer Whitson and Bart Simon published in 2014, we know the NSA, the National Security Agency, here taken in one of the photos by the artist, Trevor Paglen, the NSA has been looking at video games as instruments for massive surveillance and political propaganda. As I'm sure you know, in December of 2013, Edward Snowden released leaked documents from the NSA, and some of them revealed that around 2007 and 2008, the NSA was explicitly looking at video games as technologies for massive surveillance, and there were explicit directions for security agencies on how to look at games and how to use them for these purposes. It's quite interesting actually to look at how the NSA was interested in video games at the time. Some of their conclusions are actually surprisingly banal, and that's I think what makes it so interesting. So they are seen as becoming more and more popular thanks to these new tools of production that are making game design more easily accessible. They're also popular, as they were saying, in the 18, 35 years old male audience, and they're also very easily malleable for political propaganda. They can easily use to influence public opinion. So from the perspective of many of these political institutions and the NSA in particular, the future of gaming does not look very playful. OK? It's actually quite disheartening. It's filled with the same forms of inequalities and injustice that is currently shaping the present. So video games are becoming an instrumental medium. Instrumental for a specific financial, marketing, political, and military power. The crucial aspects in the ways in which the future of games is currently presented is that there is this rhetorical gesture of speaking the truth, of telling the truth about what games are, what they can do, and what they're going to do to us, and what we can do with them.

Truth is very often presented through data, numbers, facts, evidence, statistics that are presented to support and justify these true vision of the future of gaming. Jane McGonigal, for instance, uses numbers, a lot of numbers, to present her vision of how games can make us better people. She even has an estimate of how many minutes we should play video games in order to save the world. The game industry produces numbers all the time through agencies. They usually produce statistics and info graphics that explain how big it is and how important it is and how relevant it is. They're not just saying this. They're also supporting this vision with stats, with numbers. Now, coming from a humanities perspective myself, my main question when I look at these numbers is, I mean, who cares. I mean this in a not rhetorical fashion. Why there is so much interest from so many different institutions, from so many different contexts, and speaking so profoundly about the potential of video games, and not just talking about it as presenting a personal perspective, but presenting this as a truthful description of what games can do and where they're going to lead us. So in the work of Katherine Hayles where she writes about the metaphors used in the studies around artificial intelligence and artificial life, she can posed this quite well in saying that even a scientific truth when it is presented as being the same everywhere and whoever says it needs to be presented by some one, needs to be framed by a specific subject who is, of course, embodied. That it is not a transcendental. So truth, as always, has to do with power and authority, and power and authority that we grant to those so that we believe as being sources of truth. In this particular case, the truth about the future of video games is, I

believe, very instrumental. So these claims about what video games can do and what they're going to do, they're not just presented to be celebrating the medium, but they are used to claim that position of power, the position of power by a specific institution that claim for themselves the authority to say what our games are going to be.

I have a problem with that mostly because these institutions are also framing the present. As their visions of the future tend to be very repetitive of what we're already seeing now, and therefore, the future of gaming from their perspective, it's quite boring, I think. So to address this problem, I've come up with a solution. Well, it's not a solution really, an alternative, which I've here defined as creative game studies, which is the sort of methodology that I tried to use in this book. The creativity of this method has nothing to do with the creativity of the creative industries, for instance, which are very much interested in competition between individuals, thus being very consistent with the now liberal ideology. The creativity that the I use here is actually in reference to the work of Henri Bergson, and the interpretation of the work of Henri Bergson. I've presented it through six keywords, if you like. So it is an approach to the writing narratives around games that is intuitive rather than just being intellectual. It tries to join in the duration and the flow of time and tries to participate in the things and the world that surround us. It would be performative in the sense that it acknowledges that the things that we say are not just descriptive of the world, but they are world making. They make the world. They make things happen. This is very obvious if you look, for instance, at how political and financial institutions are talking about video games. They're not just describing the reality. They're describing it for the sake of changing it, of calling for more investments and more business opportunities and so on. So I take this performative potential also in my method. It is ethical in the sense it tries to take into account what others, other people, other games, other narratives, other ways of approaching video games and playing with them.

It is anti-authoritarian in a sense it tries to challenge given structures of discourse, and tries to approach them by kind of reframing that through different differences. It is anxious, and anxiety here is actually a key element of this approach to thinking and writing about video games, because most of these narratives around the future of games are very self-confident. They have a sort of certitude about what is going to happen. They present it as something very clear to them. So I try and get back to a much more unstable and much more problematic way of looking at the many troubles and problems that we're actually kind of not considering when presenting these conflicting narratives. So in a sense, it's not very much obsessed with the truth around video games, but it's much more interested about the many things that we do not to know and maybe we cannot possibly know about video games and their players. So I'm going to give you two examples that are taken from two of a the chapters of the book, and one of them it's actually a very personal story, a very kind of intimate story. The story of a failed relationship, of a time I broke up, maybe it's something you're kind of familiar with. After a two years long relationship, I had a breakup. My partner, at the time, was not another person, was my quantified other, was my quantified self. So I've been using for a couple of years the Nike Fuel wearable gadget, which is a gadget that you can wear on your wrist and quantifies your movement on a daily basis and gives you indications on how much you're moving. So therefore, giving you

encouragements to move more and be more fit and be a better person, more generally. So this relationship that was supposed to be about movement was not really going anywhere. So at some point, I decided to break up. So gamification, Nike Fuel is seen as an example of gamification.

If you like, it kind of belongs to the broader phenomenon of the quantified self, which became popular thanks to the pages of Wired magazine. Gary Wolf, one of the directors of Wired magazine, is also one of the leaders of the quantified self movement. Here it is presented by also Gary Wolf himself as self-knowledge to numbers. So it's the idea that a reader than having unreliable personal perspectives and feelings, we get numbers that are going to tell us how exactly we are and what we can be, and what we can become. So we are kind of getting back to these, right, so this idea that the truth about the self can be said and articulated through data, through numbers, and statistics. We are also getting back to that, that other thing, the surveillance and self surveillance. So very often, these technologies, these gadgets, are also used to take data from the individual, while not necessarily willingly accepting to release this data to other companies that are not necessarily those that are sold the original product. I'm sure you know what I'm talking about. So this happens to be presented to a game aesthetics. So gamification takes the aesthetics of video games to create, to offer leaderboards, rankings, goals, and to appropriate some of the jargon maybe of game design in order to give us incentives to get better and improve our health. If you look at the literature around gamification, for instance, the book by Zichermann and Cunningham, "Gamification by Design," there is one keyword that is very often used to define that complex feeling of getting attached to your kind of quantified other and that word is engagement. Now engagement in gamification means essentially getting attached too and feeling a sort of affect towards your scores, the very idea of improving yourself, so that you want to keep playing essentially. Engagement, as Zichermann and Cunningham already notice in their book, it also means a special period in a romantic relationship where two people are kind of promising to each other to get married, to have a more binding relationship.

So I search the meaning of engagement on my favorite search engine, AskJeeves.com, and engagement is a very polysemic word. It can mean very different things, right? In general, if you want to summarize these different meanings, it means that it's a promise between two subjects, two things, to go somewhere, to do something together, and that movement is supposed to change, to have a drastic change at some point. So in the case of a romantic relationship, that would be getting married. In other circumstances, that promise of a drastic change can be different things. That's probably the problem that we are getting with gamification, and it's not only me. Many people at the moment are quitting, dropping their wearable technologies. There are drops in sales apparently even like Fitbit, which is supposed to be one of the major producers of wearable technology. They're actually experiencing less gadgets being sold. Also many users who are buying these gadgets, usually after six months, from what we know from various sources, from buyers, around six months is the time that people stop using these things. I guess the problem is that the kind of engagement that is promised there. It's a promise to go somewhere, to do something, but that something never really happens. So in a sense, it's the problem that we are seeing here,

it's similar to what Zeno more than 2000 years ago, already conceptualized throughout his philosophical paradoxes. So Zeno, a philosopher, argued that movement is impossible. To explain this sort of counter-intuitive conclusion, he was presenting a series of fictional settings, fictional narratives to make us imagine how and why movement is not possible. So one of them is the famous paradox of Achilles and the tortoise who are engaging in a race. Achilles is, of course, this mythological hero. He's supposed to be very fast, very athletic, so he's definitely going to win the race.

But Zeno says, well, if we gave the tortoise a certain margin of advantage, let's say a few meters, by the time Achilles will have reached the tortoise, the tortoise will have moved slightly farther, of course, assuming that they're moving at constant speeds, different, but constant speeds. So then by the time Achilles tries to reach the tortoise again, then there is again another margin of advantage for the tortoise, because the tortoise keeps moving. So even though the margin of distance keeps decreasing, it's never less than zero. So it's always decreasing, but it can be divided infinitely, in infinitely smaller fragments. So Achilles will never reach the tortoise according to Zeno. Thus, reaching the conclusion that movement is impossible. So this paradox has been troubling philosophers for centuries, and among the many solutions to it, the one Henri Bergson, I think it's one of the most useful for us here. So in a sense, Bergson was saying, well, what is Zeno taking out of this story is duration, and assuming that space and movement, space and time can be divided in the same way. So if we can divide the space separating Achilles and the tortoise in infinitely smaller fragments, we cannot divide the movements that Achilles performs. So that is of a different kind than the movement of the tortoise. So for that reason, Achilles will definitely come to reach the tortoise. So if space can be divided, motion cannot be divided in the same way. So getting back to a more contemporary problem, getting back to Nike and Nike Fuel and gamification. So what happens here is the movement is divided in infinitely smaller fragments, but this puts the user always behind the goal, and that goal is never really going to be reached. There's never going to be a finishing line, a moment of definite victory, let's say, of radical change of the subject. So the kind of engagement of this in gamification is necessarily freezing the possibility of change and movement, because it is applying the same vision that Zeno was paradoxically presenting in the race of Achilles and the tortoise.

That's why at some point gamification becomes very boring, and that's why we are getting many people also stop using wearable technologies. Now, of course, this does not mean that self-tracking is stopping, is no longer in use. Actually, it's more important and pervasive than ever, even more than how it was before. We know from the study of Deborah Lupton on self-tracking that there are very different ways in which self-tracking can take place, and not all of them are necessarily voluntary. So even though maybe we are seeing a drop in the number of people who decide to buy a gadget for self-tracking, we are seeing many more examples of invisible forms of self-tracking. So it's interesting to see that Nike, Fitbit, and many other companies are now spending their energies into software rather than hardware, things that can be installed on your smartphone. Possibly you're going to forget about them, but they were going to still take your data, as Apple, for instance, has been doing with the Health app that keeps working in the background of your iPhone even though you decide to delete it from the main screen. So in short, gamification is another aspect of contemporary

game culture that is often presented and advertised as leading us towards a future better self, bringing us to the future. We're told that gamification will make players better people and the world a better place, but what it is doing in the present is actually much more problematic and worrying. It is using games in an instrumental fashion to promote usually consultancies through digital companies, often based on the sort of false impression that are applying a sort of futuristic approach to technologies. So from this point of view, I think it's Ian Bogost is correct when he says with reference to the philosophical treatises of Harry Frankfurt, that gamification is bullshit, because it is spreading technologies of self surveillance by using this keyword, games, in order to kind of make it look like more policing.

But it is effectively using these technologies to spread technologies of self surveillance, that are essentially making the future much more similar to the present than what we are probably willing to accept. There is also another event of game culture that I write about in my book, which it similarly has to do with the future, but its also a lot to do with the present. That's the unfortunate campaign of harassment against women in gaming that goes by the name of Gamergate, which started around August 2014. Many commentators have seen this to be a possible kind of precursor of the Brexit and Trump campaign, because of its use of social media and social network to spread very quickly a massive hate campaign. So Gamergate, to kind of summarize it in a few words, it's been a campaign started mostly by male gamers trying to attack women. The idea, because of the idea that they are kind of spreading a feminist liberal agenda that is trying to manipulate the game industry. It generated thousands uncountable number of memes and ongoing online conversations, and, of course, not everyone who has been accused by the Gamergate campaign was a woman, and most of them were, in fact, women. That key question around Gamergate was who is in control of game culture? Who is able to say what games are going to be? According to gamers, it's them. It's the people who hone these thing. So there shouldn't be other influences coming from the outside. At the highest and most horrible peak, Gamergate generated also life threats against game designer such as Zoe Quinn, for instance, who was accused of gaining popularity by manipulating game journalists. Of course, evidence of this was not there, but it was not needed. It was essentially a campaign that was using any sort of even false evidence to spread very toxic hate against female game designers, but also commentators such as Anita Sarkeesian who has been curating a YouTube channel, Feminist Frequency, where she explicitly analyzes and announces games for their misrepresentation of women.

She has also, of course, being targeted by the Gamergate. Of course, this is not the first time that something similar happens, particularly in game culture. Game culture is notoriously in a male dominated context has been very doing its best to protect itself from influences from the outside. It never really happened to such an extended level. It never happened in a way that really became a sort of paradigm for similar hate campaigns that happened immediately afterwards. At some point, it also involved academia. That was similarly being seen as another elite that was trying to control game culture. In my research at the time, I'd been reading an uncountable number of threads and comments left on Reddit, on Twitter, and so on around Gamergate, and one of them, at some point, really caught my attention. It

was published on the 10th of March, 2015. The thread was people are now claiming that Gamergate is killing gaming archiving. There was this line that was explicitly making a commentary about the role of academia in relation to game culture. It was saying academia is like a parasite to gaming at the moment. They produce nothing. They just try to make money and favors, prestige off other people's work usually by trying to shred it through a bias perspective that is not real application in real life. The thing is that I don't necessarily disagree with this comment. So I think the tone is, of course, something I don't agree with, but the concept actually I think it's a good description of what I do, for instance. So I don't really produce anything tangible, if not maybe those printed books that you are holding now. I don't really produce anything tangible in that sense. I do definitely use other people's ideas, unless you believe in the myth of originality, there is no escape from this.

I'm biased. If that means having an opinion, I'm definitely biased. I don't think that my work has evident applications in real life. Although, the work of academics might have applications in real life that might inspire other people. I don't think I really am here to make money. I would be doing something else, but let's say that I kind of like this general description of what I'm doing. I particularly like the word parasite. I think it's an excellent description of what I do. So probably the author of this comment didn't know that, but the parasite is actually a concept that has been used in philosophy, particularly in the philosophy of Michel Serres, who in 1982, we have the English publication of "The Parasite," which is trying to reevaluate this character, the parasitical organism as a metaphor for noise and interruptions in communications systems. As the author of the introduction of the English version says, the parasite is a microbe, an insidious infection that takes without giving, and weakens without killing, and the parasite is also a guest who exchanges his thought, praise, and flattery for food. The parasite is also the noise is the static in a system or of interference in a channel. It is the outcome of evolution in the production of change in its relation. Now in English, we also have the word symbiotic systems where organisms are not necessarily exploiting the organism, but they're actually contributing to its life, but if we take parasite as a general word to identify organism that live in depending on other organisms, I think we do have an excellent metaphor for the academic at least. The parasite is both host and the guest. It is at the margins. It is at the boundaries. It is never fully an insider, but is never completely an outsider. In a sense, everyone is in a sense. We're not really ever a literal kind of closed circle of game culture that you're either in or you're out. They're always partly contributing to it, exploiting it, taking something, and giving something.

So the Gamergate, I think, could be much more of interesting be re-interpreted if we look at this figure of the parasite. The ways in which Gamergate has been denounced immediately after it started, and actually a very explicit accusations about gamers, and I fully, of course, agree with the ways in which, for instance, of Dan Golding and Leigh Alexander in August 2014 framed their accusation of what was happening at the time. Their claim was essentially that gamers are dead, that this category of the main game consumer is no longer. Our reality is no longer the majority of game culture. So it's entitlement to speak is just a reaction to it before its completely disappeared. Now while I do agree with the idea of defending those who had been attacked by Gamergate, something that I find is likely

disagree with the ways in which this defense had been presented, because it is essentially re-using the same argument that has been used in these perspectives that try to have a truthful description of what game culture it. It is not a coincidence, I think, that these articles were using a lot of statistics and numbers to explain game consumers and how game consumers really are. So from these statistics, we know that now women are maybe the majority, maybe its no longer just that 18, 35 male consumers that the NSA was so interested in manipulating. It's more and more people and more diverse people. I mean, fair enough, but, of course, this is not the reason why we should be defending others from being part of game culture. It's not that being a majority or being a minority gives you or takes out from you the entitlement to speak. So there is no need, I think, to support this with numbers. So in a sense I think what is the problem here is that from different sides there was an approach to this story that was trying to speak for the sake of being right, to explain how things really are. We can talk about it in different ways, I think. So one of the kind of dualism and categories that I've been trying to introduce in these stories on Gamergate is to talk maybe less about people, including women, who are in game culture, and talking more about women and games, or different kinds of people and how they approach games in different ways from different perspectives.

So being in game culture as kind of assumes that there is an in and out, there is a gatekeeper that has the legitimacy and the authority to decide who is part of it and who is not part of it. I don't think that game culture, or any culture or subculture, for that matter, really works in that way or should be working in that way. So there should be no one that grants for themselves the legitimacy to say who is entitled to speak and who is not entitled to speak. Unless, of course, their speech is trying to prevent other people's freedom. Talking about women and games, for instance, allows us to look from a better perspective at some of the things that are currently happening. So just to mention one example, the work of Anna Anthropy, I think it's quite brilliant. As a woman who is working with games and making her own games, she's also working on archival of games and game material that kind of presents a different history of game culture. She's not seeking legitimacy to be part of the official, so to speak, of game culture. She's writing her own history. She's doing her own games. She's playing with game culture in her own way, and approaching it as a prolific parasite by taking and giving and reshaping game culture in her own way. I also agree with the perspective of who is sort of a historian, was looking at how women have been presented in the history of games and how come they've been so absent in the official accounts of game culture so far. Of course, it's not that women were not present and just happened at some point. This is definitely not the case. There have been moments when they have been constructed as a subject by others mostly who have been framing this character of the woman in game culture according to criteria that were maybe not necessarily those that these subjects really wanted to be represented with.

A couple of years ago, I gave a presentation on game culture at a conference, the DiGRA conference in Scotland, and then one year later in 2017, I found that the abstract of my talk was on Reddit. It was presentation when I was talking about this Reddit comments, I was going back into Reddit. My abstract was taken on this social justice warrior thread by, and, of course, they were kind of attacking my and accusing me of trying to reshape game culture

from the perspective of an academic. So there is one comment actually I found to be quite significant. One of the Reddit user was saying gamers don't want to give their biological organisms new shapes. So they were responding to my idea of the parasite. I think that's, again, another effective summary of what I was trying to say. That's precisely the problem. Biological organisms change shape even if they don't want to. There are always processes of change and modification that happen in time. Trying to freeze that shape is precisely the sort of authoritarian gesture that has been underlying Gamergate, but also other attempts to truthfully describe the future of gaming and what it is and what is going to be. There are numerous, I mean, there is a multitude of parasites in game culture. There are many in betweeners and examples of people who are in between different aspects of game culture and reshape it in different ways from different capacities, even as I'm doing right now with this talk, which is describing game culture, but also becoming part of it in a sense. There are multiple attempts from different subjects at the moment to claim how the future of gaming should be and must be like, but there are also countless parasitical organisms that are reshaping these narratives of temporal progression. In my book, I also look at many other events and phenomena of game culture, including the hacking of Playstation network, the unburial of E.

T. Atari's E.T. the extra-terrestrial, and the phenomenon of independent gaming to look at different ways in which gamers and non-gamers relate with video games and become passionate about games sometimes in an obsessive manner, how they claim for themselves the freedom and right to change video games and game consoles, different ways of relating to games and game culture, and of writing different histories, different imaginations about the past, present, and future of video games. So in conclusion, that's the sort of contribution that I am trying to bring mythological and philosophical tool to look at how players and games change in time, the potential of new narratives in framing alternative visions or what games can do, and what we can do with games, to look at the many others that are involved in these stories, to challenge the existing categories that are currently framing the present of game culture, but also to challenge the reassuring and calm narratives that give us a safe perspective of data analysis. I try to replace these stories with something much more unstable and much more anxious. I think that the interesting thing about game culture and game studies is that it is apparently a sort of trivial medium. It is supposed to be for mere entertainment, but there are many ways to play with it and to play with game culture by writing alternative narratives and introducing new troubles in a cultural sector that maybe we consider to be simply playful. There are many different modes of playing and writing about the past, present, and future of gaming. In my contribution I've been trying to present some of them, some possibilities. Thank you. Thank you very much, Paulo. That was enlightening. I think we have 13 minutes for questions. OK. If you'd like to ask a question, I'll bring the mic over and we'll get it for the recording.

OK. I've read on the one side of a book that at least this series of books is presented like alternative to that and to that thinking. So I think I can talk to you as a presenter of this idea as well. OK, you're saying that we need some alternative to that, but first you're presenting an example. One example from death and second example from a person who is speculative by default, a politic. So you're saying that he is speculative, but what do you expect? He is a

politic. He is a president. Second, what I actually wanted to ask, you're saying about engagement, engagement period with some fitness devices and so on, and that people are not OK with this and so on, but don't you connect it just with usual attention speech, motivation speech, because do you see a lot of people who are trying to go to their goal six months and they're all without motivational and so on. Like, OK, I'm using this device to achieve some of my goals, because I'm using Nike Plus to prepare for half marathon, but I understand that after run in half marathon, I will drop it, because I don't want to do it all the time. Why presenting it as these all people breaking up with, how do you say, self quantification model and so on? Why not to see maybe there are other reasons as well? The second question, small question, you presented the statistics about women and men on one side. Mm-hmm. That was bit funny. A group of women who are 18 and older is bigger than the group of men who are 18 and younger. It's a little bit strange comparison, because there's a different groups and that's pretty much, OK, you have teenagers boy and you have adult women playing, so why to compare them? OK. I mean, starting maybe from your last question and comment. Yeah, I think that's precisely the point. I mean, OK, I started researching and writing about video games when I was a teenager, so that was like 20 years ago. Numbers about the supposed consumers of video games have always been published, always been kind of contradicting themselves.

The thing about these numbers is that, as I was saying before, I mean, who cares. I mean, I'm not necessarily interested in what they are telling us about the current condition of game culture, but much more interested in why they are presented in the first place. So for instance, these numbers and statistics, they're very often used in an instrumental way. There are many inconsistencies that you can probably find in these studies, as is in all studies. I think that's not the point. I think what's interesting is the sort of rhetorical power that they have. So it doesn't really matter what exactly they're saying and how they have been made, but why they're presented by whom and for what purposes. That's the sort of stuff I'm interested about. When you're mentoring about the people not using wearable gadgets and self-tracking, of course, there are uncountable reasons, which I have no idea of, but that's, again, what I'm trying to talk about is this idea that in the end, there are so many things that we don't know and we cannot possibly know about gamers and the things that they do with games. At the same time, there are many reassuring narratives that tell us what games can do to us. Gamification I think is an excellent example of these. Promoters of gamification usually sell their apps, for instance, by giving a very clear vision of the effects of their technologies and their apps. Of course, the effects of these things are unpredictable most of the time. Sometimes they generate completely awkward situations, or they become intrusive in your life. You never know. You also said something at the very beginning about what do I expect from some of the people I presented at the I mean, how are you different from that in this case, because you're a tech alternative. How you're different from tech presenting examples by a person who is not like really, how to say, again, from a president who is speculative by default, from a person who is from tech, and from your personal example.

Yeah. How are they different? Yeah. Well, I don't consider them necessarily the alternative to tech. It's not that. I think what you are reading there in the presentation of the series

actually is that we are trying to, also with this book, to have a different way of thinking about the things that we can say about technologies and the technologies that we use on an everyday basis. So if that thinking as a sort of solution is, if you like, to problems, this is more for trouble making rather than problem solving. OK? So that's the kind of difference maybe. So if we are presented by thinkers with very reassuring narratives about what can be done with technologies, and I am trying to invent a new troubles, invent, well, to find new troubles into things that appear to be very safe. OK. Hey, thanks for the talk. I was curious. When do you think the gaming journalism and academia is going to, what's it called, grow up? When we talk about dance, we don't just talk about ballet. We talk about lots of different types of dance. When we talk about music, we don't just talk about R&B. There's lots of different genres of R&B, music. Go on, sport is not just football, American football, or whatever. There's lots of different separations. But when people talk about gaming and journalism, they usually assume that everyone's talking about that piece they're talking about, that everyone uses the same term of gaming, whether you are a mobile phone gamer, whether you're a strategy game gamer, whether you're a console gamer, whether you're a gamification type gamer. What's your opinion on that sort of level in journalism? Yeah, the problem with game journalism, it's an ongoing problem, if you like. To put it short is that this sort of self-reflexive moment when game journalists acknowledge that much of what they write tends to be very stupid and tends to present games in a very simplified manner as commercial products for entertainment.

The question has been going on for a long time is, is it possible to talk about games in a way that is a bit more mature, as some people say. The only thing I can say about it is that this idea of getting mature, I think it doesn't really go lead anywhere. It's not like a piece of cheese that needs to be put there for 30 years, and then it becomes mature. No. It needs different kinds of people and different kinds of way of approaching games. There is no reason why game journalism has not been looking at film criticism in the last 20 years. I mean, there is no reason why they're not looking at art criticism and the sort of concepts and ways of writing about games that they are using there. So there is no justification from that other than that they are just fine with what we got at the moment, because it works with the sort of readership that they have. There are many people who work on the writing of games in much more original ways. That might be a bit less prominent in the game culture, but there are many examples. It is becoming much more widespread and a bit more interesting than how it was until a few years ago. Hi. Thank you very much for the talk. I haven't quite figured out how to articulate this as a coherent question, so please bear with me. I was really interested in your ideas around parasitic and symbiotic relationships between, pardon me, game development practitioners. I'm a game designer, and my relationship with academics and then critics and then fans. There's lots of ups and downs in all those relationships I suppose. In your description of this person criticizing the role of academics, that hasn't been my experience as a game designer, and I wanted to get some more of your thoughts on that, I guess. To me, these different academic perspectives being generated by folks like yourself have been invaluable to me as a game designer in terms of informing my practice and shaping it.

So while you may not be producing a game directly, academic study of games has a huge influence on the types of games that get produced in my experience both directly and other game designers. I don't think I'm alone in that regard. Same with critics, like Anita Sarkeesian's work is incredibly valuable. I don't see a lot of game designers wanting less of that. I mostly see it coming from, quote unquote, "gamers," game fans. I was just curious as well to hear your thoughts on that, and the other bit that you mentioned of somebody criticizing mentioning that, oh, we're not parasites because you're trying to have some shape on what happens with the future of games, whereas we aren't. I guess, I was interpreting that as game players. Game fans aren't trying to do that, but they clearly are, right? It's like Gamergate is. It's a conservative movement in that they're trying to do all this gate keeping and prevent these other voices, but that is an influence on the types of they're trying to influence the host organism. Quote unquote. So it just seemed like a strange argument. I was curious your thought. No. Absolutely. You know, actually, the point is that everyone is a parasite in one way or another. So even gamers are parasite in their own way in the sense that they are not like the insiders who are deciding if the outsiders can get in or get out, but the parasite is a interesting figure because it makes us think about the many ways in which we are always in between. So it is that academics, gamers, however you decide to identify yourself, and of course these identifications are always going to change. I'm also maybe a gamer sometimes, but I'm also an academic. I can be many different things. So looking at instead of the many ways in which we are in between different forms of relating to game culture, it's I think a bit more complex maybe, but it's, I think, a better way of looking at how others can contribute to game culture as well.

We don't necessarily think in terms of insiders and outsiders, or by seeking legitimacy through market analysis, market statistics, which I don't think it's the point.

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